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The revolving door phenomenon is a systemic issue that must be urgently addressed

Conflict of interests

An analysis of the revolving door moves of former Commissioners and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) has once again thrown into the limelight the issue of potential conflicts of interest in political decision-making.

Whilst the revolving door phenomenon is neither new nor unique to Brussels, the latest research by Transparency International Europe has highlighted a dramatic lack of regulation in the European Parliament and serious under-regulation in the European Commission when it comes to revolving doors. The report shows that the revolving door phenomenon is a systemic issue that needs to be urgently addressed.

What is the problem with "revolving doors"?

If ex-politicians move into the private sector to work for industries that they were previously involved in regulating, this can give rise to preferential treatment, privileged access and disproportionate influence, thus undermining our democracies.

Key findings are that, at least 50% of ex- Commissioners are now working for organisations that are listed as lobbyists in the EU's (still voluntary) Transparency Register. Roughly one third of ex-MEPs have done the same. Firms that do a lot of lobbying, like Google, have used the revolving door as a key part of their hiring strategy, with 50% of their staff having previously worked for the EU institutions.

A missed opportunity in the European Parliament...

The bad news is that the European Parliament very recently updated its ethics rules, and MEPs completely failed to put in place any meaningful provisions on the revolving door. The Greens/EFA team pushed for cooling off period for MEPs that would last up to 2 years (basically for as long as ex-MEPs receive public funds in the form of a "transitional allowance").

However, this proposal was so controversial for the bigger political groups that - days before the final vote - Parliament President Martin Schulz removed it from the voting list completely; so it was never voted on at all. His argument for doing so was based on the idea that the EU Parliament is incapable of regulating the **private lives** of MEPs after they leave office.

The only revolving door proposal that the bigger political groups actually agreed to introduce, is a new obligation for ex-MEPs to at least notify the EU Parliament if they move through the revolving door. You can read more about all of this on our Transparency and Democracy page.

...Although some hope remains for the Commission

Following the various ethical scandals involving both past and present Commissioners, Jean Claude Juncker is planning to reform the Code of Conduct for Commissioners. Although his proposals are limited and weak compared to the complete overhaul that is required of the ethics system, there is at least still an opportunity to call for more serious and stringent improvements.

Indeed, we already managed to secure some positive changes to the way the Commission's ethics system will work from now on. See here for more: http://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/european-parliament-adopts-new-measures-to-control-conflicts-of-interest-in-the-european-commission/

We will continue to push for improvements to the way the ethics system works in both the Parliament and the Commission.
Read our latest briefing on the Commission's proposals to reform its ethics rules.

And don't hesitate to contact our transparency and democracy campaigner if you want to be involved in this campaign!

For more information about the report, visit www.transparency.eu and see www.integritywatch.eu for the full data.

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Attached documents

Framework agreement and code of conduct Commissioners

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