

GREENS/EFA GROUP STANDARDS FOR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

ENSURING INDEPENDENCE AND PREVENTING CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

- FINANCIAL INTERESTS

[The code of conduct](#)¹ requires that Members submit a declaration of financial interests to the President by the end of the first part-session after the elections (or within 30 days of taking up office with the Parliament in the course of a parliamentary term).

Members of the Greens/EFA make sure their declaration is sent on time, that it is clearly legible, that no fields are left blank and that it is updated every time their situation changes, at the latest by the end of the month following the change.

- CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

➤ **Members of the Greens/EFA group strictly follow the applicable rules on conflicts of interest.**

According to the EP Code of Conduct for MEPs: *“A conflict of interest exists where a Member of the European Parliament has a personal interest that could improperly influence the performance of his or her duties as a Member.”*

This definition includes both potential or actual conflicts of interest, and it covers **personal interests that do not have to be declared in the financial interests’ declaration**, such as relatives’ interests.

Greens/EFA MEPs also avoid any perceived conflicts of interest. Even if you think there is no improper influence, the mere public perception of a conflict of interest existing is already damaging for the reputation of the group.

The EP Code of Conduct explicitly requires that *“Members shall disclose, before speaking or voting in plenary or in one of Parliament’s bodies, or if proposed as a rapporteur, any actual or potential conflict of interest in relation to the matter under consideration, where such conflict is not evident from the information declared in their financial interests declaration. Such disclosure shall be made in writing or orally to the chair during the parliamentary proceedings in question”*

If you find yourself in a situation of conflict of interest, the first thing you should do is to **immediately act in order to cease it**. This can consist in stopping to be responsible of a specific file or putting an end to the concerned interest.

If you are unable to resolve the conflict of interest, **you shall report this to the President in writing.**

¹ Code of Conduct for MEPs: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+RULES-EP+20180731+ANN-01+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN&navigationBar=YES>

- **SIDE JOBS**

As an MEP, **your independence is a legal duty**. The freedom of the mandate principle therefore requires that your voting freedom is **never compromised by any external interests, including those of a legal or natural person**.

It is strictly forbidden to engage in paid professional lobbying directly linked to the Union decision-making process.

- However, Members of the Greens/EFA group are committed **not to engage in any professional lobbying activities in representation of an organisation** falling under the scope of the Transparency register during their mandate, **whether paid or unpaid**.

- **EVENTS ORGANISED BY THIRD PARTIES**

If Members attend events organised by third parties and get **reimbursement by the third party** of their travel, accommodation, or subsistence expenses, or the direct payment of such expenses, **it is mandatory to disclose it²**. The relevant form is available [here](#) on the intranet.

- However, as a rule, Members of the Greens/EFA group and their assistants **refrain from accepting reimbursements of costs by third parties** and use their corresponding budget lines to cover the costs of any activity related to the exercise of their mandate.

- **GIFTS**

The code of conduct foresees that MEPs shall **refrain from accepting any gifts or similar benefits**, unless they are given in accordance with courtesy and are approximately worth less than EUR 150³.

- Any gift, regardless of its value, that is not solely given in accordance with courtesy **shall be refused**.
- [Specific rules apply](#) to MEPs who are representing Parliament in an official capacity (for example if you participate in an official European Parliament mission). In particular, those gifts shall be declared via the form available [here](#).

- **VIOLATIONS OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

In case of alleged breach of the code of conduct, a request is to be sent to the President of the Parliament asking her/him to ask the advisory committee⁴ for recommendation. The advisory committee is composed of one MEP per political group and it advises the European Parliament President on how to deal with conflicts of interest. The possible sanctions for MEPs range from a reprimand to forfeiture of the daily allowance between 2-10 days, or even suspension or removal from offices held by the MEP.⁵

² Implementing measures concerning implementing measures for the Statute for Members of the European Parliament: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32009D0713%2801%29>

³ idem

⁴ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/transparency>

⁵ Rule 166 of the [Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament](#)

ENSURING FAIR REPRESENTATION OF INTEREST AND PREVENTING ABUSIVE PRACTICES

- **WHICH LOBBYISTS CAN YOU MEET?**

- As a group, we commit to meet **only those lobbyists that are registered in the Transparency register when they fall under its scope.**

If a lobbyist requests a meeting with you without being registered, **you can simply ask this person or organisation to register.** It is a very simple procedure that only takes few minutes - they can simply [fill in the online form here](#)⁶.

