

Annual Report on the operations of the Transparency Register
2015

**Presented by the Secretaries-General
of the European Parliament and the European Commission**

to

Ms Sylvie Guillaume, Vice-President of the European Parliament
and
**Mr Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European
Commission**

As laid down in **Paragraph 28 of the revised Interinstitutional Agreement (IIA) on the Transparency Register**, signed on 16 April 2014 (as a joint instrument for the European Parliament and European Commission), this **Annual Report provides an account of the operations of the Transparency Register during the year 2015.**

This Report:

- Presents statistics on the operations of the Register from January to December 2015;
- Presents the main improvements in the revised Transparency Register;
- Describes the activities of the Register undertaken by the Joint Transparency Register Secretariat to improve the quality of the content and to raise awareness of it as a tool.

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Acronyms used in the report:

EP = European Parliament

EC = European Commission

EU = European Union

GSC = General Secretariat of the Council

IIA = Inter-Institutional Agreement

IT = Information Technology

JTRS = Joint Transparency Register Secretariat

MEP = Member of the European Parliament

NGO = Non-Governmental Organisation

Register = Transparency Register

I: INTRODUCTION

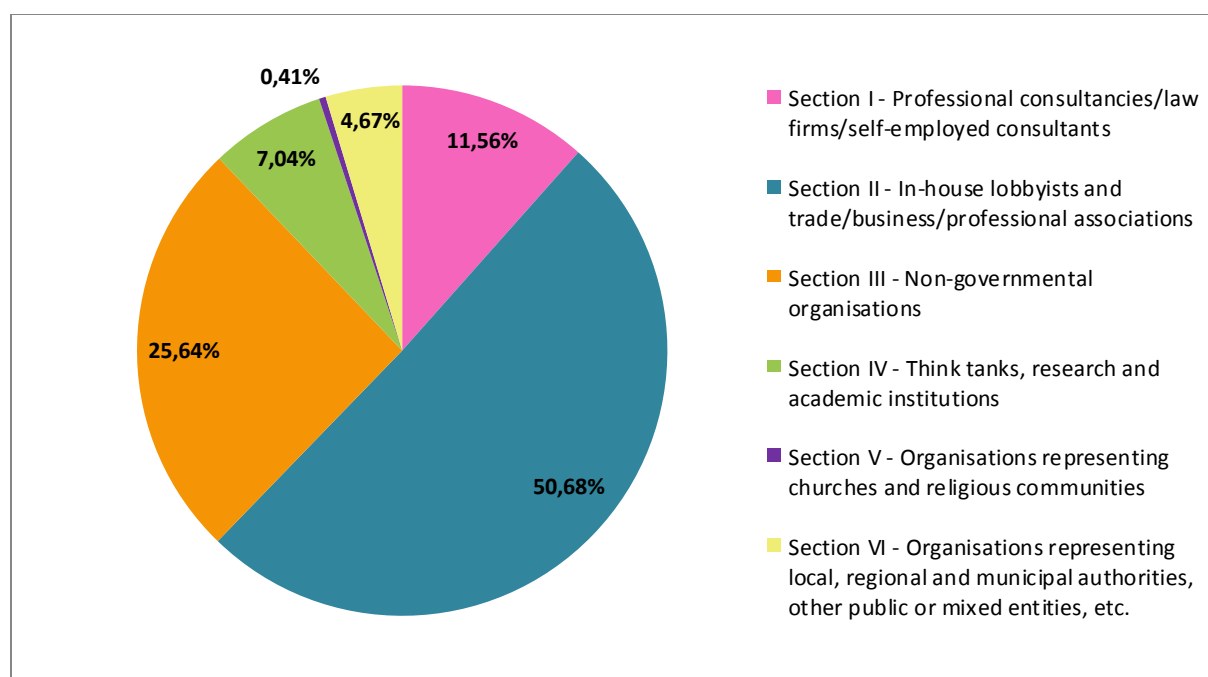
The Transparency Register (hereinafter: the Register) was set up as a joint scheme by the European Parliament (EP) and the European Commission (EC) in 2011 through an Inter-Institutional Agreement (IIA). It represents one of the key tools for implementing the commitment of these two institutions to transparency. The Register applies to all interest groups engaging in activities carried out with the objective of influencing the law-making and policy implementation processes of the EU institutions. By shedding light on what interests are being pursued, by whom and with what level of resources, the Register allows for increased public scrutiny, giving citizens and other interest groups the possibility to track the activities of interest groups. The system includes nearly 9 000 entities, all signed up to a common Code of Conduct¹.

