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Majority of EU citizens 'concerned' about EU lobbying

A new report says that a majority of people across Europe are concerned about ethics and lobbying in EU policymaking.

The main findings of a poll of over 6000 people in six European countries also shows that citizens want better regulation of lobbyists and increased transparency for the EU.

"The public are hungry for more information about what is happening in Brussels"

Helen Darbishire

The survey comes after recent scandals such as those surrounding the resignation of former EU health and consumer policy commissioner John Dalli, which implied that representatives of the tobacco industry had privileged access to key EU decision-makers.

The Olaf report which resulted in Dalli's resignation has still not been made public.

The Maltese authorities are thought to be close to concluding their inquiry into the Dalli case with charges likely to follow soon against the former commissioner's business associate who is alleged to have attempted to alter the EU tobacco products directive.

The survey reveals that 73 per cent of respondents are concerned that lobbyists representing the business sector have too much influence on EU decisions.

It says 80 per cent of those surveyed believe there should be mandatory regulation of lobbying to ensure a balanced participation of different interests in decision making.

The results come following the recent launch of the European year of citizens which aims to stimulate dialogue between governments and citizens.

Reaction to the findings came from Natacha Cingotti, of Friends of the Earth Europe, who said, "The results of this poll should be a wake-up call for European decision makers.

"Citizens are clearly asking for compulsory regulation for lobbying."

She said parliament "should insist" that this happens by making the EU's transparency register mandatory.

Four out of five people polled (80 per cent) also said 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.

French respondents (76 per cent) felt the most strongly that MEPs should not be allowed to work for a lobby group or a private company while they are serving as elected representatives.

Cingotti added, "This poll also signals that the poor enforcement of the MEP code of conduct negatively affects citizens' confidence. Strict implementation and monitoring of MEPs' second jobs are urgently needed to avoid conflicts of interest."

Further comment came from Helen Darbishire, executive director of Access Info Europe, who said, "This survey firms the findings of the EU citizens project conducted over the past year.

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An expert has warned that Cyprus faces "another 45 years of peace negotiations" unless a settlement to the island's long running dispute is found soon

EU watchdog calls on ECB to 'improve' communication with citizens

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The foreign minister of Kazakhstan says the EU has a "vital" role to play in helping his country on the "road to democracy"

Majority of EU citizens 'concerned' about EU lobbying

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"Clearly, members of the public are hungry for more information about what is happening in Brussels, and specifically that they want to know about decision making and spending."

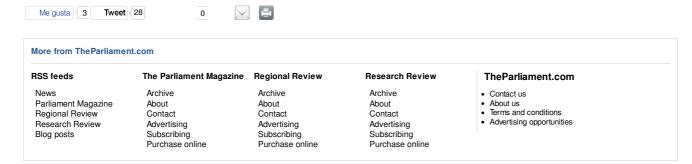
Meanwhile, it emerged on Thursday that corporate Europe observatory (CEO) has submitted a formal complaint to the ombudsman about the commission's secrecy around the 'Dalligate' scandal.

In the complaint, CEO accuses the commission of secrecy, selective release of documents and failure to fulfill its obligations under EU transparency legislation.

On 26 October 2012, CEO said it requested access to "all documents related to Dalli's resignation over the issues covered in the Olaf investigation, including all minutes of meetings, all correspondence, both internal and external, and any other documents held by the commission on these matters."

The commission has refused to disclose the most important of these documents.

CEO argues that "the commission has unduly refused access to documents, failed to provide clarity about which documents falling under the scope of request actually exist and used delay tactics", all of which constitutes "a pattern of serious maladministration".



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