

## **FIXING A BROKEN ETHICS SYSTEM IN FIVE SIMPLE STEPS**

### **Greens/EFA Proposals to improve the EU Commission and EU Parliament's ethics systems**

The Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament is getting increasingly tired of the endless scandals that have recently been rocking the Commission. As a group that believes in the potential of a shared EU project for combatting climate change and fighting for a fairer economic system, we are deeply concerned about the crisis of legitimacy that the European Union is suffering from. So, here we present 5 steps for the Commission and 5 steps for the European Parliament on how they can fix their broken ethics systems:

#### **SORTING OUT ETHICS IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION:**

##### **1. The top priority is to fix the revolving doors policy**

- For incoming Commissioners, this should mean a thorough scanning of their previous roles in business and other organisations: currently these have to be declared but there are insufficient resources to check if they are all complete and all true.
- For outgoing Commissioners, the current rules only include an 18 month cooling off period for Commissioners. These should be extended to at least three years and should also take into account other potential conflicts related to a Commissioner's role as part of the college of Commissioners.

##### **2. The Commission should improve the Declarations of Interest**

- The Commission should remove the possibility for Commissioners to decide themselves which of their financial interests or assets “might create a conflict of interests in the performance of their duties”. They should therefore be obliged to provide exact information about all their assets and financial interests as well as their debts and liabilities.
- Commissioners should be obliged to declare more information about their family interests, including spouses and close relatives.
- Declarations of Interest should be thoroughly screened and regularly updated, and Commissioners should be obliged to provide extra proof or evidence if required.

##### **3. The Commission should revamp its Ethics Committee**

- This ethical committee should be given the powers to initiate inquiries on its own and on any matter relating to Commissioners' ethics. It should make public recommendations regarding the Code of Conduct. It should be composed of independent experts selected in a transparent procedure.

##### **4. The sanctions system for non-ethical behaviour should be strengthened**

- The current sanctions system is ill equipped to deal with the different degrees of ethics violations. A procedure should be put in place for sanctioning Commissioners who fail to report potential conflicts of interest. New sanctions should be introduced, including fines (like in the Canadian system) and clear divestment requirements. Sanctions should also be made public.

##### **5. The European Parliament should have better scrutiny over Commissioners' ethics**

- As the case of Commissioner Cañete made clear, there need to be procedures in place for potential conflicts of interest of a Commissioner to be screened during their term in office, and not only when they apply as a candidate.

## QUICK OVERVIEW OF MOST RECENT COMMISSION ETHICS SCANDALS

Miguel Arias Cañete	José Manuel Barroso	Neelie Kroes
		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- His wife was named in the Panama Papers</li> <li>- He was accused of involvement in corruption scandals in Spain</li> <li>- He owned shares in oil sector companies when he was a candidate for Climate Commissioner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- He moved through the revolving door to work for Goldman Sachs after leaving the Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- She was named as a Company Director in the Bahama leaks...</li> <li>- ...But she did not declare this when she was Commissioner</li> <li>- She moved through the revolving door to work for Uber after leaving the Commission</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shows that better procedures for eradicating conflicts of interest are required</b></p>	<p><b>Shows that tougher rules on the revolving door are urgently required</b></p>	<p><b>Shows that tougher checks on the Declarations of Interest are required</b></p>

## SORTING OUT ETHICS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

### 1. Stop lobby jobs and side-jobs!

- Members of the European Parliament should be prohibited from engaging in lobbying activities, whether paid or unpaid.
- There should be far greater scrutiny over the second jobs of MEPs in order to avoid any potential conflicts of interest: for example, MEPs acting as lawyers or consultants should be obliged to state who their clients are.

### 2. Control the revolving door

- Members of the European Parliament should be covered by a cooling off period that prohibits them from taking on lobby jobs or other jobs that might cause a risk of a conflict of interest.

### 3. Improve the Declarations of Interest

- Members of the European Parliament should be required to declare the exact amounts of any additional income earned and they should also begin to declare any properties and debts as well. Declarations of Interest should be submitted in an electronic format and screened for accuracy.

### 4. Fix the European Parliament ethical committee

- The ethical committee should be composed of independent external experts, and its powers should be extended so that can initiate its own inquiries into ethics issues in the European Parliament. It should proactively check MEP's Declarations of Interest. Its recommendations on ethics issues should be made public.

### 5. Publish lobby meetings and legislative footprints

- MEPs should use the [lobbycalendar](#) system (a [free, open source software](#)) to publish information about their meetings with interest groups. They should also publish the sources behind their amendments and the written input received from lobbyists when working on EU legislation. \*\*\*\*