II: STATE OF PLAY OF THE TRANSPARENCY REGISTER²

There are six sections for registration in the Register. In 2015, the largest section, representing just over half of all registrants, was *'In-house lobbyists and trade/business/professional associations'* (see table 1). Within this section, the main sub-section, *'Trade and business associations'*, represents 48% of all in-house lobbyists and trade/business/professional associations (see table 2, Section II).

'Non-governmental organisations' (Section III) was the next most common type of registrant, representing 25.6% of all registered organisations. *'Professional consultancies, law firms or self-employed consultants'* (Section I) came next, representing almost 11.6% of all registrants. Smaller groups of registrants were *'Think tanks, research and academic institutions'* (Section IV), followed by *'Transnational associations and networks of public regional or other sub-national authorities'* (Section VI) and *'Organisations representing churches and religious communities'* (Section V).

Table 1: Distribution of interest representatives

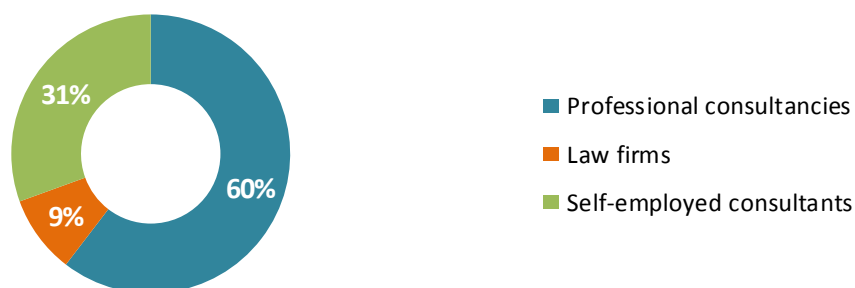


¹ Counting only entities that were registered and active on 31.12.2015.

² Figures presented in this report reflect the situation on 31.12.2015.

Table 2: Breakdown per sub-section³

Section I: Professional consultancies/law firms/self-employed consultants



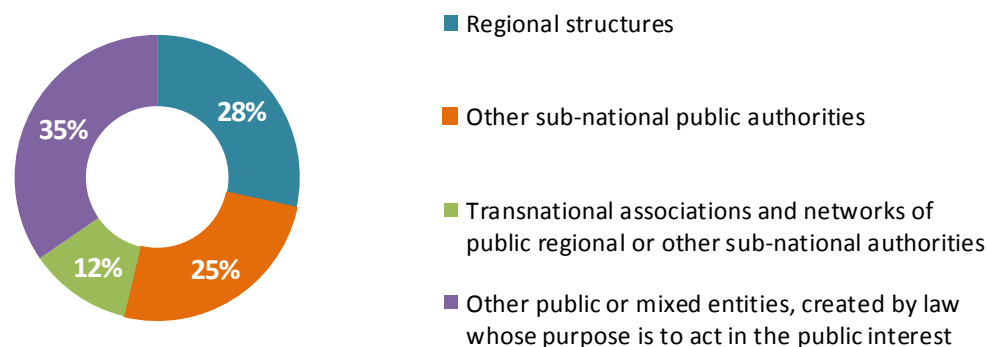
Section II: In-house lobbyists and trade/business/professional associations



Section IV: Think tanks, research and academic institutions



Section VI: Organisations representing local, regional and municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.

