European Parliament/Council of the European Union/European Commission Agreement: mandatory transparency register

2020/2272(ACI) - 27/04/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted, by 645 votes to 5, with 49 abstentions, a decision on the conclusion of an interinstitutional agreement between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register.

The interinstitutional agreement establishes a framework and operating principles for a coordinated approach by the signatory institutions as regards transparent and ethical interest representation. Under the agreement, interest representatives will have to register in order to carry out certain lobbying activities related to one of the three signatory institutions, and each institution will now put in place additional transparency measures to encourage their registration.

Purpose and scope

While welcoming the Interinstitutional Agreement, Parliament called on the institutions to commit to a coordinated approach on reinforcing the common transparency culture with a view to improving and further strengthening ethical interest representation. It reaffirmed the need to continue with the interinstitutional dialogue with a view to establishing the transparency register on the basis of a legally binding act of Union secondary legislation.

Members regretted that, with regard to personal scope, it covers only the most senior staff of the institutions; insists that any revision of the conditionality arrangements with regard to all three institutions should include meetings with other staff of the institutions, at Heads of Unit level and above.

Covered activities

Parliament welcomed the 'activity-based approach' which covers indirect lobbying activities - increasingly so as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It welcomed the clarification of covered and not covered activities, including the exclusion of spontaneous encounters and coverage of intermediaries of third countries which do not enjoy diplomatic status.

Role of the European Parliament

The resolution called for the implementation of several measures by Parliament's bodies, including the following:

- establishing a direct link between the legislative footprint of the Code of Conduct for Members of the European Parliament with respect to financial interests and conflicts of interest, contained in Annex I to its Rules of Procedure, and the transparency register;

- introducing a rule for Parliament’s officials from Head of Unit level to Secretary General, to meet only with registered interest representatives;

- developing a comprehensive approach in order to make participation as a speaker at all events organised by committees or by intergroups, such as workshops and seminars as well as delegation meetings, conditional upon registration for anyone falling under the scope of the transparency register;

- developing a comprehensive and coherent approach with regard to co-hosting of events on Parliament's premises and making it, where appropriate, conditional upon registration for anyone falling under the scope of the transparency register;

- adopt guidelines in order to support rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs and committee Chairs to fulfil their obligations under Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

Eligibility, code of conduct, information to be provided by the registrants

Parliament welcomed the fact that registrants are obliged to publish financial information of both clients and intermediaries and that financial information is also required from registrants who do not represent commercial interests. Registrants will now be obliged to provide information about the legislative proposals, policies or initiatives that they target.

Secretariat and Management Board

Members welcomed the creation of the Management Board and its task to oversee the overall administrative implementation of the Agreement and act as review body for the measures taken by the Secretariat.

The equal footing of all three institutions in the operation of the Secretariat and of the Management Board should ensure consensus, develop the joint ownership of the framework and foster a common culture of transparency.