



Press Release

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For immediate release

Sixty per cent of EU lobbying consultancies not signed up to European Commission's lobby transparency register

Survey highlights failure of voluntary approach; EU officials and MEPs urged not to meet with unregistered lobbyists.

Brussels, 11 March 2010 – Almost two years after the European Commission launched a voluntary lobby transparency register, sixty per cent of EU lobbying consultancies are still not registered, a survey published today by the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation (ALTER-EU) reveals. [1] The group has called on EU officials, including the responsible Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič, and MEPs to refuse to meet with groups which have not signed the register. [2]

The ALTER-EU survey underlines the need to urgently implement the European Parliament resolution of May 2008 that called for a mandatory register of all actors lobbying the EU institutions, including names of lobbyists and detailed information on the money behind the lobbying. [3]

Only 112 of the 286 consultancies providing EU lobbying services that we have been able to identify are listed on the Commission's register (39.2%). Of the 174 consultancies missing from the Commission's register, 104 have lobbyists accredited at the European Parliament. [4] Lobby consultancies primarily work for large companies and industry lobby groups, promoting their interests in EU policy making. In practice this frequently means assisting in lobby campaigns to postpone or block progress in environment and consumers protection.

ALTER-EU spokesperson Erik Wesselius from Corporate Europe Observatory said: "Our survey shows that over 60% of all lobby firms active in Brussels do not bother to register and are not transparent about their lobbying activities. Genuine transparency can only be secured when registration becomes de facto mandatory, by linking physical access to disclosure requirements."

Among the consultancies missing on the Commission's register are a number of big players with as many as 18 lobbyists with access passes to the European Parliament. [5] Another 70 companies are not on the Commission register and have no lobbyists accredited at the European Parliament.

Paul de Clerck (Friends of the Earth Europe), also speaking for ALTER-EU, said: "We hope that our blacklist of unregistered consultancies will serve as a working tool for EU officials and MEPs. If they are serious about ensuring lobbying transparency in the EU, they should stop meeting with unregistered lobbyists. Granting unregistered consultancies privileged access is both hampering transparency efforts and undermining the Commission's and the Parliament's credibility".

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Notes

[1] The survey of EU lobby consultancies is available at: <http://www.alter-eu.org/documents/briefings-info-sheets/2010/03/11/blacklist-of-unregistered-lobbying-consultancies>

[2] In a recent op-ed in Public Affairs News, MEP Diana Wallis suggested MEPs should politely decline meeting lobbyists who do not register. An EC-EP High Level Working Group is expected to resume talks on a joint EC-EP lobby register later this month.

[3] European Parliament resolution of 8 May 2008 on the development of the framework for the activities of interest representatives (lobbyists) in the European institutions (2007/2115(INI)).
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&language=EN&reference=P6-TA-2008-0197>

[4] Accredited lobbyists have access badges for the Parliament buildings. Currently, transparency requirements for accredited lobbyists are minimal.

[5] Not on the European Commission register (number of lobbyists accredited at the European Parliament in brackets): ADS Insight (8), Arcturus Group (10), Brunswick Group (7), Cabinet DN (13), FD Blueprint (18), EuroRSCG C&O (7), Grayling (14), ICODA European Affairs (8), Rohde Public Policy (8), Schuman Associates (8) and The Centre (16).

About ALTER-EU

The Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation (ALTER-EU) is a coalition of over 160 civil society groups, trade unions, academics and public affairs firms concerned with the increasing influence exerted by corporate lobbyists on the political agenda in Europe, the resulting loss of democracy in EU decision-making and the postponement, weakening, or blockage even, of urgently needed progress on social, environmental and consumer-protection reforms. See www.alter-eu.org