



Green Plan for Transparency and Integrity in the European Parliament

PROPOSALS ON LOBBYING

Mandatory lobby transparency: No registration, no meeting

Lobby transparency: No meetings with unregistered lobbyists

EU Commissioners, Directors-General and their cabinets do not meet unregistered lobbyists because this is their way to incentivise lobbyists to actually sign up to the voluntary Transparency Register. Parliament should follow the Commission's lead: At the very least rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs and Committee Chairs should adopt the systematic practise of meeting only with registered lobbyists. (Rule 205, para 4.1a)



Lobby transparency: MEPs to publish their lobby meetings on Parliament's website

Many Greens/EFA MEPs are already publishing their meetings with lobbyists as part of our commitment to transparency and accountability. We therefore invite other MEPs to also publish their lobby meetings, and we call on Parliament's administration to facilitate this by providing the necessary infrastructure. (Rule 116, para 7a)

Closing the lobby loopholes

More transparency over who funds EU Parliament intergroups (cross-party groups where MEPs often meet lobbyists)

In many of the Parliament's so-called "intergroups", MEPs meet with lobbyists on a regular basis. Parliament's rules oblige intergroups to be transparent about who finances their meetings and activities. Yet many declarations are not up to date. We have proposed obligatory annual updates in order to remedy this (Rule 34, para 2.2) and called on the Parliament Quaestors, who are MEPs elected to the administration, to take responsibility for enforcing intergroup transparency rules. (Rule 34, para 2.3)

No entourage badges for lobbyists

Lobbyists falling into the remit of the EU's Transparency register should be prohibited from getting EP entrance badges that disguise them as part of the "entourage" of an MEP. At the moment there is no safeguard to prevent this back-door entry to the Parliament. (Rule 11, para 5a)

Lobbyists who refuse to appear before the European Parliament lose their entrance badges

Lobbyists who refuse to appear before the European Parliament to speak in a committee without giving a proper reason for it should lose their entrance badges. For example, IKEA declined to speak at the Parliament's special committee on tax rulings in public but then invited the same MEPs to a private lobby meeting. (Rule 11, para 8)

PROPOSALS ON ETHICS

Controlling the Revolving Door for MEPs: integrity after the mandate

Enacting a cooling off period for MEPs

Depending on how long MEPs served they receive a transitional allowance for 6-24 months after their mandate, no strings attached. During this period they should at least be prohibited from taking up work as a lobbyist. They should have to notify any new job to the Parliament and the Advisory Committee (on the Code of Conduct for MEPs) should check if it violates this rule. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 6, para 1)



Integrity with teeth: fixing Parliament's Ethics Committee

More teeth for the decisions of the advisory committee

To date, the Advisory Committee has recommended sanctions for MEPs on 11 occasions. The Parliament's President rejected all of them. Since all investigations happen behind closed doors, the President doesn't have to justify his decisions to anyone. We want to change this so that the Parliament President is obliged to be transparent if he or she does not apply a recommended sanction. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 8). We also want to rename the Advisory Committee to "Ethics Committee" to express the stronger role we want for it. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 7)

Scrutiny by external experts, free of conflicts of interest

At present, the ethical Advisory Committee is composed of MEPs who are handpicked by the President of the Parliament. In order to avoid this obvious conflict of interest, external experts should be appointed instead. They should be chosen after an open call based on their qualification as a judge, auditor and/or anti-corruption expert; and this selection should be done by all political groups in the Parliament bureau, not just by the President alone. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 7)

Own-initiative powers of investigation

So far the Advisory Committee only scrutinises MEPs if the President asks them to do so. This should be changed so that the Committee can act on its own initiative. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 7 and Rule 8)

Pro-active checks on MEP's declarations of interest

At the moment the Advisory Committee checks the declarations of interest only when they get alerts from the public and are allowed to do so by the president. They should instead pro-actively check an annual sample of at least a quarter of MEPs' declarations for completeness and understandability. If necessary they should have access to additional documents. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 7)

Accepting complaints from citizens

As long as a complaint is substantiated by facts, anyone should be able to address them directly to the Advisory Committee without having to go through the office of the Parliament's president. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 8)

Better defining conflicts of interest

An expensive lobby invitation abroad, well-paid advice for a big company: MEPs might not know what constitutes a conflict of interest. The Committee should provide a better definition of conflicts of interest, including a transparent list of examples to guide MEPs. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 7)

Systematic screening of shadow rapporteurs for conflicts of interest

Rapporteurs for a dossier in Parliament lose their function in case they breach the code of conduct, for example because of a conflict of interest. We want to extend this rule to include also shadow rapporteurs since they have nearly the same influence as the main rapporteur but so far face no scrutiny. (Rule 21, para 2)

No financial ties between MEPs and lobbyists

Ban lobby side jobs for MEPs

MEPs are already forbidden to accept cash or similar incentives for voting a certain way or influencing the decision-making process. However, side-jobs are still allowed. We want to make sure that MEPs are banned from having second jobs where they also act as a lobbyist for specific interest groups. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 2, para 1.1b)

Proper transparency about other MEPs' side jobs

MEPs have to declare all their side jobs to allow their peers and the public to judge if they might have conflicts of interest. Yet some only declare to work as consultant or lawyer without naming their clients. This is a loophole that we think should be closed. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 4, para 3)

No external financing of MEP staff

There should be a clear ban on external money being used to finance MEPs' staff, as this creates a clear and serious risk of a conflict of interest. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 2, para 1.b)

MEPs to declare property and debts, not just side income

Just like in France, the UK and other countries, MEPs should make transparent also what they own or owe, not just what they earn. MEPs should therefore declare their property, debts and liabilities. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 4, para 2.1)

