Press release | 17.11.2011

EP transparency reforms

EP transparency and anti-corruption reforms a step closer after committee vote

The European Parliament's constitutional affairs committee today voted to adopt the new MEP code of conduct that was drafted in the wake of the recent MEP cash-for-amendments scandal (1). The Greens were to the fore in pushing for these reforms and welcomed today's vote, with constitutional affairs spokesman **Gerald Häfner** MEP stating:

"This new code of conduct is an important step towards more transparency and addressing potential conflict of interests in the European Parliament, and, as such, reducing the possibilities for corruption.

"MEPs will now have to provide a detailed declaration of their financial interests, listing the source of the income, and place it in four income ranges. The new measures will provide much greater transparency than hitherto and enable better scrutiny of MEPs' second activities (2). In addition to financial interests, the code will also require MEPs to declare invitations on trips - e.g. at the behest of a business - and prohibits accepting any gifts above €150.

"Crucially, MEPs will no longer be able to hold second jobs that involve lobbying on EU policies: this is an important measure, which directly addresses one of the key problems raised by the Sunday Times investigation on MEP corruption In addition, after their period in office, any MEPs engaging in paid lobbying activities will be excluded from privileges normally extended to former deputies, such as access to the EP and its infrastructure.

"Infringements by MEPs will result in clear sanctions ranging from exclusion from certain parliamentary activities to withdrawal of functions."

(1) A working group set up by EP president Buzek to draft a new code of conduct finalised its work in June and the code must now be approved by the European Parliament as a whole, with today's vote the final step before a plenary vote.

(2) MEPs will have to provide details of all their secondary activities, outlining not just where/for whom the activities are carried out but also the level of financial income accrued. The incomes are to be listed in four categories, starting from €500 per month and rising to €10,000 - similar to the system in the German Bundestag.

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