

Dear Commissioner Šefčovič,

We are writing to you as a broad group of civil society organisations closely involved and following the process of reforming the European Commission expert groups.

Civil society has been a key actor in pushing for higher levels of transparency, fairness and accountability among the Commission's expert groups, as the Commission has publicly stated at ALTER-EU events and to MEPs. However, since the launching of the informal dialogue between the Commission and the Parliament in September, many civil society groups have felt excluded from the process undertaken by the Commission to reform its expert groups .

This has in part been due to a lack of direct contact with Commission officials, as was the practice in the past, but also due to a perceived lack of transparency around progress, with relevant documents, such as the State of Play, not being made publicly available. This does not allow us to build wider public confidence in the progress being made on behalf of the Commission.

We acknowledge that different Directorate Generals are progressing at different speeds, and appreciate what has been done to date, both in results and in intention, but having seen the State of Play (February 28, 2013), we are concerned at the difficulty the Commission is having in meeting the four conditions laid down by the European Parliament in exchange for lifting the budget reserve (September 20, 2012).

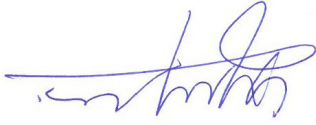
- Many groups remain very imbalanced despite modifications to their composition, and the shifting of responsibility to the Parliament is not a suitable nor practical solution.
- The Commission has not made public its reasoning for rejecting applicants, although a number of civil society stakeholders have been surprised at their exclusion.
- Many potential civil society stakeholders were not aware of the call for applications, suggesting that more could be done to reach out beyond the transparency register and the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU).
- The condition of stakeholders not sitting in expert groups in their personal capacity, while being dealt with in some cases by the Commission, continues to crop up, for example in the Stoiber Group.
- Transparency is improving but much is still lacking, regarding both what is not in the register - ALTER-EU's own State of Play (attached) shows a number of the group changes mentioned in the Commission's State of Play were not in the register - and what is in the register: inconsistencies between DGs regarding how to use the register and label members. Both instances make it difficult to effectively judge the progress.

As civil society organisations, we believe we have much to offer in supporting the Commission in improving the transparency and balance of expert groups. We are also in contact with MEPs on this issue, as they have a very important role in continuing the informal dialogue, and they will also be made aware of our correspondence with the Commission to ensure full transparency.

We first ask that all relevant documentation is made available to the general public, as a sign of good-will, but that also the Commission re-engages with civil society in the process of reform, recognising the potential of its positive contribution.

We therefore request a meeting before the next informal dialogue between the Parliament and the Commission takes place. Please let us know when would be most convenient for you.

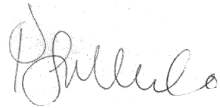
Signed on behalf of



Monique Goyens, Director General, BEUC



Angelo Caserta, Regional Director, Stichting, BirdLife Europe



Pascoe Sabido, Researcher and Campaigner, Corporate Europe Observatory



Guillame Prache, Director, EuroFinuse



Monica Kosinska, Director, European Public Health Alliance



Magda Stoczkiewicz, Director, Friends of the Earth Europe



Joss Dings, Director, Transport and Environment



Jana Mittermaier, Director, Transparency International EU Office

