

EU CITIZENS OPINION SURVEY ON TRANSPARENCY, ETHICS, AND LOBBYING IN THE EU

The EU Citizens Opinion Poll reveals that a majority of respondents in Europe are concerned about ethics and lobbying in Brussels policy-making, and want better regulation of lobbyists, as well as increased transparency of European Union bodies. This report summarises the main findings of the EU Citizens Opinion Poll and includes concrete recommendations for EU policy-makers on transparency, lobbying and ethics in the European Union.

The EU Citizens Opinion Poll reveals that 73% of citizens polled are concerned that lobbyists representing the business sector have too much influence on EU policy-making and that 80% believe there should be mandatory regulation of lobbying in the European Union in order to ensure a balanced participation of different interests in decision-making.

The poll demonstrates widespread interest in accessing information about the European Union, particularly if it relates to the spending of EU funds or the EU's decision-making process. 85% of citizens think that full information about Member States' negotiations on future rules and laws should be open to the public and a further 86% believe that it is important for the public to have access to detailed financial reports and evaluations on how EU money is spent by Member States.

The EU Citizens Opinion Poll also shows that 67% of citizens do not think that MEPs should be allowed to work for a lobby group or a private company while serving as an elected representative. Furthermore, four in five citizens declare that they feel less confident that an MEP represents the best interests of citizens if they also work for a lobby group or a private company.

For more information please visit:
<http://www.eu-citizens.org/>



**Europe
for Citizens
Programme**

The project partners gratefully acknowledge financial assistance from the European Commission Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). The contents are the sole responsibility of the project partners and cannot be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Commission. The European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information provided in the materials.



EU Citizens Opinion Poll

7 • 21 January 2013

Section 1

Lobbying in the European Union

The issue of lobbying in the European Union is relevant to citizens because unregulated lobbying can result in unequal access to EU decision-makers. This risks some interests predominating over others throughout the decision-making process and can result in public policies that do not favour the general interest. Furthermore, if citizens are unable to get a clear picture of who is participating in the decision-making process, the perception that private interests or powerful lobbies are behind unpopular decisions tends to gain ground.

The results of the poll show that respondents are concerned about the level of influence that business-sector lobbyists have on EU policy-making and reveals that four in five people believe there should be mandatory regulation of lobbying to ensure a balanced participation of different interests in EU decision-making.

'It is widely known that lobbyists have a strong influence on EU policy-making'



