



The Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and
Ethics Regulation in the EU (ALTER-EU)

Brussels, February 17 2010

To: Algirdas Šemeta, EU Commissioner for Taxation and Customs Union, Audit and Anti-Fraud

Re: Meeting with ALTER-EU

Dear Commissioner Šemeta,

As you have just been confirmed new Commissioner for Taxation and Customs Union, Audit and Anti-fraud by the European Parliament, The Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation in the European Union (ALTER-EU)¹ would like to congratulate you for your appointment. In your new capacity, you will not only be responsible for coordinating the fight against fraud between the various EU institutions but also for other ethics issues such as preventing conflicts of interests. In particular, you will be involved in the review of the current Code of Conduct of Commissioners. ALTER-EU has been highly active in the debate on transparency and ethics that was opened up in the EU when Commissioner Siim Kallas launched the European transparency Initiative (ETI). We have been advocating for tighter rules on conflicts of interests (for instance regarding officials going through the revolving door into industry lobbying) in the EU to prevent undue influence on decision making. We have regularly provided policy recommendations to both the Commission and the Parliament on these issues. We have met several times with Commissioner Kallas and we established a good work relationship with the Commission.

¹ *The Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation (ALTER-EU) is a coalition of over 160 public interest groups, trade unions, academics and public affairs firms concerned with the increasing influence exerted by corporate lobbyists on the political agenda in Europe, the resulting loss of democracy in EU decision-making and the postponement, weakening, or blockage even, of urgently needed progress on social, environmental and consumer-protection reforms. www.alter-eu.org*

During your approval hearing, ALTER-EU perceived your ambition to ensure proper cooperation between the institutions on these matters as a very positive departing point. We very much welcome your commitment to involve the Parliament in the review of the Code of Conduct for Commissioners and to meet the parliamentary Budgetary Control Committee on an annual basis to discuss how to prevent conflicts of interests. As rightly pointed out by several MEPs, the current Code of Conduct for Commissioners does not include a clear and comprehensive definition of conflicts of interests, for instance related to gifts and post-employment. **We would highly appreciate if you would accept to meet with us to discuss the concrete steps you intend to take to address these pressing issues during your mandate and the policy proposals ALTER-EU has developed in this area.**

You will find here enclosed an open letter that we sent to Commission President Barroso on November 24th 2009. The latter is addressing the review of the Commissions' Code of Conduct as well as a number of urgent questions about preventing conflicts of interests of EU Commissioners in the context of the transition between the Barroso-I and Barroso-II presidencies.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Paul de Clerck', written over a light grey rectangular background.

On behalf of the Steering Committee of ALTER-EU
Paul de Clerck, Head Economic Justice Program Friends of the Earth Europe

Contact: paul@milieudedefensie.nl

Phone: +32(0)494380959