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Press release | 05.11.2013

Lobbying transparency

Chair of EP transparency reform body must resign due to conflict of interest

The Greens have called for the resignation of the chairman of the working group set up to reform the European Parliament's transparency register for lobbyists (1) following revelations that the chairman, EP vice-president Rainer Wieland, is himself engaged in lobbying activities in Brussels. The group today wrote to the Parliament's president Martin Schulz to this end (2), also expressing general concern with the lack of progress of the working group. Commenting on the development, Greens/EFA co-president **Rebecca Harms** stated:

"There is a fundamental and inherent conflict of interest in Mr Wieland's role in charge of the body tasked with reforming the EP's lobbying rules. The revelations that he is involved with a firm lobbying on EU policy make his continuation as chair of working group on lobbying transparency completely untenable and we call on EP president Schulz to demand his resignation and to look at the wider implications of these revelations.

"The EP's code of conduct explicitly prohibits members from holding second jobs involving lobbying on EU policies. The revelations that Mr Wieland failed to declare his lobbying activities are a cause of major concern in this regard and the European Parliament must investigate this as a matter of urgency, also with regard to the implications on the compatibility with the exercise of all his current functions. This is essential for the credibility of the European Parliament."

Green transparency spokesperson **Claude Turmes** added:

"The swiftly growing presence and influence of lobbying towards the EU institutions has been underlined by recent intensely-lobbied legislative files, for example on tobacco. While lobbying is a normal part of the democratic process, there is an urgent need for all EU institutions to update their rules on lobbying and transparency to address the concerns of citizens and uphold the integrity of the democratic process.

"We are concerned at the stalemate in the European Parliament's working group tasked to update its own rules on lobbying transparency. The EP urgently needs to revise its transparency rules, notably to prevent non-registered lobbyists from accessing the Parliament. The lobbyist register must be mandatory, also for law firms, which seem to think they should be immune from any provisions on lobbying. MEPs should be obliged to make all lobbying contacts public and any interaction with non-registered lobbyists should be forbidden.

"Strong EU lobbying rules must be backed up in member states, with national governments and parliaments also directly involved in EU decision making. This implies swiftly rolling out mandatory lobbying registers and provisions on the phenomenon of 'revolving doors' at national level as well. Otherwise, we will simply be shifting lobbying activity from Brussels to national capitals."

(1) In June this year, the Bureau of the European Parliament set up a working group to revise the parliament's current rules on lobbying.

(2) Click to view the letter (pdf).

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