



**Mr Frans Timmermans**

First Vice-President  
European Commission  
Rue de la Loi 200  
BE-1049 Brussels  
BELGIUM

24 March 2015

Dear First Vice-President,

A transparent and open dialogue between the EU institutions and all stakeholders is vital for high-quality EU policy-making. We have therefore always promoted registration in the Transparency Register among our member federations and companies.

BUSINESSEUROPE itself lists all its meetings with EU institutions in the weekly newsletter 'Headlines', and letters and positions are publicly available on its website.

BUSINESSEUROPE and its member federations have therefore welcomed the European Commission initiatives to increase transparency from its conception 10 years ago. The same goes for the new rules on contacts between EU institutions and interest representatives and its overarching aim to bring the EU closer to its citizens.

Therefore, this letter intends to bring to your attention some broadly shared concerns about unintended side-effects and unnecessary bureaucracy. In order to further bring the Register's provisions in line with its core purpose and to provide more legal certainty without creating too much administrative burden for all sides, we would like to share with you the following thoughts:

1. BUSINESSEUROPE encourages the Commission and Parliament to facilitate the disclosure of memberships in EU structures and platforms as well as to ensure a coherent terminology. Especially for large entities, it is often very burdensome to collect all relevant information. On a practical note and to increase data reliability, we recommend to establish a fully integrated, accurate database covering all EU structures and platforms and to link it to the EU Transparency Register.
2. BUSINESSEUROPE is in favour of further improving the reliability, validity and transparency of costs for EU interest representation. We see the importance to protect the quality and robustness of data, which should be based on a clear methodology. At the same time, comparability of such financial data should be improved in order to meet accuracy of the Register. Requirements to disclose membership costs and related fees in the total lobby sum could lead in many circumstances to exorbitantly inflated sums.



For instance, trade associations offer a large variety of activities for their members that go beyond interest representation targeted at EU institutions. One example being interest representation targeted only at regional and national policies, or internal activities to promote social dialogue. In such cases, the inclusion of the full membership fees in the overall costs would provide a distorted picture since a certain portion of such costs would not relate to EU interest representation. In addition, membership fees would be referred to twice – as costs of members and as costs of associations (double counting). This would create a misleading picture and threaten the quality and the reputation of the register. We therefore strongly recommend to clearly separate between estimated annual costs and memberships.

3. Finally, BUSINESSEUROPE and its members would appreciate legal certainty in respect to turnover figures. Whereas the Inter-Institutional Agreement of April 2014 (in annex 2, section C3) calls on section II registrants (companies and trade associations) to provide such figures, the Register itself rightly does not. It has proved impossible for companies and associations to provide reliable information on such turnover figures attributable to EU interest representation. Therefore, we would appreciate if this requirement could be cleaned from the future Inter-Institutional Agreement.

We encourage the European Commission and the European Parliament to make the EU Transparency Register even more effective and thus promoting a more open, accountable and stronger Europe.

BUSINESSEUROPE and our member federations will continue providing constructive support and therefore contribute to help improving high quality legislation and transparency in the EU.

We would very much appreciate if we could discuss this matter further with you and your staff in the near future. We need clarification, in particular on the issue of membership fees. We remain at your disposal for any comments and questions.

Yours sincerely,

Markus J. Beyrer