

To: Mr. Fredrick Hyde-Chambers
International Association of Business & Parliament (IABP)
Date: 7 November 2008

Dear Fredrick Hyde-Chambers,

Thank you for your response on behalf of the European Business & Parliament Scheme (EBPS) to the EBPS' nomination for 'Worst EU Lobbying' Awards 2008.

Allow us first to clarify that we do not claim that the EBPS is a lobby group. The reality is, however, that the EBPS is being used as a vehicle for lobbying by large multinational companies. This lobbying has been facilitated very actively by EBPS staff working from offices within the European Parliament, by people using EP email addresses. This is an unacceptable situation.

The corporate members of the EBPS undertake a wide range of different activities in their attempt to influence EU decision-making. They lobby directly via their own in-house lobbyists, and indirectly via associations of which they are a member, via think tanks that they finance, by sponsoring public debates in the Brussels EU quarter, or by advertising in newspapers and magazines read by EU policy-makers. These are just a few examples. It seems very naïve to claim that these companies would not consider the opportunities for in-depth interaction with MEPs provided by the EBPS as a complement to their lobbying strategies.

In late September, for instance, the EBPS wrote to an MEP with a high public profile on energy issues to offer an 'educational programme', to "better understand economic issues and the businesses that work within the legislative framework created" by the Parliament. Among the firms which the EBPS recommended the MEP to engage with through a "company attachment" was Suez, the France-based energy, water and waste management giant. In a two-page appendix, a wide range of options are presented, starting with the offer of "Meeting with top specialists and panels of experts at SUEZ headquarters in Paris and/or Brussels with possible additional on-site visits and meetings."

This type of meetings are a dream-come-true in terms of lobbying opportunities for a company like Suez, which, clearly, has a direct commercial interest in influencing several important dossiers under discussion in the European Parliament at the time, including reports on emissions trading, greenhouse gas reduction, CO2 capture and storage as well as the directive on renewable energy. The claim that your corporate members do not (ab)use the opportunities facilitated by EBPS to lobby MEPs is simply unconvincing.

You mention that "Those who breach this rule are subject to sanctions defined in the IABP's Governance Regulations for the European Business and Parliament Scheme." We have not heard of any of the participating firms ever having been investigated for breaching the rules, let alone received a warning or lost its membership. If this has indeed happened please kindly make this information available.

We noticed that Suez is also represented on your Business Advisory Board, with Florence Mourey, a former Hill & Knowlton lobby consultant who is now the Deputy Head of the firm's EU Affairs Department, in other words Suez lobbying headquarters in Brussels. You argue that the EBPS "promotes a link between parliamentary and business practitioners rather than with professional representatives or lobbyists", but also the other three members of the Business Advisory Board are lobbyists for corporate giants rather than practitioners (Alexis Brouhns from Solvay, Miguel Pestana from Unilever and Willem van der Weiden from oil firm Yara).

In your letter you highlight the importance of transparency and state that every programme of the EBPS is approved by a cross-party board of MEPs. You however fail to mention that the full board resigned "with immediate and irreversible effect" in the end of September. The MEPs state that the EBPS has transformed into "a continuous source of trouble and concerns".

There is nothing misleading about our decision that the EBPS deserves a place in the voting shortlist of the 'Worst EU Lobbying' Awards 2008, nor is this a witch-hunt. The concerns about the EBPS' operations inside the European Parliament were shared across the political groups in the Parliament. This led to a decision by the Group of Presidents in May 2008 that the EBPS should leave its rent-free offices in the Parliament. Implementing this decision would be a long-overdue step towards restoring normal democratic practice.

Yours sincerely,

Olivier Hoedeman

On behalf of the organisers of the 'Worst EU Lobbying' Awards 2008
(Corporate Europe Observatory, Friends of the Earth Europe, LobbyControl and Spinwatch)