70% AGREE



15% DISAGREE



15% DON'T KNOW

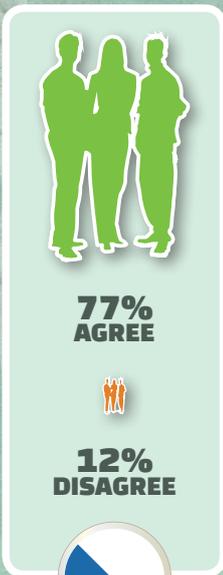


**83%
AGREE**

**10%
DISAGREE**



AUSTRIA

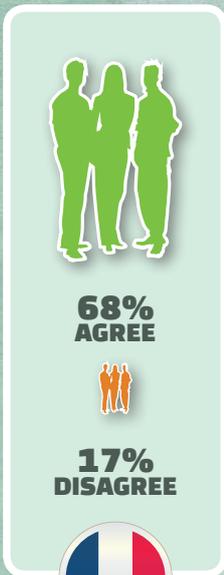


**77%
AGREE**

**12%
DISAGREE**



CZECH REPUBLIC

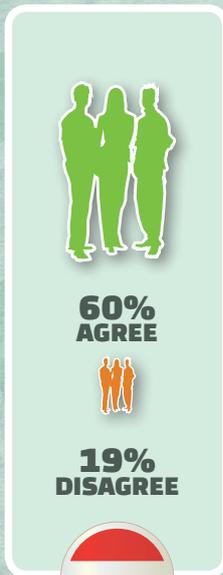


**68%
AGREE**

**17%
DISAGREE**



FRANCE

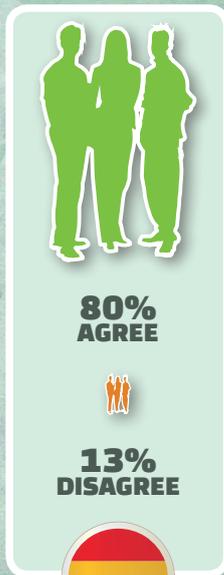


**60%
AGREE**

**19%
DISAGREE**



NETHERLANDS

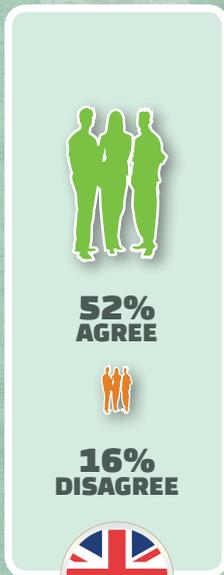


**80%
AGREE**

**13%
DISAGREE**



SPAIN



**52%
AGREE**

**16%
DISAGREE**



UNITED KINGDOM

‘Lobbying by business representatives can result in policies that may not be in the public interest’



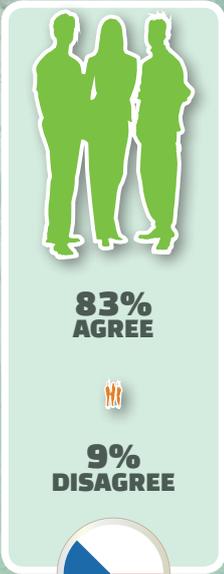
77% AGREE

11% DISAGREE

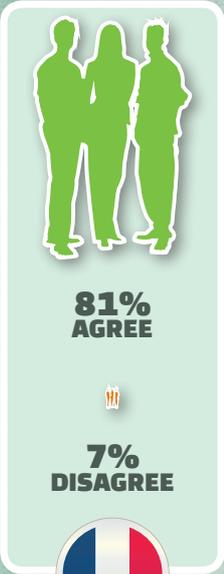
11% DON'T KNOW



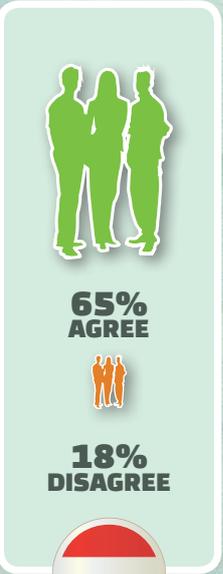
AUSTRIA



CZECH REPUBLIC



FRANCE



NETHERLANDS



SPAIN



UNITED KINGDOM

‘I am concerned that lobbyists representing the business sector have too much influence in EU policy-making’



73% AGREE

14% DISAGREE

12% DON'T KNOW



81% AGREE



13% DISAGREE



AUSTRIA



75% AGREE



15% DISAGREE



CZECH REPUBLIC



78% AGREE



9% DISAGREE



FRANCE



62% AGREE



22% DISAGREE



NETHERLANDS



83% AGREE



11% DISAGREE



SPAIN



61% AGREE



15% DISAGREE



UNITED KINGDOM

‘There should be mandatory regulation of lobbying to ensure a balanced participation of different interests in decision-making’



80% AGREE



10% DISAGREE



10% DON'T KNOW



AUSTRIA



CZECH REPUBLIC



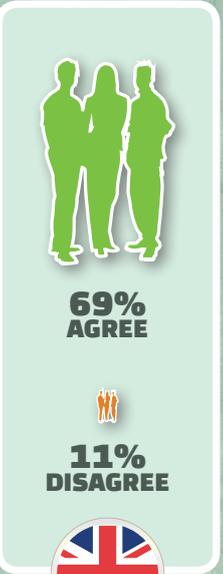
FRANCE



NETHERLANDS



SPAIN



UNITED KINGDOM

EU Citizens Opinion Poll

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Section 1

Lobbying in the European Union

RECOMMENDATIONS



- The review of the EU's Transparency Register should be conducted in a fully open and democratic way, and steps should be taken to transition to a mandatory register by 2015.
- The information currently contained in the Transparency Register should be improved, including by executing regular spot checks and by fully investigating and resolving external complaints about under-reporting.
- European Commissioners, Commission staff and Parliament staff should commit to meet only with registered lobbyists.
- The European Commission should keep a public record of their meetings with interest representatives.
- European Union bodies that are involved in legislative processes or other decisions that have a direct impact on citizens should commit to meeting with a balanced set of interest representatives, citizens and other stakeholders.
- Up-to-date and relevant information about the different stages of the decision-making process should be made proactively available so that citizens and civil society can participate in the EU's decision-making process on a level playing-field with professional lobbyists.



