

From:
ALTER-EU
The Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation
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To: MEPs on Budget Committee

7 May 2012

Re: MEPs should reject lifting reserve on expert groups budget

Tomorrow, on 8 May, the Budget Committee will vote on the European Commission's request to lift the reserve of two million Euros for meetings for expert groups. (Transfer of Appropriations No DEC 05/2012)

The European Commission is requesting that this reserve is lifted without any of the conditions set by the European Parliament being fulfilled, but also without providing MEPs with any further substantial information regarding the situation with expert groups.

The Commission has committed to 'conduct a review of existing expert groups which are not exclusively composed of national authorities with a view of assessing their composition' and to 'report to the Parliament on the outcome of the above review by the summer'.

This suggests that the Parliament would only be in a position to take a further decision on whether or not to lift the reserve after the submission of the Commission's report (originally expected by the end of the summer).

However at the moment of writing, the Commission has not fulfilled any of the four conditions set by the Parliament:

1. The Commission still refuses to apply safeguards against the capture of expert groups by special interests. Unbalanced expert groups are still widespread. An ALTER-EU report to be published soon shows for example that two thirds of DG Enterprise's expert groups are dominated by corporate interests.
2. On interests representatives sitting in expert groups as impartial experts ('in a personal capacity'), the Parliament's request for the publication of their declaration of professional activities continues to be ignored by the Commission. While Commission apparently intends to clarify when members of expert groups are sitting as stakeholders or as experts in personal capacity, but it should also effectively prohibit stakeholders or persons with conflicts of interests from sitting 'in a personal capacity'.
3. The Commission has refused to impose balanced composition and the absence of conflicts of interests as minimum common selection criteria.
4. The Commission has committed to make the documents (including agendas, minutes, participants' contributions and reports) related to the work of all expert groups available from April 2012. Our research shows that this has not been put into effect - at least not in the case in DG Enterprise and DG Internal Market.

The Parliament should therefore reject the Commission's proposal to lift the reserve on the budget

for expert groups and should only re-examine the issue after the Commission has presented the report of its review to the Parliament.

In our view, the Commission can only fulfil the conditions of the Parliament if it revises its rules on expert groups [C(2010)7649]

Yours sincerely,

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On behalf of the ALTER-EU steering committee

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