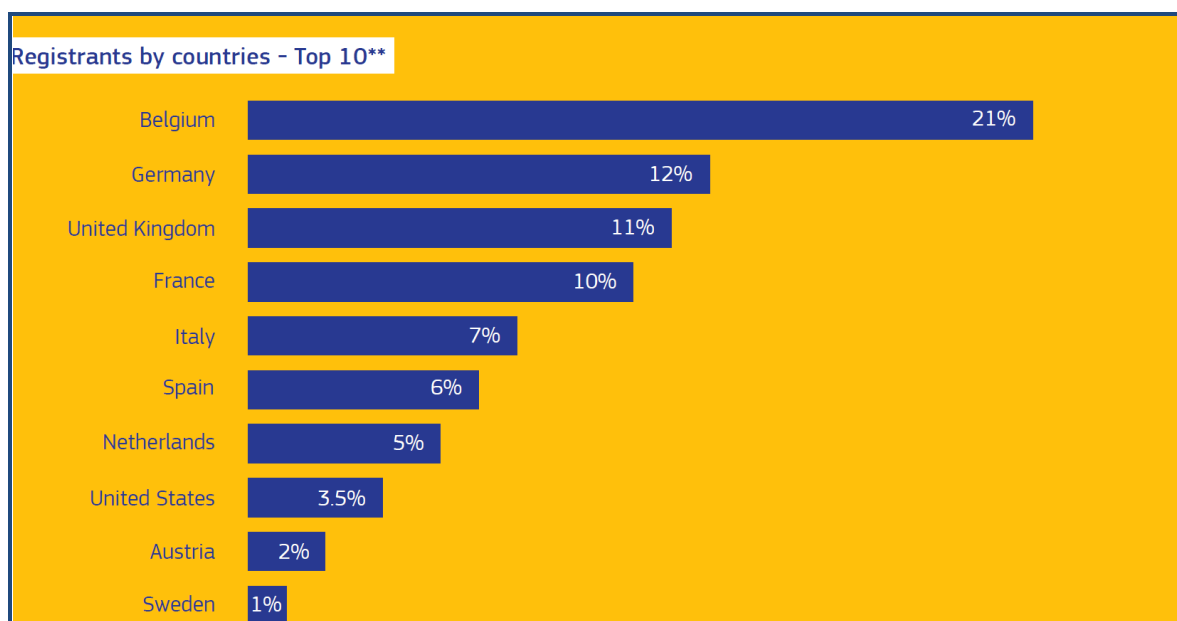


³ Sections III and V do not have sub-sections.

Table 3: Distribution of registrants on 31.12.2015

On 31/12/2015, there were 8 981 registrants in the Register spread across the following (sub)categories:	
I - Professional consultancies/law firms/self-employed consultants	1 038
Professional consultancies	627
Law firms	94
Self-employed consultants	317
II - In-house lobbyists and trade/business professional associations	4 552
Companies & groups	1 564
Trade and business associations	2 187
Trade unions and professional associations	523
Other organisations	278
III - Non-governmental organisations	2 303
Non-governmental organisations, platforms and networks and similar	2 303
IV - Think tanks, research and academic institutions	632
Think tanks and research institutions	453
Academic institutions	179
V - Organisations representing churches and religious communities	37
Organisations representing churches and religious communities	37
VI - Organisations representing local, regional and municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.	419
Regional structures	119
Other sub-national public authorities	106
Transnational associations and networks of public regional or other sub-national authorities	49
Other public or mixed entities, created by law whose purpose is to act in the public interest	145