- Members of the Greens/EFA Group follow the UN Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (Article 5.3)⁷ by limiting meetings with tobacco lobbyists and refusing them when working on tobacco-related public health policies.
- Members of the Greens/EFA group are committed **to ensure fair and balanced access of interest representatives to EU decision-making processes.**

- **TRANSPARENCY OF LOBBY MEETINGS**

If you are rapporteur, shadow rapporteur or committee chair, **you have the obligation, under the EP Rules of Procedure** to publish online, for each report, your lobby meetings. In addition, according to the EP rules of procedure, all other MEPs “should” publish their meetings. The European Parliament has put in place an online system for listing these meetings on the EP website, which can be accessed here: <http://www.meponly.ep.parl.union.eu/meponly/>

- **As a group, we committed to publish all our lobby meetings, regardless of whether you are rapporteur, shadow or committee chair and regardless of whether the meeting takes place in the context of drafting a report or not.**
- This transparency commitment also applies to foreign government/foreign agent lobbying unless the disclosure of such meetings can put individuals, i.e human rights defenders, political activists etc., in danger.

- **INTERGROUPS, FRIENDSHIP GROUPS OR OTHER INFORMAL GROUPINGS OF MEMBERS**

Members can decide to participate in intergroups, friendship groups or unofficial groupings of Members. Those groupings shall follow transparency rules. They are required to make an official declaration of any support, whether in cash or in kind (e.g. secretarial assistance), which, if offered to Members as individuals, would have had to be declared in the financial interest declaration.

- Members of the Greens/EFA group do not participate in intergroups or unofficial grouping that do not strictly respect transparency rules.
- If you become aware of non-declared support being provided to groupings you participated in, you should declare this support in your own financial interest declarations.

Moreover, be aware that **only interest representatives who are registered in the Transparency register can participate in intergroup or other unofficial grouping activities organised on Parliament’s premises.** This means that if they are not registered, they cannot attend meetings or events of the intergroup or other unofficial grouping, offer support to them or co-host them.

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/ri/registering.do?locale=en>

⁷ UN [Framework Convention on tobacco control](#) and [guidelines for the implementation of Article 5.3](#)

- **WHAT RULES SHALL LOBBYISTS FOLLOW?**

Registered lobbyists have committed to respect a [code of conduct](#)⁸. If you witness a breach of this code of conduct, you should file a complaint to the Secretariat of the Transparency Register following this [link](#).

If you notice that information provided by lobbyists in the register are incorrect, you should send an alert to the same secretariat by following this [link](#).

ENSURING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OUR WORK

- **TRANSPARENCY OF THE GENERAL EXPENDITURE ALLOWANCE**

Greens/EFA members have committed to minimum transparency and accountability rules regarding the use of their general expenditure allowance⁹:

1. The GEA must be handled in a **separate bank account**
2. **Unspent GEA should be returned at the end of each mandate**
3. Spending of the GEA should be accountable and transparent:
 - All receipts should be kept by Greens/EFA MEPs until the end of their mandate, unless there is a legal obligation to keep them for longer (or you can show an extract from your bank statement to corroborate the spending).
 - **An overview of the headline expenditure by category** (e.g. communications costs, office rental, office supplies, etc.) **should be published at least once a year**, or at the very least be made available upon request.

The Rules of Procedure gives the possibility for Members to publish online an audit or confirmation to show that their use of the General Expenditure Allowance complies with the applicable rules of the Statute for Members and its implementing measures.

