Opening the windows: Commission commits to enhanced transparency

Strasbourg, 25 November 2014

The European Commission today gave a boost to transparency by committing to publishing information about who meets its political leaders and senior officials and to providing greater access to documents relating to the negotiations for a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with the United States. In its very first weeks in office, the Juncker Commission is making good on the President's promise of a more open and transparent Commission, signalling a new approach for the next five years.

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said: "We could do the best possible work but it will be worth nothing if we do not earn the support and trust of the citizens we are working for. So let us be more transparent, because in fact we have nothing to hide. Let us show that this time it really is different and that together we are able to really change and renew Europe."

Transparency of meetings

The Commission agreed on a common set of rules that will apply to Commissioners, their Cabinets, and the Directors-General of the Commission services. From 1 December, the Commission will, within two weeks of each meeting, publish on its website the dates, locations, names of the organisations and self-employed individuals met and the topics of discussion of its bilateral meetings.

European Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans said: "For people to regain trust in Europe, we have to open the windows wide and be more transparent about the way we work. It is just as important to enable citizens to know who we meet and why, as it is for the Commission to maintain an open and regular dialogue with stakeholders. The Commission intends to lead by example on transparency matters."

The new rules adopted today are set out in two Commission Decisions, one covering the Commissioners and their Cabinet Members and a second covering Directors-General. Both will take effect as of 1 December 2014. Today's move will be followed, in 2015, by a Commission proposal for an interinstitutional agreement with the European Parliament and the Council to create a mandatory register for lobbyists covering all three institutions.

Enhanced transparency in TTIP

The Commission also adopted a Communication from Commissioner Malmström outlining how more transparency will be injected into the negotiations on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). The Commission considers it vital to ensure that the general public has accurate and full information of the EU's intentions in the negotiations, to address the concerns and to evacuate misperceptions.

"We want to consult even more extensively on TTIP," said Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström, "and be even more transparent, so we can show clearly what the negotiations are about and de-mystify them. We'll use this as a basis to engage further with stakeholders and the public."

Actions put forth by the Commission to enhance transparency in the TTIP negotiations include:

- making public more EU negotiating texts that the Commission already shares with Member States and Parliament;
- providing access to TTIP texts to all Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), not just a select few, by extending the use of a 'reading room' to those MEPs who had no access to restricted documents so far;
- classifying less TTIP negotiating documents as "EU restricted", making them more easily accessible to MEPs outside the reading room;
- publishing and updating on a regular basis a public list of TTIP documents shared with the
Background

On 15 July 2014, President Juncker presented his Political Guidelines to the European Parliament and pledged enhanced transparency when it comes to contacts with stakeholders and lobbyists, saying: "I would like ordinary people in Europe to know who has been to see who, and who has spoken to whom, and I would like the other institutions to follow suit."

In his speech before the European Parliament on 15 July, President Juncker also committed to operating transparently in the TTIP negotiations, saying "Let us not give the impression that we are not being upfront, let us operate transparently and make the documents public." This commitment to transparency was also underlined in the Mission letters President Juncker sent to the 27 Commissioners, and has been included in a Communication from the President to all Commission officials on the Working Methods of the new European Commission. The Communication states that "Commissioners, as a rule, must not meet organisations or self-employed individuals which are not in the Transparency Register."

For More Information

Commission decision on the publication of information on meetings held between Members of the Commission and organisations or self-employed individuals

Commission decision on the publication of information on meetings held between Directors-General of the Commission and organisations or self-employed individuals

Communication to the Commission concerning transparency in TTIP negotiations

President Juncker’s Political Guidelines

President Juncker’s opening speech at the European Parliament Plenary on 15 July 2014

President Juncker’s Mission Letter addressed to First Vice-President Frans Timmermans

President Juncker’s Mission Letter addressed to European Commissioner Cecilia Malmström

More about the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership

Working methods of the European Commission 2014-2019

More about the Transparency Register

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