

Politics for People Campaign: Now is the time for MEPs to start tackling corporate lobbying

Brussels, Madrid, Cologne, May 28, 2014

More than 1330 MEP candidates have signed the Politics for People pledge in the run up to the election, promising, if elected, to "stand-up for citizens and democracy against the excessive lobbying influence of banks and big business." [1] This support makes Politics for People one of the most successful civil society pledge campaigns around the 2014 European parliament elections

165 of these candidates have now been elected and ALTER-EU will be working with these MEPs to implement their commitments and start to tackle the problems of corporate lobbying and promote a European parliament which operates in the public interest with strong ethics and transparency rules..

The Politics for People campaign is run by the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation (ALTER-EU), together with a broad coalition of civil society organisations and trade unions from across Europe, including Corporate Europe Observatory, AK EUROPA and the ÖGB Europabüro, (Austria), Lobbycontrol, (Germany), Access Info Europe (Spain), GONG (Croatia), Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (Finland), Young Friends of the Earth Ireland, Diritto di Sapere (Italy), Citizen Network Watchdog Poland. [2]

Olivier Hoedeman, campaign coordinator for Corporate Europe Observatory and member of the ALTER-EU steering committee said:

"The strong commitment to our campaign shows that there is growing concern about the impact of corporate lobbyists in Brussels. This creates a unique opportunity for strong progress in transparency and ethics rules to curb undue corporate influence in EU policy-making"

ALTER-EU has put together a briefing [3] for elected MEPs on lobby and transparency issues. Some important decisions on these issues will be made already in the coming weeks and the Politics for People campaign briefing recommends concrete actions which MEPs can take to tackle the excessive lobbying influence of banks and big business.

Pam Bartlett Quintanilla, transparency campaigner for Access Info said:

"The first action MEPs can take to show their commitment for stricter lobby regulations is to influence the appointment of key European Parliament positions, such as ensuring that the post of vice president for transparency is occupied by a transparency champion. No less important is to put pressure on the new European Commission President to be far more ambitious about curbing undue lobby influence than Barroso-2 has been." A recent report [4] issued by the ALTER-EU coalition concludes that the Barroso-II Commission has failed to make meaningful progress on key issues such as lobby transparency, revolving doors, advisory groups and access to documents.

ALTER-EU demands that MEPs take concrete action on the revolving door issue [5], a strengthened code of conduct for MEPs [6], tackling unbalanced Commission advisory groups [7] and the transition to a mandatory lobby register. [8]

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1. <http://politicsforpeople.eu/en/solution/>

2. For a full list of active partners across 19 EU member states, see
<http://politicsforpeople.eu/en/about-us/>

3. <http://www.alter-eu.org/documents/2014/05-0>

4. <http://www.alter-eu.org/sites/default/files/documents/FINAL%20ALTER-EU%20Barroso%20II%20overview.pdf>

5. <http://www.alter-eu.org/revolving-doors/>

6. A detailed briefing released last week by three civil society groups (who are also members of Politics for People), collates cases of potential conflicts of interest and breaches of ethics rules by former MEPs. These include one MEP who failed to disclose stock options worth several million euros, four who maintain side-jobs with large corporations and lobby groups, and one who submitted over 200 amendments handed to him by industry lobby groups. The lack of enforcement of the European Parliament's ethics rules leaves the integrity and the credibility of the parliament at risk.

http://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/news/briefing_mind_the_gap_foee_ceo_lobbycontrol_130514.pdf

7. http://www.alter-eu.org/sites/default/files/documents/Broken_Promises_web.pdf

8. <http://www.alter-eu.org/taxonomy/term/23>