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## European Commission reforms Expert Groups

### But transparency remains optional

Yesterday, the European Commission adopted new rules to increase the transparency of its expert groups, which give expert advice that shapes the very first drafts of EU laws. This follows a high-level political commitment made by Juncker to improve the transparency of the EU institutions when he first took office. For many years, the Greens/EFA group has consistently called for greater transparency and equality in the Commission's expert groups and our rapporteurs on the Budget and Budgetary Control committees have fought hard for improvements.



However, key concerns remain, such as the lack of commitment to ensure that there is a fair and balanced representation of all interests including small and medium-sized enterprises or non-governmental organisations, which often require financial support to be able to properly participate in these types of processes.

The European Commission has also refused to make the expert groups' deliberations transparent by default, preferring to keep deliberations secret unless a majority of members vote otherwise – and this will have to be decided upon before each and every meeting. In addition, the European Commission has ignored the Parliament's calls that it should refrain from proposing new rules until the European Ombudsman has had the chance to conclude her own-initiative inquiry. We had also asked the Commission to organise a stakeholder meeting on the draft expert group rules, but instead Transparency Commissioner Frans Timmermans chose to meet stakeholders individually, in what some critics have dubbed a “divide and conquer” strategy.

The new expert group rules have also been accompanied by the launch today of a new register of expert

groups. We will continue to monitor the implementation of the new rules on expert groups and to call for improvements so that all stakeholders and adequately, and transparently, involved. Should the new rules fail to deliver, we will push for a budget freeze next year.

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