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Section 2

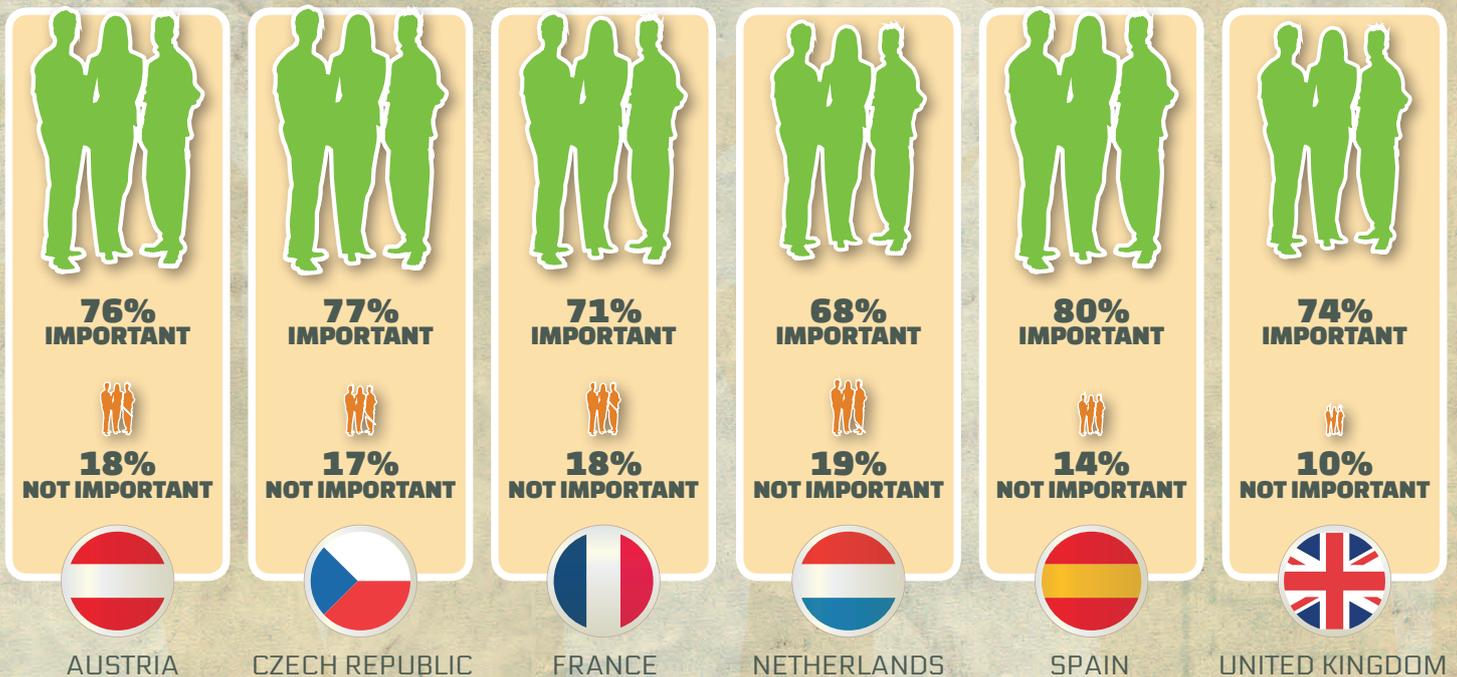
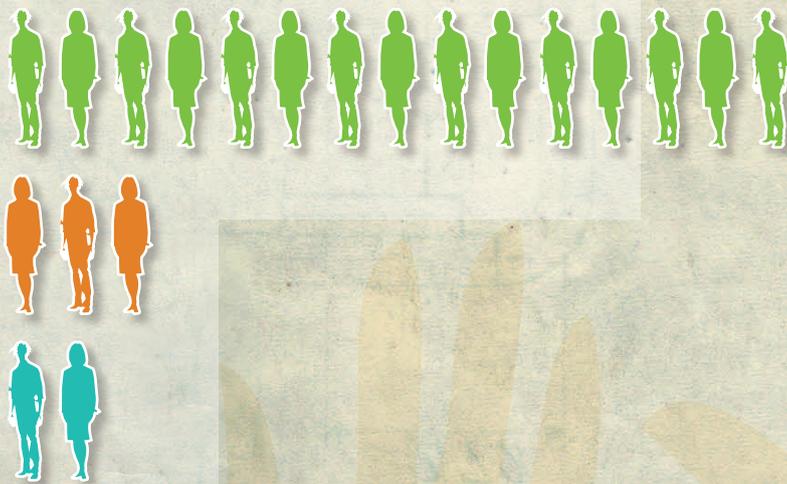
Access to EU Documents

