

Greens/EFA Group, European Parliament

Transparency and Democracy Priority: 2017 Work Plan

Why prioritise the fight for transparency and democracy?

We strive for a world in which each citizen has the same rights and opportunities and access to power. A democracy in which citizens' representatives are exactly that – their representatives. For this, we need empowered citizens who have access to the right information, who can exercise their right to freedom of expression, and who have equal access to power. Their representatives, in turn, must be bound to represent only the general public interest, and therefore should be free from corruption, undue influence, or any other potential conflicts of interest.

We believe that without equal access to information and equal access to power, there is no real democracy. We don't want to live in a world in which decision-makers favour private interests over the public interest, for whatever reason. That's why we think that our work to promote freedom of expression and information, to improve the regulation of lobbying and to enforce ethical conduct in office, is more important now than ever before.

We believe that peaceful coexistence on a multi-cultural continent is one of the greatest achievements of the EU unification process, and this is endangered when citizens feel disenfranchised from the institutions that govern their existence. Through empowering citizens, we fight for them to feel at home in the EU, and thus for EU to act as a guarantor for peace.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Whistleblower Protection

1. Directive on whistleblower protection

In its work programme for 2017, the Commission signalled that it intends to explore the possibility of both an overarching horizontal directive on the protection of whistleblowers, and the extension of the existing patchwork of sectorial legislations covering the various contexts in which whistleblowing may occur. We want to ensure that the Commission proposes overarching and comprehensive (rather than sectorial) legislation.

Planned actions:

- Organise a strategy meeting in the first half of the year for the whistleblower Directive campaign
- Participate in and publicise the European Commission public consultation on whistleblower protection
- Organise a high-level roundtable at which the Commission would be invited as well as legal experts
- Gather further legal argumentation for the impact assessment and the EP reports
- Launch draft Directive version 2
- Research and draft campaign arguments (on EU added value, etc)
- Create campaign materials: Visualisation of the plight of a whistleblower in various different countries, all faced with the same dilemma. The objective is to show how differently their cases are treated simply because they live in different countries – hence, to show the need for EU action.

2. Whistleblower protection inside the Institutions¹

- Budget discharge: for those institutions that have open whistleblower cases or that have failed to put into place whistleblower protections, freeze part of their budget
- Use existing cases to highlight the weaknesses in the current system and call for reform

3. Euleaks

- Reporting on alerts received via the platform every quarter
- Promotion of the platform via press, flyers, online, stickers

Press Freedom

- 09/05, marking World Press Freedom Day
- Pilot project on funding for investigative journalists: publicise, push EC to move forward quickly

Access to information/documents

- Fight regulatory and procedural hindrances to requests for access for information, such as requirements for postal addresses and tactics for delay and general non-responsiveness
- Glyphosate access to documents case: possible court appeal, promotion of initiative
- Internal campaign for reform of framework agreement between EC and EP that leads to all the EMIS, tax, and TTIP reading rooms.
- Interactive guide on access to EU documents and how to argue against refusals to provide information
- 28/09, Marking Right to Know Day

DEMOCRACY: EQUAL ACCESS TO POWER

Lobbying Regulation and Transparency

- Campaign on the IIA for the new lobby register: to get the strongest, most “mandatory” register possible
- Research/campaign materials showing real-life impacts of lobbying in EU and need to regulate lobbying
 - Firearms Directive video
 - Research and campaigning on the dirty energy lobby (vis a vis COP 23)
 - GMOs lobby, notably to highlight corporate capture of the scientific process

Lobby transparency tools

- Finalise update of lobbycal
- Promote lobbycal to Green parties (eg. at the global congress), and to members of the Open Government Partnership etc
- Create “how to install and use lobbycal” video(s)
- Develop a practicable workflow for creating a legislative footprint (e.g. finalise merger between lobbycal and lobbycloud)
- Developing automated text analysis to find out when lobby papers have directly influenced draft files and amendments

¹ The internal whistleblowing regime still falls way short of the standards that would be required if internal whistleblowing was meant to be an effective safeguard against corruption and conflicts of interest in the institutions. Based on experience, internal whistleblowers have no reason either to feel safe, or hope that they can make anything better.

European Citizens' Initiative

- Legislative initiative report in AFCO on ECI, campaign for reform of the regulation so ECI's are easier and more effective
- Mark ECI day

ETHICS: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

EU Commission Code of Conduct

- Campaign for substantive reform: create gifs/videos on the Commissioners' scandals
- Research and propose concrete edits to the Commission code of conduct

EP Code of Conduct

- File complaints/follow up on previous complaints on second jobs of MEPs that might create a conflict of interest
- Campaign to fix the advisory committee: compare the standards of that committee with those of key Member States and point out key weaknesses
- Follow-up on Oettinger's written/oral promises during the hearing

Oversight of spending:

- General Expenditure Allowance: adoption of internal paper, implementation of internal paper
- Internal campaign to implement the call for transparency of the General Expenditure Allowance in last year's budget discharge and the new rules on what the GEA can be spent on (Welle's hearing is in Feb 2017)
- Insert the call again into this year's budget discharge
- Follow the implementation of the new rules on political party financing

THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

Anti-Corruption Report/Corruption Index

- Anti-corruption index: Point 4.4.5 of the 2009 Stockholm Programme invited the Commission "to develop indicators, on the basis of existing systems and common criteria, to measure efforts in the fight against corruption." In the PIF report we called upon the Commission to develop a system of exact, objective, and easily applicable indicators to assess the state of play in the Member States on a yearly basis in order to recover wrongfully spent funds. The EC is currently working on a methodology. We want to closely follow the Commission's work on this.
- Campaign for there to be a chapter dedicated to the EU institutions in the next anticorruption report

Fight against Corruption in Member States and in Cohesion Policy

- Joint T&D/REGI conference on the future of cohesion policy with a specific panel on anti-corruption, including the presentation of the T&D study (foreseen for June 2017)
- Cooperation with Baltic to Balkans WG and local actors on specific cases
- Identify local partners in key Member States that would be interested to campaign on tackling corruption, involve them in our T&D WG
- Study/research identifying best practices in anti-corruption agencies and proposing new measures to tackle corruption in spending of EU funds