



## Policy making: Constitutional Affairs Committee welcomes new "transparency" register

Committees: Committee on Constitutional Affairs

The joint EU "transparency" register of those wishing to contribute to the EU policy-making process, which Parliament and the Commission have agreed will replace the so-called "lobby" register, was welcomed by Constitutional Affairs Committee MEPs on Tuesday. MEPs called on the Council to join the register too, and stressed that registration should eventually be made mandatory. The new register should be available on line in June 2011.

"With the new register, our citizens can have more trust in the decision-making process", said Parliament's Vice-President Diana Wallis (ALDE, UK), presenting it to the committee. MEPs nonetheless wanted to know why registration is voluntary, not mandatory.

"Real progress has been made here, but there are some things that puzzle me. Our own preference is to have a mandatory register, but will we have the power to enforce it?" asked Andrew Duff (ALDE, UK). Ms Wallis replied that the "ultimate goal is to have a mandatory register."

### MEPs call on Council to join the register

In discussion, many MEPs felt that the joint register should also include anyone lobbying the Council of Ministers. "It would send a good signal to the citizens if we had a mandatory system which included all three institutions", argued Mathias Grootte (S&D, DE) argued. Ms Wallis replied that the discussions were still in progress, and that "by June, we might be able to have a joint register which includes all three institutions."

### Registration required for those involved in the policy-making process

The register covers all activities carried out with the aim of influencing the decision-making processes of the EU institutions. For example, anyone from the media, think-tanks, companies, contractors or grass-root initiatives who enter the institutions is invited to register. Long-term access cards to Parliament's buildings will only be issued to organizations or individuals who have been registered.

On the registration of churches and lawyers, which was a particular issue in the negotiations on the new rules between Parliament and Commission, the agreement says that lawyers need not register when they are providing legal or other professional advice to a client, and that churches as such do not need to register, although the institutions and networks representing them are expected to do so.

### Financial information and code of conduct

By registering, organizations agree to publish not only basic information, but also information on their activities in the EU institutions, as well as financial figures on activities falling within the scope of the register. At the same time, they agree to act in compliance with the code of conduct of the EU institutions. If European Parliament access badges are misused, or used in a way that does not comply with the code of conduct, then they may be withdrawn for a certain period of time.

### Aim of the register

The aim of the new joint transparency register is to offer a "one-stop shop", both to registering organizations and to all citizens wishing to know who is engaged in such activities. In this way, people can see full range of stakeholders who contribute to EU decision-making discussions and policy implementation.

# Press release

## **Next steps**

Parliament's rapporteur on the issue is Carlo Casini (EPP, IT). The Constitutional Affairs Committee is expected to vote on the transparency register in April, and the plenary in May. If adopted, the register should be up and running in June 2011.

*In the chair: Carlo CASINI (EPP, IT)*

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