Control of the Register and composition of the Commission's expert groups

2015/2319(INI) - 12/01/2017 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the own-initiative report by Dennis de JONG (GUE/NGL, NL) on control of the Register and composition of the Commission’s expert groups.

The Committee on Legal Affairs, exercising its prerogative as an associated committee in accordance with Article 54 of the Rules of Procedure, also gave its opinion on the report.

Members welcomed the Commission Decision of 30 May 2016 establishing horizontal rules on the creation and operation of Commission’s expert groups.

Through the adoption of the new horizontal rules, many concerns previously expressed by Parliament have seemingly been met, in particular those concerning the need for public calls for applications for the selection of the members of expert groups and concerning the revision of the Register of Commission expert groups and the creation of synergy between this Register, the Transparency Register of the Commission and Parliament, and those rules relating to the need to avoid conflicts of interest.

Reform of the system: Members considered that the effective reform of the Commission's expert groups system, based on **clear principles of transparency and balanced composition**, will improve the availability and reliability of data, which will in turn help increase people's trust in the EU. They reiterated the importance of reviving forms of involvement of representatives of civil society and the social partners in crucial areas such as the transparency and the functioning of the European institutions.

Selection of experts: noting that transparency and coordination of interinstitutional activities are of paramount importance, Members welcomed the fact that the selection process is now taking place publicly. They stressed that it needs to be clearly visible what **practical experience and qualifications** the experts possess.

Moreover, new rules should apply strictly and equally to all Commission expert groups, irrespective of their title to ensure a **balanced representation** through participation of representatives of all stakeholders.

According to the report, the Commission is asked to:

- make progress towards a **more balanced** composition of the expert groups;
- when creating **new expert groups**, state clearly in the public call for applications how it defines a balanced composition, which interests it seeks to be represented, and why;
- investigate whether a new **complaints mechanism** is required, if the definition of balanced composition is contested by interested stakeholders or whether current arrangements are adequate, Parliament should be associated in this control mechanism;
- explore ways to facilitate and encourage the **participation of underrepresented organisations** or social groups in expert groups (e.g. experts representing SMEs, consumers, trade unions);
- assess the development of an **allowance system** that supports underrepresented groups in acquiring the necessary expertise;
- make it possible for **European non-governmental organisations** to be represented in the expert groups by representatives of their national member organisations, when provided with a clear mandate from the European organisations;
- provide for the meetings and minutes to be made **public**;
-

- develop specific **guidelines** explaining how it interprets the provision that the minutes of the expert groups should be meaningful and complete;
- devote **sufficient resources** to the activities relating to the Register.

Lastly, Members noted that the Commission has stated that by the end of 2016, the new framework for Commission expert groups will have to be implemented by all Directorates-General. They requested the Commission to submit to Parliament a **report on the implementation and evaluation** at the latest one year after the adoption of the Decision, i.e. before 1 June 2017.