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Mr. Jiri Mastalka
Member of the European Parliament
Advisory committee on the conduct of members
European Parliament
Rue Wiertz, 60
B-1047 Bruxelles

Brussels, 27 August, 2014

Your appointment as a member of the advisory committee on the conduct of members

Dear Mr. Mastalka,

Congratulations on your election as a Member of the European Parliament and your appointment as member of the advisory committee on the conduct of MEPs.

As you are aware, the introduction of the code of conduct was a direct result of the cash-for-amendment scandal that hit the European Parliament in spring 2011¹. Members of the advisory committee have an important role to promote the good application of the code of conduct, by providing individual MEPs with advice on interpretation of the rules, including the declaration of their outside financial interests.

The Alliance for Lobbying and Ethics Regulation (ALTER-EU) has fully engaged in the process that led to the creation of the code. We monitored its application and raised awareness in cases of abuse². We consider that the code has been an important step towards better ethics management in the European Parliament, yet it still has significant shortcomings which currently impede its robust implementation. These concerns are widely shared, as illustrated in European media coverage³.

¹ http://www.foeeurope.org/press/2011/Mar21 ALTEREU cash_for_laws_scandal.html

² <http://www.foeeurope.org/mep-ethics-rules-not-effectively-enforced-130514> ;
<http://www.foeeurope.org/new-code-old-conduct-European-Parliament-180713> ;
<http://www.foeeurope.org/weaknesses-MEP-ethics-rules-190712>

³ <http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/imported/parliament-fails-to-see-the-problem/74464.aspx> ;
<http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/imported/schulz-maintains-parliament-s-poor-disciplinary-record/80362.aspx>

When introducing implementing measures to clarify the conditions of application of the code of conduct in April 2013, the Bureau of the European Parliament requested a review process to take place one year later⁴. This has not happened yet, and we believe that the European Parliament's new term provides an important opportunity to address, through such a review process, some of the shortcomings that we have identified. Such a process should not only seek to improve the code itself, but also to make implementation easier for individual MEPs. This would send a positive signal to the European citizens who have elected you and your peers, and likely prevent new scandals that would tarnish the reputation of your parliament.

During the recent elections, ALTER-EU co-ordinated the 'Politics for People' campaign, which asked MEP candidates to sign a pledge to stand up for citizens and democracy when taking up office⁵. Nearly 1,400 candidates across Europe signed this pledge, and 180 of them are now elected MEPs. This demonstrates that there is ample support within the new parliament for enhanced ethics and transparency rules across the EU institutions.

With this letter, we would like to request a face-to-face meeting with you in order to discuss the possibilities for reform and to hear about your plans as member of the advisory group. We attach our latest publication "Mind the Gap – MEP code of conduct is not effectively enforced" (May 2014) which documents some of the important shortcomings in the implementation of the code. This publication is based on research we carried out during the previous parliamentary term and offers recommendations for improvement.

In the meantime, we remain available to provide any information that you might need.

We are looking forward to meeting with you soon on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

ALTER-EU steering committee:

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Helen Darbshire (Access Info Europe)
Paul de Clerck (Friends of the Earth Europe)
William Dinan (SpinWatch)
Jorgo Riss (Greenpeace European Unit)
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Yuklan Wong (European Federation of Journalists)

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⁴ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/meps/926701_1_EN_IM_DEF.pdf (see article 11)

⁵ <http://politicsforpeople.eu/en/>