



Transparency



Posted by: Transparency International



2014 Anti-Corruption Pledge

Blog Posts Related to this Issue:

- [When principles struggle to find their way into actions](#)
-

Before the European Parliament (EP) elections in 2014, Transparency International (TI EU) invited candidates to sign up to the [Anti-Corruption Pledge 2014](#) committing to advance the anti-corruption agenda and to adhere to integrity and transparency standards in their functions as politicians. The Pledge included commitments in the three areas of (1) legislative transparency, (2) EU open budgets & procurement and (3) whistleblower protection:

(1) The governance and law-making of EU institutions will become a global model of transparency, accountability and integrity, establishing the highest standards. I/we commit to upholding both the letter and spirit of the Code of Conduct for MEPs and will **publish a 'legislative footprint'** that will be attached to any report that I am responsible for drafting in my office.

(2) The EU will promote greater integrity and transparency in public spending. It will **ensure that all information on EU funds is published** in a manner that is easily accessible and usable by citizens, for example by conforming to open data principles. **EU public procurement rules will take account of open contracting principles** and have effective methods to deal with conflicts of interest. This applies to spending by EU and national bodies.

(3) The EU will **promote initiatives and legislation that will provide effective protection to whistleblowers** in the public, private and non-profit sectors. With the support of many of our chapters across the EU signatures were gathered from 502 candidates, out of which 174 were elected into the European Parliament.

EU Policy Background

The Pledge was drafted in 2014 shortly before the EP elections. A number of high profile corruption and conflict of interests cases had shaken the EU institutions involving senior decision-makers, from the Cash-for-Amendments scandal at the European Parliament to the affair surrounding European Commissioner Dalli. As a consequence, both citizens and civil society organisations were demanding a reform of the EU governance framework allowing for more transparency and democratic accountability as well as a stronger ethics framework. With the start of the new mandate, a number of new political initiatives relating to the aforementioned three different policy fields subject to the pledge in this regard were launched in the EP:

The Pledge was drafted in 2014 shortly before the EP elections. A number of high profile corruption and conflict of interests cases had shaken the EU institutions involving senior decision-makers, from the **Cash-for-Amendments scandal** at the European Parliament to the **affair** surrounding European Commissioner Dalli. As a consequence, both citizens and civil society organisations were demanding a reform of the EU governance framework allowing for more transparency and democratic accountability as well as a stronger ethics framework. With the start of the new mandate, a number of new political initiatives relating to the aforementioned three different policy fields subject to the pledge in this regard were launched in the EP:

areas subject to the pledge in this regard were identified in the EP.

(1a) Reforming the Parliament's Rules of Procedure, including the Code of Conduct for members of Parliament

Potentially reviewing conflict of interest policies for MEPs

(1b) Making EU lobbying transparent by

Introducing a 'legislative footprint' (i.e. annex of lobby organizations influencing an EP report, and record of meetings with lobbyists)

Making the Transparency Register, the joint EU lobby register, as mandatory as possible for all EU lobbyists to sign up to and provide full and meaningful information

(2) Opening up the EU budget and spending to public scrutiny by:

Promoting open contracting standards in EU public procurement and open budgeting principles

(3) Protecting and supporting whistleblowers by

Promoting initiatives and legislation that will provide effective protection to whistleblowers

Providing guidance and support to whistleblowers

As part of the "On Our Watch" project, TI EU has reviewed some of these key process in the EP and the follow-up to the pledge. For this purpose, we will stick to the basic structure of the pledge looking into the policy areas separately. TI EU contacted all 174 MEPs via mail to ask Members whether or not they had published their lobby meetings and used the possibility to publish a legislative footprint in the past or were willing to do so in the future. These two aspects pertain to the first area of commitments and are easily assessable as part of a quick survey. As of now 44 Members provided feedback.

This by no means prejudices the work and achievements in the other areas, which do not lend themselves in the same way to a quantitative assessment yet. Initiatives and reports are underway that could bring about change in the areas of open budgets, open contracting and whistleblower protection, but it is too early to assess the progress that might be achieved by these initiatives. The status of the reform processes will be updated continuously on this website.

Key Processes

(1a) Reform of the EP Code of Conduct and ethics regime

Following the Cash-for-Amendments scandal in 2011 and the introduction of the Code of Conduct in 2012 the time has come to review the ethics regime in the European Parliament. Since the introduction of the Code of Conduct there have been 12 violations, but not a single case has ever been sanctioned. Progress has been made in terms of making outside activities and incomes of members transparent, but a significant number still publish generic activities such as “lawyer”, “consultant” or “freelancer” and the broad income categories do not allow detailed publication of incomes. A Parliament that is free of conflicts of interest and undue influence is a core component of European democracy and an important building block of the EU Institutions being free of corruption, transparent and trusted by EU citizens.

