



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

Directorate B - Relations with civil society
Director

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Mr Erik Wesselius
Corporate Europe Observatory

Paulus Potterstraat 20
NL-1071 DA Amsterdam

Subject: Lobbying

Ref.: Your letter of 25 October 2004 (BARROSO (04) A/956, 3 November 2004)

Dear Mr Wesselius,

Thank you for the above-mentioned letter which the President-designate, Mr Barroso, has forwarded to me. In the letter, signed by about 50 civil society groups, you express your concerns about influence of lobby groups over EU policy making.

As you certainly know, the European Commission Services are in constant contact with external parties when drafting policies. This is a normal part of our work and it is essential to listen to different views when policies are being developed.

Therefore, the Commission works in an open manner and there is no accreditation system for interest groups. The Commission, in its dialogue and consultation with civil society seeks to ensure that relevant parties are heard. This important principle was stressed in the Communication on Minimum standards for consultation adopted by the Commission in 2002 (COM(2002) 704). According to this, everybody is welcome to provide input to the Commission, and dialogue and consultation can be adapted according to the needs of different policy fields. On the other hand, our internal staff regulations impose requirements of independence and objectivity on the Commission staff when dealing with external parties - lobbyists, for instance. Officials are bound by such obligations, which are not incompatible with the fact that they listen to different arguments of parties that have an interest in a particular file or question.

As you mentioned, there is a voluntary code of conduct which several professional organizations or individuals have already signed. By recommending the signing of voluntary codes the Commission wanted to encourage interest groups to maintain good practices, while at the same time guaranteeing openness.

The signatories to these voluntary codes, which include both companies and individuals, come together within two entities (SEAP - Society of European Affairs Practitioners and PAP - Public Affairs Practitioners). Interested organisations and practitioners are welcome to sign the code.

Yours sincerely,



Jens Nymand-Christensen

Cc: Mr H. Reichenbach, DG Enterprise, Mr M.P. Carl, DG Trade
SEAP: Mr R. Chorus, PAP: Ms Laptev, Ms Coldrick