

# Spitzenkandidaten survey on EU lobbying transparency and regulation

## Die Antworten von Junqueras (Europäische Freie Allianz)

In Brussels as the political heart of the European Union, a high degree of corporate influence on policy-making continues to put public-interest decision making on the line. With the help of big lobbying budgets, threats to leverage their economic power (via layoffs, offshoring, or refusal to invest), privileged access to policy-makers and public officials, a blurred line between the private sector and public office thanks to the ever-revolving door, and many other influencing tools, vested interests all too often manage to shape EU legislative processes in their interests – commonly at the expense of environmental safeguards, climate action, and the protection of social, consumer and workers' rights.

2019 brings an opportunity for big change in the EU, with a new European Parliament and Commission to take the lead. The next President of the European Commission should play a central role in fighting the excessive corporate power that still undermines EU democracy. As a lead candidate for the presidency, we kindly ask you to answer the following questions.

Please provide a few lines of reasoning for each of your responses and assessments.

### **1. How will you ensure that citizens' interests are prioritised over corporate interests?**

If I were to become Commission President, one of the key issues for me would be to ensure the independence of EU decision-making in a way that more adequately reflects the interests of citizens. To do so, the powers of the European Parliament should be strengthened in different ways, such as improved control over the Commission or better functioning of the Petitions committee.

The strengthening of the European Citizens' Initiative, a long-standing fight of the Greens-EFA group, and putting more resources into EC consultations to make sure that they reach a far greater percentage of EU citizens and, thus, they are more representative, are also interesting steps to be taken.

Finally, avoiding conflicts of interest should be a priority. This is why, during the hearings of the candidate commissioner, we will use thoroughly scan for conflicts of interest. Candidates with conflicts of interest should be prevented from advancing to the next stage of the committee hearing procedures. In the next term, we will push once again to eradicate conflicts of interest amongst MEPs and Commissioners, including via stricter revolving door provisions and clearer bans on side jobs that create a risk of a conflict of interest.

### **2. Will you enforce the guideline for commissioners to balance the numbers of their stakeholder meetings with corporate interest representatives and non-profit entities (incl NGOs, trade unions, academic institutions, etc)?**

**If yes, how will you enforce it? If no, why not?**

We will push for a reform of the European Commission decision on meetings with stakeholders to ensure a better balance in the inputs received from them.

- 3. Will you a) prioritise the establishment of a strong and actually mandatory Transparency Register that covers all three institutions, b) ensure sufficient financial and staff resources for its maintenance, and c) support a sanctions regime for non-compliance with the register's rules?**

This has been a Greens-EFA group priority for a number of years. Having failed to update the inter-institutional agreement on the Transparency Register presents a clear opportunity to push our demands for a legally binding register, including appropriate sanctions.

It is worth pointing out that, during the revision of the transparency register, we pushed for specific improvements, such as the creation of a specific website for stakeholder meetings.

- 4. Will you extend the ban on meetings with unregistered lobbyists to all levels of the European Commission?**

Yes. This has been a key demand of the Greens-EFA group.

- 5. Are you going to introduce a legislative footprint that traces any input received by lobbyists during the drafting of proposals?**

Some of our members are already using Lobbycal -a tool automatically publishing information about meetings held with lobbyists and interest representatives such as civil society organisations- as a form of legislative footprint .

Integrating legislative footprints into MEPs work will be part of the Greens-EFA Standards on transparency and ethics that we are currently finalizing.

In fact, since this Spring, at least rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs and committee chairs from our group publish their meetings with stakeholders. In the next term we will prioritise the proper application of this transparency rule, as we foresee that there will be continued attempts from other groups to significantly weaken the provisions.

The Commission should also enact a legislative footprint.

- 6. Will you implement the [recommendation by European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly](#) that all dealings with tobacco lobbyists should be fully transparent, in an effort to ensure the EU's full compliance with Article 5.3 of the World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and its accompanying guidelines?**

Yes, this is part of the aforementioned Greens-EFA Standards on transparency and ethics. If I were to become President of the EC, I would not only ensure that contacts with the tobacco industry should be fully transparent, but I would recommend that those working on tobacco policy limit these contacts, in accordance with the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control's implementation guidelines.

- 7. Will you replace the current self-policing system for the prevention of ex-Commissioners' conflicts of interests in new roles (including but not limited to revolving door moves) with a fully independent ethics body which consists of members external to the European Commission, has the power to initiate its own investigations, implement its decisions and has sufficient financial resources to effectively do its work??**

The current EU ethics system is too weak and fragmented and, more important, not uniform for all the institutions. This is why establishing an independent ethics authority - not just for the EC but also for the Parliament and other EU agencies- to monitor declarations of interest, scan for conflicts of interest, give advice on 'grey zones' and propose sanctions where necessary is one of our key demands for the next Parliamentary term.

- 8. Do you have any other comments you would like to make in the context of this Spitzenkandidaten survey?**

No.