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Limited progress on European Parliament ethics package

Daniel Freund · Tuesday, December 13th, 2016

Today, the European Parliament has made some progress on lobbying reform but failed to close loopholes around MEPs conflicts of interest, according to Transparency International EU. The “Corbett report” on over 400 changes to the Parliament’s internal rules of procedure aims to streamline parliamentary processes and make the inner workings more effective. The report provides only limited progress on overhauling the Parliament’s ethics rules following recent scandals.

There are some real improvements in the area of lobby transparency. MEPs approved that they should only meet with those lobbyists on the EU Transparency Register. Parliamentarians have also banned themselves from working as lobbyists while in office through today’s vote.

“Parliament’s five-year-old ethics rules urgently needed an update. MEPs however failed to address some of the most urgent points: better declarations of interest to prevent conflicts of interests, a cooling-off period and an independent oversight committee,” said Daniel Freund, Head of Advocacy EU Integrity at Transparency International EU.

There are still shortcomings when it comes to conflicts of interest and what is more, many MEPs do not provide enough details on their activities to allow the public to monitor potential conflicts of interest. Despite 12 breaches of the current Code of Conduct, not a single MEP has ever been sanctioned, according to research by Transparency International EU.

“There is an urgent need for an independent oversight committee of MEPs activities as well as a cooling-off period after leaving office, both of which this report fails to address,” said Freund.

Transparency International EU has made [detailed recommendations](#) based on international best practices on how to reform the Parliament’s ethics rules. A full and detailed background on Transparency International EU’s analysis on today’s vote can be found [here](#).

Editor’s note:

- 21% of MEPs currently have paid outside activities.
- 50 earn in excess of 20,000 EUR a year on the side.
- Dozens of MEPs provide unclear information which does not allow adequate monitoring of potential conflicts of interest.
- Seven MEPs are employed by registered lobby organisations, mostly in board positions.

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