Key processes in the European Parliament

The European Parliament is currently looking into reforming its ethics regime. Several points on these issues are covered in the own initiative report of rapporteur Sven Giegold. At the same time, the EP is undergoing a revision of its rules of procedure and the Code of Conduct for members of Parliament. The Constitutional Affairs Committee of the Parliament (AFCO) had established a working group to reform the Rules of Procedure (to which the Code of Conduct is attached) with MEP Richard Corbett as rapporteur for the resulting report.

In this context, TI has advocated specifically to prohibit work as lobbyist for sitting MEPs, and an introduction of a ‘cooling-off period’ after leaving office.

Another priority has been to advocate for more detailed information on outside activities and incomes to allow effective monitoring of potential conflicts of interest. In addition, TI EU has pushed to make the oversight body (Advisory Committee) more independent, being able to initiate inquiries and to sanction members in case of violation of the Code.

The two following reports have been discussed in the EP :

[The own-initiative report of Sven Giegold on Transparency, accountability and integrity in the EU institutions 2015/2041\(INI\)](#)

[Richard Corbett's report on the General Revision of Parliament's Rules of Procedure 2016/2114\(REG\)](#)

Read more on the 'revolving door' between the EU institutions and lobbying here:

[3 ways MEPs can fiddle expenses](#)

(1b) Making EU lobbying transparent

Lobbying activities at the EU level need to be made more transparent. Over 10,000 lobbying entities are registered in the voluntary EU Transparency Register seeking to influence EU legislation. The undue influence of corporate lobbying and a lack of transparency of the law-making process (e.g. secret negotiations between the main EU institutions known as 'trilogues', international negotiations such as the EU-US free trade talks) have been widely identified as core problems of the Brussels policy machinery. The fear that public policy-making is captured by corporate interests has contributed to rising euro-scepticism and a growing public perception of the EU institutions as corrupt. For this it is crucial for transparent EU decision-making that their goals and workings are made transparent.

A mandatory joint register for the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of Ministers, in which every EU lobbyist has to register, is an essential tool to prevent undue influence and to strengthen EU citizens' trust in European institutions.

Additionally, TI EU has advocated for years to **introduce a so-called “legislative footprint”** for EU policy-makers to make public which actors have approached and influenced them. This can be done by publishing the meetings with lobbyists or attaching a list of lobbyists who have been consulted to a report, or disclosing written input from them.

The European Commission under President Jean-Claude Juncker has made strong commitments to increased transparency. Since 1 December 2014 Commissioners, their Cabinets and Director-Generals publish their meetings and only meet with lobbyists registered in the EU Transparency Register. Moreover, these meetings are made public on the Commission website. In a communication from the President to the Commission on the Working Methods of the European Commission 2014 – 2019, the Commission also pledged to “ensure an appropriate balance and representativeness in the stakeholders they meet”.

Key processes in the European Parliament

The EP has participated in the current voluntary register since 2011. As part of the reform process, the EP had to come up with its own position on reforming the Register and its contribution to the mandatory nature. The following initiatives touch on elements outlined in the pledge and are currently work in progress or recently adopted by the EP:

[The own-initiative report of Sven Giegold on Transparency, accountability and integrity in the EU institutions 2015/2041\(INI\)](#)

[Discharge 2015: General budget of the EU – European Commission 2016/2151\(DEC\)](#)

[Discharge 2015: General budget of the EU – European Parliament 2016/2152\(DEC\)](#)

In June 2016, the European Parliament also adopted a “legislative footprint” template that MEPs can annex to their reports. This remains voluntary and “non-exhaustive”. But all rapporteurs can now attach this to their draft and update the list of meetings before the vote. Before the formal adoption by the

update the list of meetings before the vote. Before the formal adoption by the Bureau, it was already possible to do this on an ad-hoc basis.

The EU Commission published its proposal for a mandatory EU Transparency Register on 28 September 2016. In the months to come, the reform process continues with negotiations between the three institutions involved.

Transparency International has advocated in this context for putting in place an effective system to motivate all organisations influencing EU decision-making to sign up to the EU Transparency Register, ensuring that the new Transparency Register covers all EU institutions involved in the political decision-making process: including the Council, and designing a robust system with better legal definitions, monitoring procedures and an enforcement mechanism with sanctions.