In order to get an accurate picture of how decisions are taken in the EU, citizens and civil society rely on getting access to official documents. In fact, access to documents held by the European Union is a fundamental right of all EU citizens according to the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Since 2008, the EU institutions have been trying to negotiate an agreement on the future of the EU's public access to documents Regulation (1049/2001); the Council of the European Union is divided between governments that favour restrictive proposals that would narrow the right of access and those that support the Parliament's pro-transparency position.

The European Ombudsman's annual report reveals that almost a quarter (23.3%) of the complaints processed in 2011 were about accessing EU documents. Transparency is therefore a key issue for many European citizens.

‘How important do you believe it is to make publicly available the legal advice given by EU lawyers to EU officials and policy makers?’



‘How important do you believe it is to make publicly available detailed financial reports and evaluations on how EU money is spent by Member States?’



86% IMPORTANT



7% NOT IMPORTANT



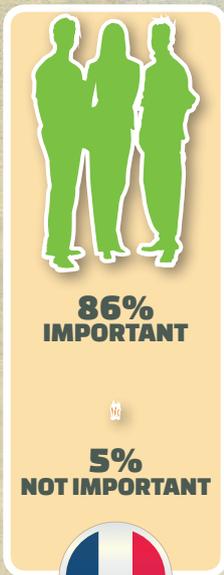
8% DON'T KNOW



AUSTRIA



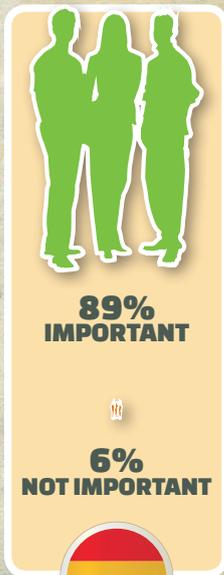
CZECH REPUBLIC



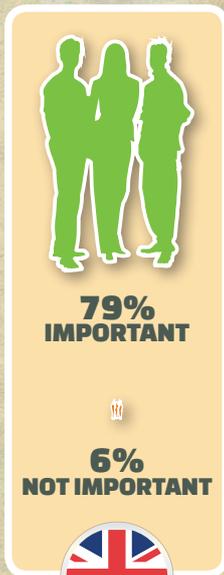
FRANCE



NETHERLANDS

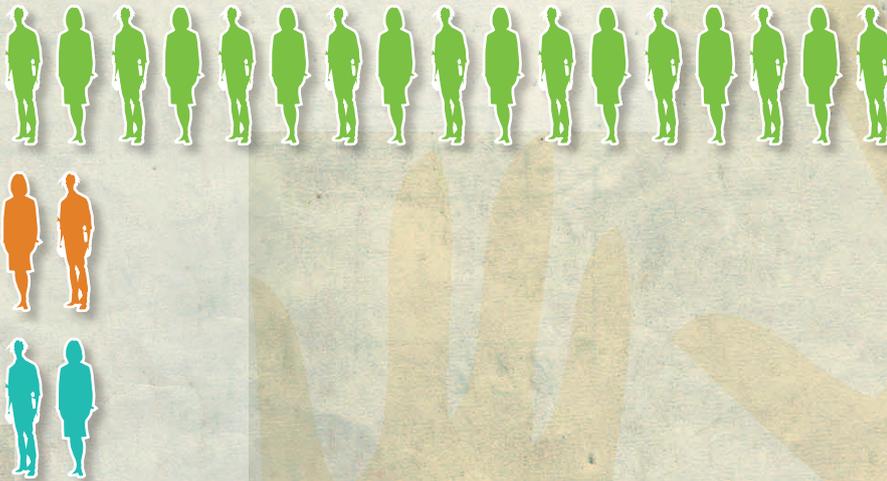


SPAIN



UNITED KINGDOM

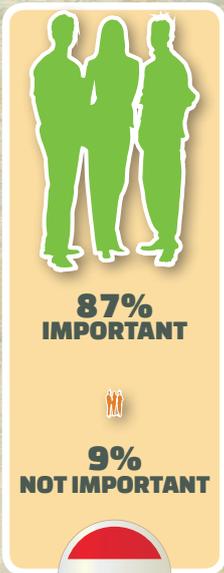
‘How important do you believe it is to make publicly available full information on what Member States are doing in negotiations about future EU rules and laws?’



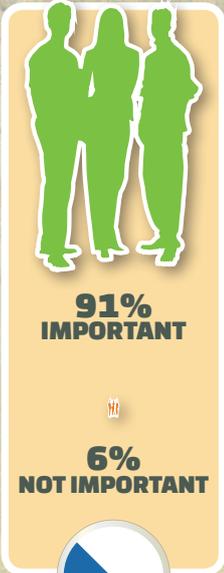
85% IMPORTANT

8% NOT IMPORTANT

8% DON'T KNOW



AUSTRIA



CZECH REPUBLIC



