



## **Opening remarks of First Vice-President Timmermans on the Commission proposal for a mandatory Transparency Register covering all EU institutions**

Brussels, 28 September 2016

I am here today to speak about the transparency register, not about wider ethical issues.

You know that President Juncker is looking at the Barroso and Kroes cases and we are being as transparent as possible as we go through this process – within the limits of our legal obligations. The Commission will first establish the facts, and then act if and when appropriate.

But today is about looking forward.

The proposals we make are about rebuilding trust in all EU institutions.

Because for citizens, Brussels is Brussels and the EU is all of us. They don't distinguish between Commission, Parliament, Council. They look at all of us in the same way.

I don't care for EU institutions pointing fingers at each other. I don't like that at all. On something like transparency we need to work together – and to achieve the highest standards together.

We need to reflect collectively on how we can win back the trust of our citizens. That means delivering on the big issues that matter most to citizens. Our economic policies count, our social policies count, our trade policies, our environmental policies, and our actions in many areas which affect many lives for 500 million people.

How we make the decisions here in Brussels – and who influences them – is a matter of public concern and scrutiny.

The Commission wants all the EU institutions to shed light on this. Many citizens answered our public consultation to say they feel the same. We got strong support for this idea in our public consultation. Ultimately it boils down to trust. Trust that we do things openly, fairly and in the best interests of the citizens we serve.

Today's proposal for a mandatory transparency register, covering interactions with all three EU institutions, is in my view an important step in the right direction – it will open the windows of all the institutions in Brussels, and Strasbourg, and Luxembourg.

Speaking with outside organisations is a normal part of any public authority's work and is a requirement of the Treaties.

Listening to the outside world is not a bad thing: we need to hear what people think about our proposals. That is why this Commission has put in place more consultation, also in the Inter-Institutional agreement on better law-making there is a lot more consultation and a lot more input from the outside.

Our openness about draft rules, and our consultation of the public, has already shown positive results. Just look to the roaming rules, where we have listened to and acted on feedback when it has come. This is a key part of better regulation. We do not have the monopoly of wisdom, far from it.

Yes we must listen, but citizens need to know who we are listening to. We need to be open about when and how lobbying happens and have some rules in place for how it works.

Transparency has been Jean-Claude Juncker's priority and my priority since day one. It is not by chance that the Commission was the top-ranked EU institution in last year's Transparency International Report on lobbying transparency; the Commission ranked second behind Slovenia and we ranked first in European institutions.

It is this Commission which has let the public know who Commissioners, our Cabinets and our Director-Generals are meeting. It is this Commission which has applied the rule: "If you're not on the Transparency Register, you don't get a meeting".

Since then we have seen about 4000 new entries in the register. 4000. Quite a telling number I think.

Building on the Commission's positive experiences, we are now proposing that the other EU institutions join our approach.

We want the Parliament and Council to sign up to the same minimum requirements for their interactions with interest representatives who seek to influence European policies and decisions.

Our proposal would make the Register mandatory for any lobbyists trying to influence policy-making in Brussels, by extending the "no registration, no meeting" rule to MEPs, the Secretary-General and Directors-General of the Parliament and the Secretaries-General of the political groups.

On the Council side, the rule would be extended to the Ambassadors and Deputies of the current or incoming Presidency of the Council, as well as to the Council's Secretary-General and Directors-General.

In addition to extending the coverage of the Transparency Register, we propose measures to improve the data it holds, better control its quality and enforce the rules. This was also something that came up strongly from the public consultation and the feedback we got from interested parties.

And those who don't play by the rules risk being suspended from meetings with EU institutions or even removed from the register altogether.

I believe that thanks to the mandatory register, all citizens will be able to see who is trying to influence EU policy, who they represent and how much they spend on lobbying.

We will now get to work now with the Parliament and Council and hope to conclude these negotiations as quickly as possible.

We are fully committed to openness and transparency in our decision-making. This is our proposal to the other two institutions. We are open for debate on this. If they want to go further than this, by all means we are open to that as well.

Let's take all EU institutions to the same level and let's increase collectively the transparency of what we do.

Thank you very much.

SPEECH/16/3223

Press contacts:

[Natasha BERTAUD](#) (+32 2 296 74 56)

[Tim McPHIE](#) (+ 32 2 295 86 02)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)