Table 4: Registrants per country of origin

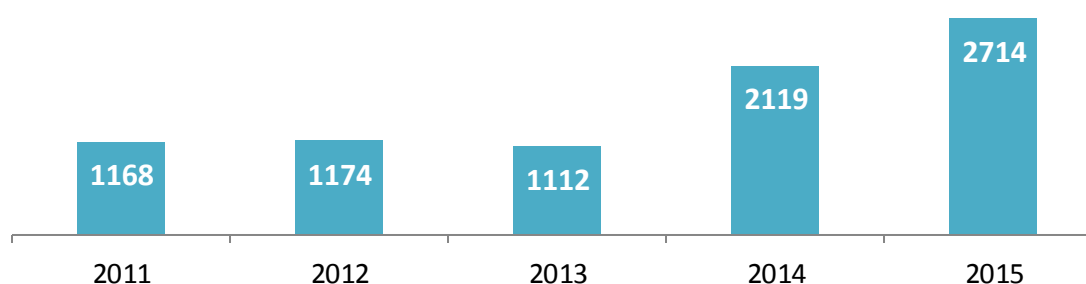


The vast majority of registrants are EU-based (91.4%), with over 21% of all registrants declaring a head office in Belgium, 12% in Germany, 11% in the UK, 10% in France, 7% in Italy and 6% in Spain. Only 3.5% of registrants have USA-based offices (see table 4).

Trends in 2015

There were 2 714 new registrations in 2015⁴. Of these, 354 entities registered in Section I; 1 331 in Section II; 662 in Section III; 221 in Section IV; 8 in Section V and 138 in Section VI. The average number of new registrations per week was 52.

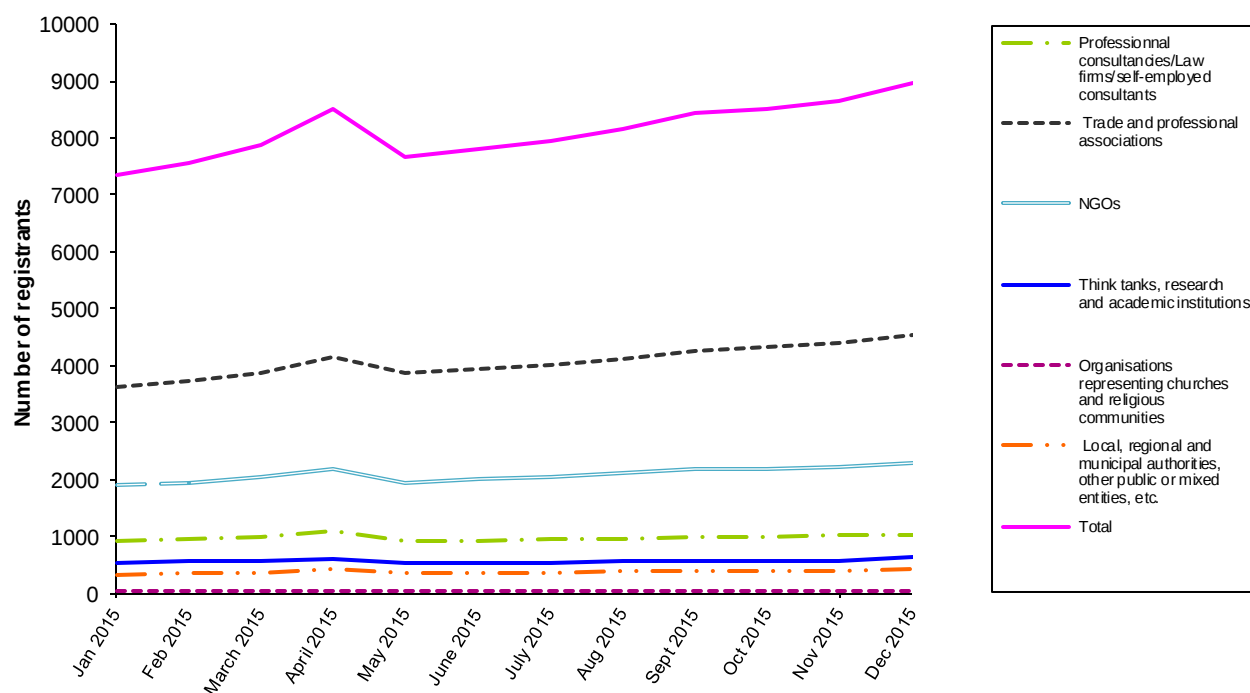
Table 5: New registrations per year



Note: For trends since 2011, please refer to the Register website – <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/statistics.do?locale=en&action=prepareView>

⁴ Counting only entities that were registered and active on 31.12.2015.

