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Qatargate reforms: European Parliament fails its first big test

Michiel van Hulten · Tuesday, March 14th, 2023

Last night's [decision](#) by the Parliament's secretive ruling body, the Bureau, to introduce a 6-month cooling off period for former MEPS before they can lobby their former colleagues amounts to little more than window-dressing.

Michiel van Hulten, Director of Transparency International EU, said: "This was the first big test of the Parliament's resolve to put its house in order following the Qatargate scandal, and it has failed miserably".

A six-month cooling-off period is purely symbolic. The first six months of any legislature are spent dividing up committee assignments and the approval process for members of the new European Commission. There is very little legislative activity.

Transparency International EU believes that for former MEPs, the cooling-off period should be equal to time during which they receive a transitional allowance from the taxpayer (from 6 to 24 months, depending on length of service), as President Metsola proposed in January.

Only a meaningful cooling-off period will help prevent former MEPs monetising their privileged access to their former colleagues.

When they do eventually become lobbyists, former MEPs should register in the same way as other lobbyists, with the same access rights and responsibilities. They should not, as last night's agreement says, be given a "specific badge", other than the one handed to other lobbyists.

For further information, see TI EU's [position](#) on the initial Parliament reform package.

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