FRANCE



NETHERLANDS



SPAIN



UNITED KINGDOM

‘How important do you believe it is to make publicly available full documentation from the European Central Bank about action taken in response to the financial crisis?’



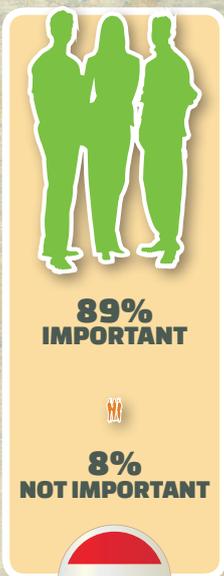
84% IMPORTANT



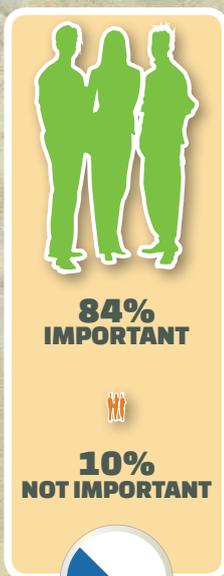
8% NOT IMPORTANT



8% DON'T KNOW



AUSTRIA



CZECH REPUBLIC



FRANCE



NETHERLANDS



SPAIN



UNITED KINGDOM

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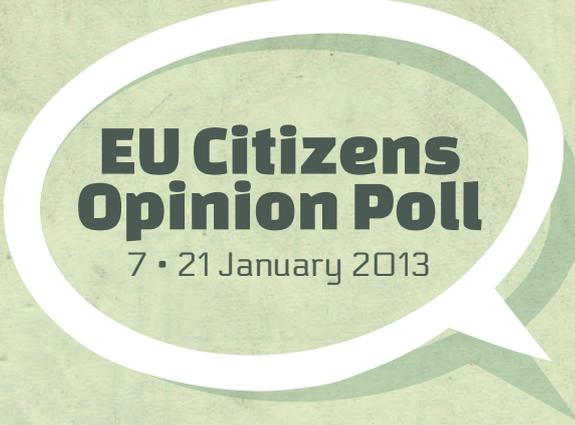
Section 2

Access to EU Documents

RECOMMENDATIONS



- Legal advice that forms part of a legislative process should be proactively made public by the EU institutions concerned.
- Key documents related to EU spending should be proactively published, including the conditions related to each grant, details about what the grant is for and whom it is going to, and information about the implementation of the grant such as final reports and evaluations. Citizens should have access to enough information to permit them to track EU funding down to the local level and to make comparisons between projects and over time.
- More information should be made proactively available about the positions being taken by EU Member States on behalf of their citizens during Council negotiations. The Council of the European Union should grant full access to documents relating to legislative matters wherever possible, in line with the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon.
- The European Central Bank should explore the impact of its new supervisory powers on its current communication and publication policies, and should enact the Treaty of Lisbon provision which states that “decisions shall be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen”.



