

Lobbying, corruption and lack of transparency in the EU – the dark side of democracy?

Did the code of conduct for MEPs reduce the likelihood of corruption in the EP?

Natacha Cingotti

Friends of the Earth Europe

natacha.cingotti@foeeurope.org



**Friends of
the Earth
Europe**

New code...

○ First ethics code of its kind

- Guiding principles and main duties
- Definition of a conflict of interest:

A situation 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”

- Declaration of outside financial interests
- Guidance on gifts and benefits
- Guidance for former members

○ Advisory committee

○ Possible sanctions

○ But...



**Friends of
the Earth
Europe**

But what kind of code?

○ MEPs' declarations of interest of financial interest, July 2012

- 88 (12%) of the submitted declarations are empty
- 25% MEPs not declaring any occupation prior to taking up their mandate
- 118 MEPs with a remunerated activity outside of their mandate but 19 not declaring how much related income
- One MEP found to have a side job as « master of the universe » with a salary > €10,000...

○ Purpose of the code?

- Code: « ***Any MEP who finds that he or she has a conflict of interest shall immediately take the necessary steps to address it, in accordance with the principles and provisions of this Code of Conduct*** »
- Schulz: « ***The Code of Conduct doesn't interdict conflicts of interest, but seeks to ensure that any actual or potential conflict is declared promptly and transparently*** »

... Old conduct?...

○ Have behaviours changed?

- Completeness and correctness
- Financial interests (the case of stock options)
- Side occupations (lobby groups and law firms)
- Support in MEP staff from industry lobby groups
- Third-party gifts and hospitality

○ Interpretation influences implementation and level of regulation

- Limited implementing measures
- Limited mandate for advisory committee and EP administration capacities
- CoC user's guide vs code of conduct
- Lacking monitoring of declarations, including plausibility
- No central record of declared conflicts of interest
- Potential conflicts of interest?

Where do we go from here?

- **Transparency without accountability is not enough**
- **Strong implementing measures for enforcement**
 - Clarify which situations constitute a conflict of interest
 - No conflict of interest whilst serving as an MEP
 - Right of initiative for advisory committee
 - Toughen up sanctions
- **A matter of citizens' trust: revision of code and implementing measures under new Parliament term!**



**Friends of
the Earth
Europe**