



Initiative für Transparenz und Demokratie



**Attention: Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament**

**Ref: Transparency over financial interests of MEP Jean-Luc Dehaene**

Brussels, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2012

Dear President Schulz,

Friends of the Earth Europe, Corporate Europe Observatory, LobbyControl, and Spinwatch as active members of the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Lobbying Regulation (ALTER-EU), are closely following the implementation of the new code of conduct for Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)<sup>1</sup> as well as the related system of declarations of interests.

Jean-Luc Dehaene<sup>2</sup> is currently a sitting MEP, who is also involved in several side activities, including sitting as the chairman of the board of the Belgian bank Dexia and as member of the board of Director of Thrombogenics. Until March 2011, Mr Dehaene was also a member of the respective boards of AB InBev (the world's largest brewer) and Lotus Bakeries.

According to several Belgian media outlets<sup>3</sup>, since Monday 30<sup>th</sup> April MEP Dehaene is allowed to exert the stock options he has been granted by AB InBev – which could amount to around three million Euros.

We are surprised to notice that those stock options are nowhere reported in Mr Dehaene's current declaration of interest<sup>4</sup>, despite the very clear obligations set up by article 4 of the code as regards the declaration of MEPs' outside interests. The declarations of financial interest shall contain the following information:

*“any occasional remunerated outside activity (including writing, lecturing or the provision of expert advice), if the total remuneration exceeds EUR 5 000 in a calendar year, any holding in any company or partnership, where there are potential public policy implications or where that holding gives the Member significant influence over the affairs of the body in question, [...] any other financial interests which might influence the performance of the Member's duties.”*

Our concerns are twofold. Firstly, we believe that Mr Dehaene holding stock options, and being allowed to exert them, while being an MEP presents a risk of potential conflict of interest. This is in direct contradiction with the Code of Conduct. Article 1(b) states that MEPs must *“act solely in the public interest and refrain from obtaining or seeking to obtain any direct or indirect financial benefit*

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/meps/Code\\_of\\_conduct\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/meps/Code_of_conduct_EN.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/28256/Jean-Luc\\_DEHAENE.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/28256/Jean-Luc_DEHAENE.html)

<sup>3</sup> De Standaard, 30 April 2012 <http://www.standaard.be/artikel/detail.aspx?artikelid=U23P9MH4> ; Le Soir, 3 May 2012, [http://archives.lesoir.be/fiscalite-une-proposition-de-loi-entend-imposer\\_t-20120503-01XHPV.html](http://archives.lesoir.be/fiscalite-une-proposition-de-loi-entend-imposer_t-20120503-01XHPV.html)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-dif/28256\\_27-02-2012.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-dif/28256_27-02-2012.pdf) (consulted on 4th May 2012)

or other reward”, while article 3(1) clarifies that “a conflict of interest exists where a Member of the European Parliament has a personal interest that could improperly influence the performance of his or her duties as a Member. A conflict of interest does not exist where a Member benefits only as a member of the general public or of a broad class of persons”. Secondly, according to the new rules, Mr Dehaene should make full transparency about his interests outside of his MEP mandate, in particular in this case where his holdings could influence his behaviour when sitting in office. All his shares and outside revenues should be mentioned in his declaration of interest. However this is currently not the case, which seems to be a clear breach of the rules set forth by the code of conduct.

We are writing to you in order to ask you to carefully look into this case. In particular:

- How will the parliamentary authorities ensure that Mr Dehaene fully complies with the new rules on declaration of MEPs’ outside interests?
- In the context of his MEP mandate, Mr Dehaene might be called to vote on regulations affecting the brewery sector, as part of the European food and drink industry. He is likely to find himself in situations where he will be regulating a sector in which he has direct financial interests. How will the parliamentary authorities guarantee that proper safeguards are put in place to avoid potential situations of conflict of interest in this particular case?

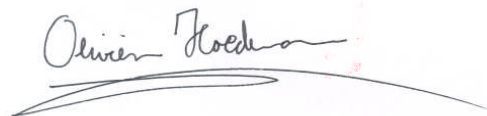
Thank you very much for considering our letter.

We are looking forward to your response.


Yours sincerely,



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