Table 6: Number of registrants in 2015



Following the entry into force of the revised IIA on the Transparency Register, all registrants were requested to update their registration data by end of April 2015, in order to adhere to the new system and provide any additional information required in the new registration forms. The decrease in the number of registrants following this period is linked to this requirement, as 1 214 registrants were removed for having failed to update their entries in time.

The overall number of new registrations per year is rising, however. This is most likely due to the implementation by the two institutions of new incentives for registration.

The decisions⁵ taken in November 2014 by the Juncker Commission to begin publication of information on all meetings held by Commissioners, their Cabinet staff and Directors-General with interest representatives, as well as the related rule 'not on the Register, no meeting', also explain the increase in registration from December 2014.

Registration is also a precondition for organisations and self-employed individuals whose representatives have been invited to speak at committee hearings of the Parliament or who seek facilitated access to the Parliament's premises. Accreditation can be granted for a period of up to 12 months and is renewable. Approximately 6 800 authorisations for access for individuals were granted in 2015 by Parliament, for representatives of over 2 000 organisations in the Register (either as a new request or a renewal).

In 2015, the Register website received an average of 75 000 unique visitors⁶ or 134 000 visits per month⁷. Up to 30% of visits came via the main *Europa* website, while almost 12% reached the website via search engines.

⁵ C(2014)9051: http://ec.europa.eu/news/2014/docs/c_2014_9051_en.pdf and C(2014)9048: http://ec.europa.eu/news/2014/docs/c_2014_9048_en.pdf.

⁶ The 'unique visitor' is the uniquely identified client viewing pages within a defined time period (one day in this case). A unique visitor is counted once in the considered period whereas the visitor can have several visits. As identification is done on visitor' PCs, the same visitor using more than one PC is counted more times.

⁷ A 'visit' is defined as a series of page requests from the same uniquely identified client.

III: LAUNCH OF THE REVISED TRANSPARENCY REGISTER

On 16 April 2014, the Parliament and the Commission signed a revised Inter-Institutional Agreement on the Transparency Register, which included a series of improvements to the system. The changes were applied as from January 2015 when a new version of the Register was launched.

The main improvements in the revised IIA were the following:

- Clarification of the different sections, enabling registrants to select the correct category more easily;
- Overhaul of the alerts and complaints procedure to increase the speed and efficiency of monitoring and improve the quality of the data;
- Strengthening of the Code of Conduct by adding two new provisions⁸;
- Commitment to introduce more incentives to encourage registration;
- Introduction of similar financial disclosure requirements for all registrants so to ensure a level playing field;
- Clarification of the scope of activities covered by the Register, to encourage the registration by part of some underrepresented stakeholders.

The Register website was revamped offering easier navigation, a more straightforward registration process, extended search options and clearer helpdesk services. The registration process as well as the accreditation procedure to obtain long-term access to the EP were made more efficient. Additionally, to assist registrants, the JTRS issued comprehensive guidelines to accompany them through the registration process, also featuring frequently asked questions (FAQs).

IV: ACTIVITIES OF THE JOINT TRANSPARENCY REGISTER SECRETARIAT

The Joint Transparency Register Secretariat (JTRS) is made up of a team of officials from the EP and the EC. It operates under the coordination of the Head of the Transparency Unit in the EC Secretariat-General; Council is an observer. The JTRS is in charge of the day-to-day management of the system; it offers help-desk services, issues and updates guidelines for registration, undertakes data quality checks, handles alerts and complaints received, coordinates IT development and maintenance, and carries out awareness-raising activities.

1. Monitoring of data in the Register

One of the main tasks of the JTRS is to monitor the quality of data in the Register by performing quality checks and ensuring appropriate follow-up to alerts and complaints.

