398 MEPs earn up to €18m from side-jobs - EU Integrity Watch database launched -

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Members of the European Parliament must be more transparent about the on-the-side activities they do while in public office, Transparency International's EU Office said today, as new research showed MEPs collectively earn between €5.8 and €18.3 million per year on top of their official salaries.

"With more than half of MEPs pursing activities outside of the European Parliament, it is important for citizens to know exactly what private interests, they have at the same time as they carry out public duties." says Carl Dolan, Director of Transparency International EU. "If it wants to restore trust in Brussels decision-making, the Parliament must do more than just pay lip-service to transparency, and put in place some meaningful checks and balances."

The findings come from the new EU Integrity Watch database (www.integritywatch.eu), launched today, which will for the first time collect all available information on the outside activities and incomes of MEPs.

The data shows that Europe's politicians have alarming levels of private interests, with 175 earning at least €500 per month from outside activities. 12 MEPs earn more than €10,000 a month, while one MEP declared 68 different outside activities. The database shows the scale of outside activity but raises more questions than answers, Transparency International's EU Office warned.

The database provides a comprehensive overview of MEPs' outside revenues. It can be used to show differences between countries, political groups and national parties, and to monitor potential conflicts of interest where their private interests conflict with their public duties. It allows MEPs to be ranked based on the number of outside occupations, board memberships or other political mandates they have as well as the income derived from these activities.

Key findings:

- ? 398 or 53% of MEPs have outside activities
- ? Combined, those 398 MEPs earn between €5.8 and €18.3 million per year on top of their MEP salaries.
- ? 175 earn at least €500 per month from outside activities, 12 MEPs even exceed €10,000,

- ? One MEP has declared 68 different outside activities
- ? Seven declarations are completely blank (no previous or current activities or revenues)
- ? 46 MEPs indicated a previous income of less than €1,000 per month, according to their declarations.
- ? Of those, eight were members of the previous Parliament, who failed to declare their previous mandate. Whether these activities constitute a conflict with the role of MEP is still hard to say because of lacking transparency, according to Card Dolan. While the database shows a total of 1,210 activities have been declared, the way in which some MEPs declare these activities, using terms such as "consultant", "freelancer", "manager" or abbreviations such as "RvC FMO" or "ASDCAM", does not allow an assessment of potential conflicts of interest. "Meaningful monitoring of conflicts of interest is impossible with the current declarations", said Daniel Freund, Policy Officer at Transparency International EU. "The European Parliament administration should improve checks on the declarations for possible errors and remind MEPs to provide accurate, useful and updated information. False declarations should lead to sanctions" Transparency International's recommendations:

- ? Members need to provide more detailed, accurate and timely information on their activities and incomes to allow a meaningful monitoring of potential conflicts of interest
- ? The financial bands on the declaration forms (e.g. 'income between €1.001 and €5,000 per month') should be narrowed. Current rules that allow MEPs who earn more that €10,000 per month to provide no further information should be changed
- ? The European Parliament should issue clearer guidelines on how to fill out the declarations and it should better monitor the submitted declarations
- ? All declarations should be translated into all official EU languages to allow all European citizens to monitor all their MEPs
- ? An independent ethics committee should monitor compliance and issue binding recommendations for sanctions against MEPs in case of false declarations Transparency

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