Rapporteurs and Committee Chairs to state their independence when taking up their role

Rapporteurs and Committee Chairs have key influence over Parliament's decision making. They are supposed to be free of conflicts of interest yet this is hardly ever checked. To strengthen scrutiny, they should sign a declaration of independence before starting their special roles. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 4)

No payments for speeches, articles or extra functions of MEPs

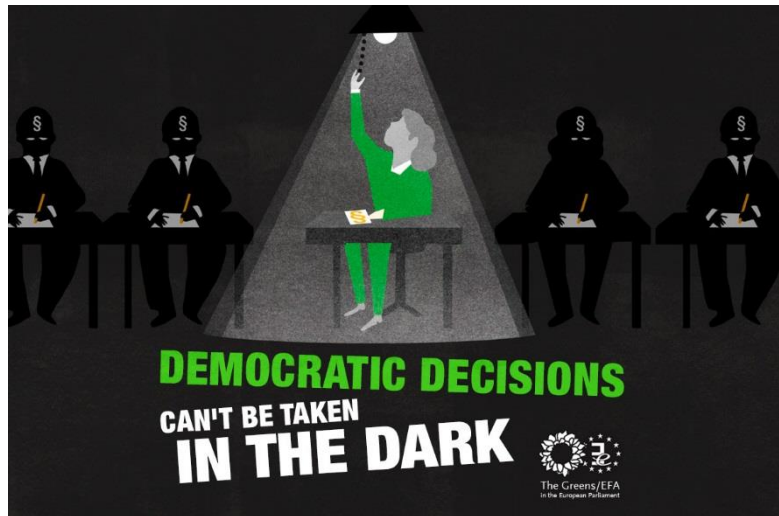
To further strengthen existing anti-corruption rules the ban on MEPs accepting extra money should also include speeches, articles or appearances, because these are activities that are part of a MEP's job and they should need no extra remuneration. Similarly, serving on a board of an association, corporation or similar should not be a reason for any payments. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 2 para 1.1b)

PROPOSALS ON TRANSPARENCY

Legislative footprint: showing who influenced what

Legislative footprint as a rule, at least for rapporteurs and committee chairs

Legislative footprints are lists of interest representatives who have been consulted while drafting a report. MEPs can already list these influencers on a voluntary basis, but we want it to become a rule. At the very least, rapporteurs and committee chairs should be covered by this obligation, because of their key roles in the legislative process. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 4)



Legislative footprint: include written input by lobbyists

Rapporteurs and Committee chairs receive plenty of lobbying on what they should write into EU laws. The public should know where the content of their laws come from. Therefore all written input to rapporteurs and committee chairs should be collected and disclosed by Parliament. (Rule 205, para 4.1b)

MEPs should say where their amendments come from on all reports, not just legislative ones

Some amendments tabled by MEPs are originally drafted or inspired by lobbyists. This is legitimate but the sources behind those amendments should be public. Present rules do not allow MEPs to add justifications behind their amendments to all reports, so we propose that the current limitation to only legislative reports should be dropped. (Rule 169, para 1.3)

Reconnecting to citizens: Transparency has to be understandable

Full transparency about MEPs' side income: without upper ceilings or brackets

MEPs already have to declare their side incomes but only in broad, vague bandwidths. Like in France and other countries, MEPs should declare their exact side incomes instead. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 4, para 2.2)

Declarations of interest to be improved

Declarations of interest should no longer be submitted in handwritten form: this makes them impossible to read and to analyse properly, let alone to make any transparency apps or other online scrutiny tools. Language barriers are also a problem: declarations should be translated at least into English, French and German, thus striking the right balance between access and translation costs. (Code of Conduct for MEPs, Rule 4, para 3)

Transparency for agenda-setting in committees

Some decisions within the Parliament are not made in the open but only by those who set the agenda. Committee coordinators are decisive in these agenda decisions, which is why we believe that the minutes of their meetings should be public and then made available in all official languages. (Rule 205, 2a)

Supporters of amendments in plenary should be transparent

Amendments in the European Parliament's plenary can be submitted by Committees and by Political Groups yet also by 40 individual MEPs. However, the names of the MEPs are not public - this needs to change. (Rule 169, para 1.1)

Trilogue transparency: shedding light onto how legislation is negotiated

Trilogue transparency: Parliament to publish updates on legislative negotiations

Trilogues are informal meetings between Parliament, Council and Commission representatives and they happen behind closed doors, despite their decisive role in legislation. Committee Chairs should publish documents reflecting the outcome of each meeting proactively. (Rule 73, para 4.2). It should be clear that trilogue documents should be just as accessible as other documents related to the legislative process: transparency should be the rule and secrecy the exception. (Rule 116, para 2.1 and para 3.1)

PROPOSALS ON PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT

Strengthening minority rights

Limit big groups' veto against committees of inquiry

Although in many Parliaments setting up an inquiry committee is a right granted to the opposition, in the European Parliament any such decision has to pass through the conference of group presidents. This effectively gives the big groups the power to stop or weaken any inquiry that might go against their interests. Instead, Parliament should be able to vote on a proposal to initiate an inquiry committee directly, without having to go first via the political groups' leadership. (Rule 198, para 3)

Strengthening Parliament: getting serious by following up on decisions

Keeping tabs on how Parliament's recommendations are applied

Parliament regularly calls on the Commission, Council and Member States to take specific actions or to deliver certain policies. Too often nothing happens because we do not follow up enough on our own decisions. A register on the demands made by Parliament including information on how they are followed up can strengthen the pressure for action and add to the EU Parliament's limited rights. (Rule 25, para 12a)