

EU staff blocked from delivering Barroso petition

By **ALEKSANDRA ERIKSSON**  

BRUSSELS, 13. OCT 2016, 09:22

The European Commission has refused to accept a [petition drafted by EU employees urging it to end the “revolving door” between its top management and big business.](#)

The appeal was launched after former commission president Jose Manuel Barroso landed a top job at US investment bank Goldman Sachs, and has now been signed by 152,000 people.

But security guards stopped the petitioners from entering commission headquarters on Wednesday (12 October).

A delegation from the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation (**Alter-EU**) received the same treatment when trying to deliver [a similar petition](#), signed by 63,000 people, moments later.

The two petitions have called for strong measures to be taken against Barroso, whose new employers were heavily implicated in both the global and the Greek financial crises.

They want to see Barroso’s pension rights forfeited and EU rules on the limits of conduct of former commissioners sharpened.

Under the current framework, EU officials are free to take up any job after a "cooling off" period of 18 months after they leave office.

Barroso's successor, Jean-Claude Juncker, has [referred the case to an advisory ethics committee](#), but only after the EU ombudsman questioned whether he really had done everything to verify that the appointment was in line with the ethical obligations laid down in the EU treaties.

Juncker has also launched [another probe on former competition commissioner Neelie Kroes](#), a member of Barroso's cabinet, after leaked documents showed she had failed to declare directorship of an offshore company based in the Bahamas.

But NGOs say the EU executive should have acted when Kroes took up a job with tech firm Uber earlier this year after promoting their interests during her time in office.

Lobby group [Alter-EU](#) has lodged a complaint of maladministration over this, and a similar case involving former trade commissioner [Karel De Gucht](#).

Juncker has stated that [the EU executive is mulling changes](#) to the commissioners' code of conduct, but has yet to announce concrete proposals.

EU employees and NGOs say the commission is doing too little, too late.

Glorified photo opportunity

The EU staff want to remain anonymous, both for fear of retaliation but also "because we represent the people of the street", one of them said.

It's the first time that EU workers have publicly criticised their leadership.

They say they are deeply committed to the European project and tired of their bosses giving them a bad name.

He said representatives of the EU employees and NGOs had eventually been invited to meet with the commission's secretary-general, Alexander Italianer, on Wednesday afternoon.

"But that's not what we asked for," the employee said. "We want to see Juncker - he's the only one who can change the rules."

Margarida Silva attended the meeting on behalf of **Alter-EU** and was also disappointed.

"When Alexander Italianer called us up for a meeting, we thought he would have something to say, that it would be an opportunity to open up a dialogue," the transparency campaigner told EUobserver. "Then we realised this was just a photo opportunity for the commission."

Dutch socialist MEP Dennis De Jong, co-chair of the European parliament's intergroup on integrity, joined protesters outside the commission building on Wednesday.

He told this website the commission had angered the parliament as well by sending Pierre Moscovici to answer MEPs' questions on the code of conduct of commissioners.

Moscovici, a French socialist, is considered a progressive member of the college.

"But he's not even responsible for these questions, which by the way was his line of defence in our debate," De Jong said.

The Dutch politician said the commission was out of touch with public opinion, which didn't accept any longer cosy relationships between politics and business.

"Business as usual is over," De Jong said.



Former EU climate chief defends VW post

30. SEP 2016, 09:20

Former EU commissioner Connie Hedegaard told EUobserver she did nothing wrong in taking up posts at VW and Danfoss, amid a swirling debate on EU officials' links to big business.



OPINION

Barrosogate: rejects 'discriminatory' criticism

19. SEP 2016, 09:30

Barrosogate is putting to the test an already weak oversight system of former EU commissioners and highlighting the limits of the lobbying regulatory regime.



Barroso rejects 'discriminatory' criticism

13. SEP 2016, 17:02

In a leaked letter, the former EU commission chief says protests against his Goldman Sachs job are "baseless and wholly unmerited".



EU commission seeks answers from Kroes

22. SEP 2016, 19:24



Barroso cleared on 'image of greed'



EU commission drops anti-corruption report

2. FEB, 18:37

Juncker has written to former competition chief after revelations about her offshore firm. Kroes says she forgot to mention it. Her penalty, if any, will be symbolic, but EU reputational damage is growing.

bank job

1. NOV 2016, 10:45

EU commission's ethics committee said Barroso should not be sanctioned for taking "image of financial greed" bank job. Ombudsman not so sure.

Transparency campaigners are livid after the EU commission scuppered plans to publish an EU anti-corruption report amid unfolding corruption scandals in Romania and France.