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Section 3

Parliamentary Ethics – side jobs

Several recent scandals in the European Parliament and Commission have revealed that safeguarding ethics for EU officials requires strong rules and clear implementing guidelines. When it comes to the European Parliament, this is likely to be of specific interest for citizens as Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are the only European officials directly elected by citizens.

This section of the poll focuses on the links between parliamentary ethics and public trust. The results reveal that poor enforcement of parliamentary rules on ethics and conflicts of interest negatively affects citizens' confidence.

Four out of five respondents feel less confident that MEPs represent the best interests of citizens if they also work for a lobby group or a private company, and 82% think it can be a conflict of interest if an MEP works for a lobby group or a private company. The survey also reveals that according to 67% of the respondents, MEPs should not be allowed to work for a lobby group or a private company while they are also serving as elected representatives.

'I am less confident that an MEP represents the best interests of citizens if they also work for a lobby group or a private company'



80% AGREE

10% DISAGREE

10% DON'T KNOW



**83%
AGREE**

**10%
DISAGREE**



AUSTRIA

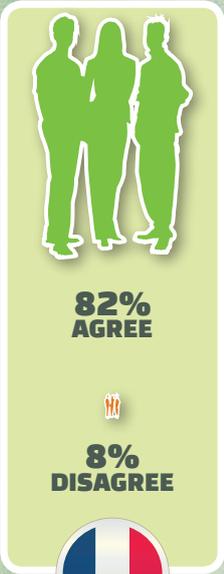


**84%
AGREE**

**11%
DISAGREE**



CZECH REPUBLIC



**82%
AGREE**

**8%
DISAGREE**



FRANCE

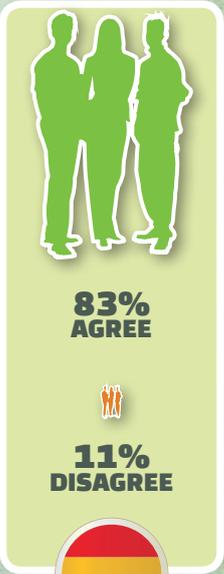


**73%
AGREE**

**12%
DISAGREE**



NETHERLANDS

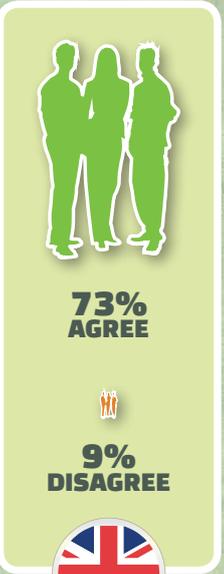


**83%
AGREE**

**11%
DISAGREE**



SPAIN



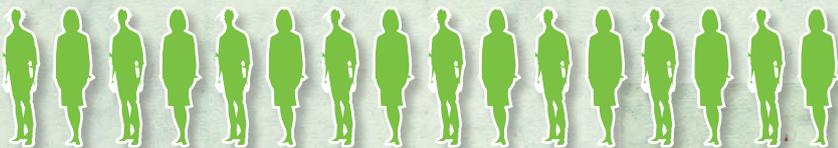
**73%
AGREE**

**9%
DISAGREE**



UNITED KINGDOM

‘It can be a conflict of interest if an MEP works for a lobby or a private company’



