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Green Plan for Transparency and Integrity in the European Parliament

(AKA, “Rules of Procedure”)

The recent ethics scandals involving former Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso - who moved through the revolving door to Goldman Sachs - and former Commissioner Neelie Kroes - who failed to declare that she was listed as Director of a company in a secretive tax haven (Panama), has made clear that there is an [urgent need to reform the Commission's ethics system](#). Indeed, [in a plenary debate held on Tuesday 4th October](#), the majority of political groups made strong calls for the EU Commission to reform its ethics system.

However, we should not forget that in the European Parliament there is plenty that needs to be done when it comes to ethics reform. The key question is whether or not those same MEPs that cry foul when ethics scandals arise in the Commission are sincere enough to make meaningful changes to their own ethics codes, namely the EU Parliament’s Code of Conduct.

The signs are not encouraging: Just two weeks ago, the Conservatives (EPP), Social Democrats (S&D) and Liberals (ALDE) blocked the vote on the fully negotiated **Giegold-report** on “Transparency, Accountability and Integrity in the EU institutions”. The report contained a number of proposals to limit and control potential conflicts of interest of Members of European Parliament, including by finally banning MEPs from also acting as lobbyists-for-hire.

In parallel, the Parliament’s Code of Conduct is about to be reformed. Found in an annex of the EP’s Rules of Procedure, the idea of the Giegold report was to secure changes in the Parliament’s rules on ethics; but the groups listed above decided to block it. In any case, this Thursday, the first negotiation meeting with all shadow rapporteurs will take place, and the Greens/EFA group will of course continue to push for meaningful reform.

In related transparency news, last Wednesday the EU Commission presented its proposal to revamp the EU’s Transparency Register for lobbyists. We welcomed the announcement, which was a long time coming, but still think that more can and should be done.

This is why we are now coming forward with a [“Green Plan for Transparency and Integrity in the European Parliament”](#). It covers all issues that can and should be dealt with in the new Rules of Procedure, including the Parliament’s Code of Conduct - in the form of 46 specific amendments which we have already submitted for negotiation with the other political groups.

The concrete proposals, which resulted from the long process of negotiation that took place when drafting the (now blocked) **Giegold report**, include:

- Ending conflicts of interest, particularly when it comes to side jobs of MEPs,
- Controlling the revolving door to limit conflicts of interest after MEPs leave office,
- Providing transparency in all contacts with lobbyists on legislation,
- Increasing scrutiny of the financial interests of MEPs, and
- Introducing more effective sanctions for violations of the Parliament's integrity rules.

MEP Sven Giegold, rapporteur for “Transparency, Accountability and Integrity in the EU institutions” and spokesperson for the German Greens in the European Parliament, has worked on this plan together with Swedish **MEP Max Andersson**, who is the rapporteur for the report on changing the Rules of Procedure, otherwise known as the Corbett report.

MEP Sven Giegold comments:

“European democracy deserves more trust by the citizens. But trust must be earned. Walking the talk when it comes to MEPs’ own ethics rules is fundamental to strengthen the ties of trust between the European Parliament and European citizens. Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and Liberals have to give up their blockade against lobby transparency and tougher integrity. Otherwise they are just shooting us all in the foot.”

MEP Max Andersson adds:

“The problem is not lobbying per se, as all politicians need to interact with different groups when they form their positions on various policies: that’s what we were elected for! However, lobbying becomes problematic when the resources, and consequently the political influence, of corporate interests considerably exceeds the resources of organisations working for the public interest. We therefore need a strong set of rules to avoid any skewed decision-making, and to guarantee that ethical standards are upheld.”

- [All Green amendments to the rules of procedure](#)
- [All new amendments, here 863-1078](#)
- [All new amendments, here 1079-1283](#)

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