



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its reply to the public consultation on the Transparency Register. The Bundesrat's comments and suggestions are very timely and have received our full attention.

The Commission welcomes the Bundesrat's support for our wider transparency agenda and particularly for the Transparency Register as one of its most important tools. Transparency lies at the heart of the 'Democratic Change' priority set out in the Political Guidelines of this Commission. Although the Commission is already a very transparent public administration, public expectations for openness and accountability are evolving and the Commission has reviewed its tools and practices in order to adapt them and progress further where appropriate.

It is with this objective in mind that the Commission included in its Better Regulation package in May 2015 a series of new transparency features to facilitate the participation of citizens and stakeholders in policy-making processes. We have also taken decisions to improve transparency around trade negotiations and have updated our internal rules on expert groups to introduce more openness and avoid conflicts of interest. Finally, the rule that Commissioners, their cabinets and Directors-General only meet with interest representative who are registered has led to a significant increase in the number of entries in the existing Transparency Register.

The forthcoming proposal for an Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory Transparency Register covering the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission is a key item in the Commission's Work Programme for 2016.

In preparing the proposal, the Commission will take due account of all the feedback received in reply to the public consultation which ended on 1 June. The Commission received a total of 1,758 contributions, of which approximately 780 come from organisations and the rest from the general public. This high volume of responses shows that President Juncker's Transparency Initiative and the commitment to create a mandatory Transparency Register have helped increase the visibility and importance of the Register vis-à-vis the other EU institutions and stakeholders.

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Given the important role of national Parliaments in the multi-layered system of European governance, when designing the proposal for a mandatory Transparency Register, the Commission will pay special attention to the views expressed by the Bundesrat and by other national Parliaments.

The Commission is also fully aware of the specific role of regional and local authorities. In the context of the design of a mandatory Transparency Register, the Commission will therefore give due consideration to the views expressed by the Bundesrat regarding the scope of the Register.

This exercise offers a fresh opportunity to look carefully into all the provisions contained within the current Interinstitutional Agreement and to improve it where necessary. The Commission's aim is to balance effective disclosure rules without creating an excessive bureaucratic burden for interest representatives and the EU institutions. The Commission intends to present its proposal for a mandatory Transparency Register in the autumn.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Bundesrat and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

Frans Timmermans

First Vice-President