- Members of the Greens/EFA group follow our rules on the transparency of the GEA.
- Members of the Greens/EFA group commit to publish an audit or confirmation that their use of the GEA complies with the rules.

- **TRANSPARENCY OF DECISION-MAKING - “LEGISLATIVE FOOTPRINT”**

According to the Code of Conduct for MEPs¹⁰, MEPs may voluntarily list the stakeholders or outside interests that they have consulted with whilst drafting a report.

The Secretariat of your committee should send you a form to list the stakeholders who you consulted with during the drafting of a report if you are nominated as rapporteur, and this list of meetings will be annexed to the report.

- Members of the Greens/EFA group aim to publish a legislative footprint whenever they are appointed shadows. If the secretariat does not proactively provide you with the form, you should request it from them.

⁸ Code of Conduct for MEPs: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+RULES-EP+20180731+ANN-01+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN&navigationBar=YES>

⁹ Greens/EFA GEA Transparency Rules, applicable from 1 July 2018: <https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/document/transparency-of-the-general-expenditure-allowance/>

¹⁰ Code of Conduct for MEPs: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+RULES-EP+20180731+ANN-01+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN&navigationBar=YES>

PROTECTING WHISTLEBLOWERS WITHIN THE GREENS/EFA GROUP

It is important to remember that all staff employed by the European Parliament **are under the obligation to report any instances of wrongdoing** that they witness in the workplace, according to the Staff Regulations.

Under the European Parliament rules, it is possible to report to the President of the Commission, the Court of Auditors, the Council or the European Parliament, as well as to the European Ombudsman. However, in order to be protected, you **must first have alerted your immediate superiors** or OLAF.

Any reprisals against whistle-blowers constitute a ground for disciplinary action, according to the Staff Regulations. The Greens/EFA group has produced internal guidelines to ensure an even stronger protection for whistleblowers that work for our group¹¹. They make it simple **for a Greens/EFA staff member, assistant or MEP to blow the whistle**, should he or she ever come across **wrong-doing within the Greens/EFA group** in the European Parliament.

In the case of group staff, trainee, or a service provider, alerts should be submitted to the Greens/EFA Group Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General, or to immediate superiors.

In the case **of Parliamentary Assistants or service providers for MEPs**, report should be done to other Members, for example the Members that are Heads of the Greens/EFA National Delegations or to another Greens/EFA member on the same Parliamentary Committee. You can also turn to the internal Ombudsman of the Greens/EFA group.

An MEP who wishes to blow the whistle can choose between any of the options presented above.

Whistle-blowers will be protected from reprisal, and their alert will be handled in full confidentiality.

Those receiving a whistle-blower alert, including MEPs, are obliged to:

- **confirm receipt** of the alert **within 5 working days**
- **transmit to OLAF any evidence** of which they have been made aware and inform the whistle-blower once the information has been transmitted to OLAF “without delay”
- **Tell the person** who blew the whistle, **within 60 days**, of the appropriate periods within which they can expect a follow-up.
- **Maintain the anonymity** of the whistle-blower, and of the person accused of misconduct or wrongdoing.

The Group will ensure whistle-blowers are not disadvantaged and do not face reprisal.

In case the whistle-blower is an APA or service provider to an MEP and the wrongdoing reported is so grave that it prevents the continuation of the working relationship with the MEP, the Greens/EFA group will explore all possible options in order to protect APAs who blew the whistle.

- **Members of the Greens/EFA group commit to creating a working culture whereby whistleblowers are thanked and protected for pointing out wrongdoing.**

PREVENTING HARRASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

The group has specific rules on harassment, which you should also refer to before taking up your duties. Your staff should be familiar with the rules and training should be taken by everyone working in the Greens/EFA Group.

¹¹ See Greens/EFA internal whistleblower guidelines: <http://extranet.greens-efa-service.eu/public/media/file/1/6049>