1.1 Quality checks

A 'quality check' is a set of verifications carried out by JTRS to ensure the quality and accuracy of the data submitted by registrants under Annex II to the IIA, so as to avoid factual mistakes and non-eligible registrations. In the event of non-compliance with the requirements set out in

⁸ New provisions: (f) in general, respect, and avoid any obstruction to the implementation and application of, all rules, codes and good governance practices established by EU institutions; and
(i) obtain the prior consent of the Member or Members of the European Parliament concerned as regards any contractual relationship with, or employment of, any individual within a Member's designated entourage.

Annex II to the IIA, the JTRS initiates correspondence and starts a dialogue with the registrants to identify possible solutions.

In 2015, the JTRS performed 2 591 quality checks, over double the number performed in 2014. With regard to the 2 591 quality checks performed, 578 registrations were deemed to be correct, while 2 013 entities were asked to update their entries. 808 entities were removed from the Register for the following reasons: inconsistent, incorrect or incomplete data, failure to update, and ineligibility.

1.2 Alerts

'Alert' is a mechanism to complement the quality checks carried out by the JTRS that allows third parties to inform the JTRS about registrations of one or more entities that may contain factual mistakes or be non-eligible. Of the above mentioned 2 591 quality checks, 572 were undertaken in follow-up to alerts received by the JTRS. In 2015, 24 individual alerts were received by JTRS, of which 8 were originally received as complaints.

Among these alerts, one was a mass alert concerning 4 253 entries (received by JTRS in September). This alert reported three types of erroneous entries: (i) no relevant activities described; (ii) implausibly high spenders; and (iii) implausibly low spenders. Given the high number of entries concerned, the JTRS provided follow-up by prioritising certain criteria. A total of 433 organisations were contacted in three phases (two in 2015, one continued in 2016).

Phase I results - entities that do not describe any activities covered by the Register:

- **293** organisations were contacted in September 2015;
- 129 (44%) made satisfactory updates;
- 164 (56%) were removed from the Register due to an unsatisfactory reaction or no reaction at all.

Phase II results - unusually high expenditure reported:

- **140** organisations were contacted in October/November 2015;
- 87 (62%) made satisfactory updates;
- 53 (38%) were removed from the Register due to an unsatisfactory reaction or no reaction at all.

The results of phase III relating to apparent underreporting of costs will be reported in the next Annual Report.

1.3 Complaints

'Complaint' is a notification alleging a breach by a registrant of any of the obligations under the Code of Conduct, save for allegations concerning factual mistakes.

In 2015, JTRS received 17 complaints, of which three were admissible. Six were non-admissible, as they were not related to the Code of Conduct, while eight were re-qualified as alerts and counted as such, since they concerned factual mistakes (see 1.2 Alerts). For these, six updates were made and two registrants were removed from the Register for reasons of ineligibility.

The three admissible complaints referred to possible breaches of the following clauses of the [Code of Conduct](#): (b) 'undue pressure', (d) 'incorrect information'; and (g) 'not contravene the rules and standards of behaviour'. After investigation by the JTRS, and contact with the

registrants concerned, two complaints were closed with updates by the registrants and for one no violation of the Code of Conduct was established.

2. Guidance and awareness-raising

The JTRS regularly carries out training and communication activities with the aim of raising awareness of the Register and to promote its use. In 2015, the EP organised 12 internal training sessions for staff and MEPs' assistants. The EC organised nine training courses for staff. In addition to internal presentations, some 25 presentations were delivered to stakeholders and visitor groups shared by the two institutions.

V: CONCLUSION

The revised Transparency Register launched in January 2015 increased the data disclosure requirements, offered more incentives for signing up, and tightened the sanctions for those who break the rules. Growth in registrations has continued, with more than 2 700 new entities joining during the course of the year. At the same time, the JTRS made greater efforts to ensure an optimum quality of data in the system, by performing more quality checks and striving to ensure timely follow-up to alerts and complaints received. The high number of new registrants, as well as the increased visibility and importance of the Register, highlighted the need to allocate appropriate human and IT resources to the JTRS for its efficient operation and the general credibility of the system.