To reduce bureaucratic burden for MEPs offices in publishing their meetings, Transparency International has worked together with other organizations to launch a new online tool, [LobbyCal](#), which allows to export meetings from MEPs calendar to their website automatically. Meetings between MEPs and lobbyists will be published in a database that is open to all. The tool is open software and free to use for all MEPs interested. This allows all citizens to see who their representatives are meeting with and what they talk about with outside stakeholders. This also allows MEPs themselves to get a better overview over their stakeholder meetings to ensure a proportional and balanced access for all stakeholders.

For more information on the links between MEPs and lobbyists, please see our work here:

[Who is your MEP meeting with?](#)

[How many lobbyists are there Brussels?](#)

[Inside Job: When MEPs are lobbyists](#)

(2) Greater integrity and transparency in public spending

Openness and transparency can act as a disincentive to corruption. The

current lack of open budget and open transaction data makes it very hard for citizens and other stakeholders to get an overview on public spending. The comparison of budgets between administrative regions and other government levels proves even more difficult.

TI EU has joined the [OpenBudgets.eu](#) consortium, which aims to advocate for more transparent and open public budget and spending data, as well as provide a platform designed for public administrations, citizens, NGOs, media organisations, working with fiscal data.

For more on MEP integrity, please see our work here:

[An in-depth look at the European Parliament's new ethics package](#)

[We need to talk about MEPs' expenses](#)

[3 ways MEPs can fiddle expenses](#)

(3) Protecting and supporting whistleblowers

A key challenge in preventing and fighting corruption is to detect and expose bribery, fraud, theft of public funds and maladministration. To expose such acts it often takes an insider to blow the whistle. Unfortunately, whistleblowers commonly face retaliation in the form of harassment, firing, blacklisting, threats and even physical violence, and their disclosures are routinely ignored.

To help to ensure that whistleblowers are adequately protected from reprisals, and to provide them with easy-to-access avenues to make their disclosures, Transparency International is engaged in a wide range of advocacy, public awareness and research activities all around the world.

At Transparency International EU we are working to increase protections of EU institutional whistleblower protection rules. We had repeatedly pointed out the inadequate implementation of the EU staff regulation in many EU institutions and the remaining problems with adequate protection. In the case of the European Parliament, guidelines were finally adopted in the beginning

of 2016, but they still fail to provide adequate measures for the special working relationship that accredited assistants have with members. We are also currently advocating for the Commission to come forward with a proposal for an EU directive on whistleblower protection.

Key processes in the European Parliament

The following initiatives, touching on elements outlined in the pledge are currently work in progress or recently adopted by the EP:

[JURI Own-initiative report on Legitimate measures to protect whistle-blowers acting in the public interest when disclosing the confidential information of companies and public bodies 2016/2224\(INI\)](#)

[Discharge 2015: General budget of the EU – European Commission 2016/2151\(DEC\)](#)

[Discharge 2015: General budget of the EU – European Parliament 2016/2152\(DEC\)](#)

[CONT report on Role of whistle-blowers in the protection of EU's financial interests](#)

For more on whistleblower protection in the EU, please see our work here:

[Fear of speaking out against corruption shows need for EU whistleblower law](#)

[New whistleblowing rules in the European Parliament fail to protect staff](#)

[Transparency International EU](#) (TI EU) aims to prevent corruption and promote integrity, transparency and accountability in the EU institutions as well as in EU policies, programmes and legislation. TI EU is part of the global [Transparency International](#) movement, the leading civil society organisation in the fight against corruption around the world. TI EU works in close cooperation with the International Secretariat in Berlin and national chapters in over 100 countries around the world, including 25 in the 28 Member States

in over 100 countries around the world, including 25 in the 28 Member States of the European Union.

In 2014, we published a comprehensive assessment of the transparency, accountability and integrity of the main political institutions – the “[EU Integrity System report](#)” – and launched [EU Integrity Watch](#), which provides detailed information on the outside activities and incomes of Members of the European Parliament, which was lately be updated to contain the 12,000 high-level meetings of EU Commission officials and lobbyists and information about EU lobby organisations from the Transparency Register. In 2015, Transparency International published the comprehensive [Lobbying in Europe](#) report providing a ranking of the 19 countries and 3 EU institutions in regard to the robustness of lobby regulation.

The long-term goal is ensure that decisions made by the European Institutions are in the public interest and, as far as possible, free from distortions as a result of conflicts of interests, corruption or undue influence by private interests. This requires both a **robust integrity/ethics framework** as well as **active monitoring** by civil society, journalists and other concerned citizens.

Links for futher reading

transparency.eu/priority/eu-money-politics

integritywatch.eu

Publication: ‘Lobbying in Europe’

2014 Report: EU Integrity System

openbudgets.eu

anticorruptionpledge.eu

How to Install LobbyCal
