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To: Mr Frans Timmermans
Vice President European Commission
cc. Michelle Sutton, Deputy Head of Cabinet

Rue de la Loi 200,
1049 Brussels
Belgium

11 May 2015

Dear First Vice-President Timmermans,

We, civil society organisations from across Europe, are writing to urge the European Commission to take strong and urgent action to create a high-quality and legally-binding EU lobby transparency register.

This issue is really important to us. Lobby transparency is vital to reduce unethical lobbying and also to begin to ensure a better balance between corporate and public interest groups in the access to, and influence they have on, decision-making processes.

We welcome the steps the Juncker Commission has taken to increase lobby transparency at the European level, including to ban the most senior Commission representatives from holding meetings with unregistered lobbyists and to publish lists of the lobby meetings held by those senior Commission representatives. However, the EU lobby register still has major weaknesses.

Firstly, it is still not obligatory. Lobbyists determined to avoid transparency will continue to get away with it unhindered. Secondly, disclosure requirements are too limited to give a comprehensive picture of who the EU's lobbyists are; who they are working for; what their financial means of influence are; how much they spend influencing; and what specific dossiers they lobby on. Moreover, too much information disclosed within the register is vague and can even be misleading. And thirdly, the lack of adequate capacity to monitor entries properly and to apply sanctions means that lobbyists who fail to follow the rules can do so without fear of sanction.

We urge you to take the following steps, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that the lobby register presents as full and accurate a picture as possible:

- » The Commission immediately extends its ban on meeting unregistered lobbyists so that it applies to all staff, to further boost registrations.
- » The Commission makes detailed proposals on the disclosure of additional and more precise information, including expenditure on lobbying activities and further details about the dossiers lobbied on.
- » The Commission commits to an open and transparent process with other EU institutions to improve the lobby register, which would include substantial opportunities for input by citizens and civil society.

- » The Commission commits to increasing the resources devoted to this area so that monitoring and enforcement of the rules can become far more effective.
- » The Commission commits to including the objective of a lobby register that is legally-binding on lobbyists and thus truly mandatory (requiring legislation) in its proposed Inter-Institutional Agreement as a medium-term option to ensure that all EU lobbyists sign up.

We recognise that other European institutions, including the Parliament, as well as member states operating at national level, also need to improve their rules and regulations regarding lobby transparency. Yet we consider that the Commission has a special responsibility to drive this agenda forward and to lead by example. The Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation, which has coordinated this letter, will prioritise the improvement of lobby transparency at the EU and member state levels over the next two years and it would be happy to work with you on this endeavour.

We look forward to hearing from you.

[C.S.O. LOGOS]