



Brussels, 12th February 2013

EU Citizens project: presentation of the results of a TNS opinion public survey on transparency and ethics

Dear President Barroso,

Please find enclosed the results of a public opinion survey on transparency, lobbying and ethics in the European Union. The survey, commissioned by the EU Citizens project partners (Access Info Europe, Aitec, Environmental Law Service, Friends of the Earth Europe, Health Action International, Spinwatch)¹ with the support of the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour (AK Europa), was conducted by TNS opinion in six European countries – Austria, Czech Republic, France, The Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom.

The opinion poll looked at three aspects: lobbying transparency, access to EU documents, and ethics for Parliamentarians. The results reveal that a vast majority of respondents support more openness and tighter transparency and ethics rules. For instance:

- 80% of the citizens surveyed believe that there should be mandatory regulation of lobbying to ensure a balanced participation of different interests in decision-making.
- 73% of the respondents are concerned that lobbyists representing the business sector have too much influence on EU decisions.
- 85% of respondents think that full information about Member States' negotiations should be open to the public.
- 84% of people find it important that full documentation about what the European Central Bank is doing is publicly available.
- 80% of the Citizens polled said they feel less confident that an MEP represents the best interests of citizens if they also work for a lobby group or private company.

The EU Citizens partners call on you, President Barroso, as the President of the European Commission to take steps to make sure that citizens' demands for more transparency are heard. In particular, we would like to encourage you to:

- Ensure the upcoming review of the Transparency Register is conducted in the most open and democratic way, fully involving the European Parliament, citizens and civil society, and taking into account the European Parliament position in favour of a mandatory register with names of lobbyists;

¹ More information about the project can be found at: www.eu-citizens.org. The full survey results, including country-by-country tables, can be found at: <http://www.eu-citizens.org/noticia10.php>



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- Ensure that strong implementing measures are introduced for the Ethics Code of the European Parliament and that conflicts of interest are avoided or addressed;
- Ensure that citizens' right to access EU documents is fully respected and that information about the EU's decision-making process is made available in a timely and proactive manner to enable citizen participation.

We hope that this survey will be useful and we remain fully available to provide you with any further clarification or information that you might need.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

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On behalf of the project partners and the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour (AK Europa)
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Briefing Paper

February 2013

EU Citizens opinion survey on transparency, ethics, and lobbying in the EU

Introduction

As part of the EU Citizens¹ project, Friends of the Earth Europe, Access Info Europe, Aitec, Environmental Law Service, Health Action International and Spinwatch, with the support of the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour (AK Europa), commissioned a public opinion poll on transparency, ethics and lobbying in the European Union (EU). The survey was conducted by TNS opinion² in six European countries – Austria, Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom – over 6,000 people in the second half of January 2013. The survey asked respondents about the following aspects: lobbying transparency, access to EU documents, and parliamentary ethics. For each of these aspects, four statements were tested among respondents, either asking about the degree of agreement or the degree of importance of an issue.

Main findings

Lobbying transparency

- 70% think that it is widely known that lobbyists have a strong influence on EU policy-making.
- Almost three quarters of the respondents (73%) declared being concerned that lobbyists representing the business sector have too much influence on EU decisions.
- 77% think that lobbying by business representatives can result in policies that may not be in the public interest.
- 80% believe there should be mandatory regulation of lobbying to ensure a balanced participation of different interests in decision-making.

Access to EU documents

- 85% think that full information about member States' negotiations should be open to the public.
- 84% find it important that full documentation from the European Central Bank about what it is doing in response to the financial crisis is publicly available.
- 86% find it important that detailed financial reports and evaluations on how EU money is spent by Member States is made publicly available.

Parliamentary ethics

- 80% declare they feel less confident that a MEP represents the best interests of citizens if they also work for a lobby group or a private company.
- 82% think that it can be a conflict of interest if a MEP works for a lobby group or a private company.
- 67% think that MEPs should not be allowed to work for a lobby group or a private company while they are serving as elected representatives.
- 69% think that being a MEP is a full-time job, which does not leave time for any other employment.

¹ <http://www.eu-citizens.org/>

² <http://www.tns-opinion.com/>

Policy recommendations

- **Lobbying transparency: to the European Commission and the European Parliament**
 - Ensure the upcoming review of the Transparency Register is conducted in the most open and democratic way, fully involving the European Parliament and reflecting its position in favour of a mandatory register;
 - Use the upcoming review of the Transparency Register to create a fully operational tool by:
 - o Initiating the transition towards a fully mandatory register by 2015;
 - o Improving the quality of the information contained in the register, including by executing regular spot checks of the information provided and by fully investigating and resolving external complaints of under-reporting;
 - Promote greater lobbying transparency by committing to only meet with registered lobbyists.

- **Right to access to EU documents: to all EU institutions**
 - Ensure that the existing regulation on access to EU documents (Regulation 1049/2001) is respected;
 - Guarantee that citizens' fundamental right of access to EU documents is upheld by responding to requests in a timely and complete manner and by granting partial access if full disclosure is not possible.
 - Denounce legislative proposals that would have the effect of restricting the right of access to EU documents during the ongoing negotiations between the European Commission, Parliament and Council over the reform of the EU access to documents Regulation 1049/2001.

- **Parliamentary ethics:**

To President Schulz

- Initiate a review to assess potential conflicts of interest for MEPs that have outside financial interests;
- Extend the mandate of the advisory committee to a proactive monitoring and investigative role, so that it can undertake random checks of the declarations and investigate any potential conflict of interest.

To the working group on the implementing rules of the code of conduct

- Introduce clarifications about what constitutes a conflict of interest by establishing a list of clear criteria. Activities that constitute a conflict of interest should include the following:
 - o Any paid or unpaid activity of interest representation, as defined in the joint Transparency Register, for lobby consultancies or industry groups or any other lobby actor;
 - o Any paid or unpaid position in the advisory or supervisory board of companies operating in fields that MEPs are likely to regulate or companies with an interest in influencing the European Parliament;
 - o Any type of holding (including shares and stock options) or other financial interest in companies operating in fields that MEPs are likely to regulate or with an interest in influencing the European Parliament.

The complete results of the survey, presented by country and in total, can be downloaded here:
<http://www.eu-citizens.org/noticia10.php>



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