82% AGREE



8% DISAGREE



10% DON'T KNOW



AUSTRIA



CZECH REPUBLIC



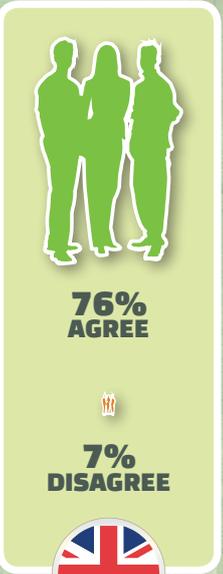
FRANCE



NETHERLANDS



SPAIN



UNITED KINGDOM

'MEPs should be allowed to work for a lobby group or a private company while they are serving as elected representatives'



22% AGREE



67% DISAGREE



12% DON'T KNOW



21% AGREE



71% DISAGREE



AUSTRIA



17% AGREE



75% DISAGREE



CZECH REPUBLIC



14% AGREE



76% DISAGREE



FRANCE



25% AGREE



59% DISAGREE



NETHERLANDS



30% AGREE



62% DISAGREE



SPAIN



21% AGREE



59% DISAGREE



UNITED KINGDOM

‘Being a MEP is a full-time job, which does not leave time for any other employment’



69% AGREE



18% DISAGREE



12% DON'T KNOW



**71%
AGREE**



**19%
DISAGREE**



AUSTRIA



**75%
AGREE**



**19%
DISAGREE**



CZECH REPUBLIC



**76%
AGREE**



**14%
DISAGREE**



FRANCE



**64%
AGREE**



**18%
DISAGREE**



NETHERLANDS



**67%
AGREE**



**22%
DISAGREE**



SPAIN



**63%
AGREE**



**17%
DISAGREE**



UNITED KINGDOM

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Section 3

Parliamentary Ethics – side jobs

RECOMMENDATIONS



- The European Parliament should initiate a review to assess potential conflicts of interest for MEPs who have outside financial interests.
- The European Parliament should extend the mandate of the Advisory Committee to a proactive monitoring and investigative role, so that it can undertake random checks of the declarations and investigate any potential conflict of interest.
- The Working Group on the implementing rules of the Code of Conduct for Members of the European Parliament should introduce clarifications about what constitutes a conflict of interest by establishing a list of clear criteria. Activities that constitute a conflict of interest should include the following:
 - Any paid or unpaid activity of interest representation, as defined in the joint Transparency Register, for lobby consultancies or industry groups or any other lobby actor,
 - Any paid or unpaid position in the advisory or supervisory board of companies operating in fields that MEPs are likely to regulate or companies with an interest in influencing the European Parliament,
 - Any type of holding (including shares and stock options) or other financial interest in companies operating in fields that MEPs are likely to regulate or with an interest in influencing the European Parliament.

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6.222
EU citizens

1028
citizens



AUSTRIA

1022
citizens



CZECH
REPUBLIC

1054
citizens



FRANCE

1050
citizens



NETHERLANDS

1052
citizens



SPAIN

1016
citizens



UNITED
KINGDOM



About the EU Citizens Opinion Poll

The EU Citizens Opinion Poll focuses on three cross-cutting themes related to European Union decision-making: lobbying transparency, access to documents and parliamentary ethics.

The opinion poll was conducted by TNS opinion in Austria, Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom. Over 6,000 respondents completed online surveys from 17–23 January 2013. Citizens were asked a total of twelve questions, designed to test the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement.

The opinion poll is part of the twelve-month ALTER Citizens Project (5 February 2012 – 4 February 2013), which sought to foster citizen participation in EU decision-making and which was supported by the European Commission's Europe for Citizens Programme.

About the ALTER Citizens Project

There are six organisations involved in the ALTER Citizens Project. These are Access Info Europe - based in Spain, AITEC - based in France, Environmental Law Service - based in the Czech Republic, Friends of the Earth Europe - based in Belgium, Health Action International - based in the Netherlands, and SpinWatch - based in the UK.

The ALTER Citizens project is a partnership between varying organisations specialising in health, environment and the regulation of lobbying, with the central aim behind the project being to increase the transparency of the EU and to allow for greater and more meaningful public participation in EU decision-making.

The ALTER Citizens Project was partially funded by the European Commission under the Europe for Citizens Programme and has the official title "Accountability, Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation: Citizens have a right to know".

For more information please visit:
<http://www.eu-citizens.org/>



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