



Brussels, 4 April 2008

Mr Hans-Gert Poettering
President of the European Parliament

Dear President,

As you will no doubt be aware, the EP will vote during the May 2008 Plenary on the Stubb report on lobbying, which aims to improve the control and transparency of lobbying activities within the EP. We consider this issue to be critical with respect to the credibility of our institution in the eyes of the public. We were therefore very surprised and alarmed to receive a letter from Vice President Vidal Quadras Roca concerning the European Business and Parliament Scheme (EBPS), of which we would like to ask for further clarification.

Vice President Vidal Quadras Roca wrote a letter to the Chairman of Eurolat, Mr José Ignacio Salafranca, asking him to make all participants of the Eurolat Plenary Session in Lima aware of opportunities to visit member companies of the European Business and Parliament Scheme.

According to the website of EBPS:

"The EBPS is a parliamentary educational resource for all Members, senior permanent officials and political group staff. It is non-partisan and non-lobbying, covering all business sectors and size of enterprises. The Scheme provides tailored study programmes and other activities which brings together business practitioners with parliamentarians of all parties. EBPS has no policy views but helps to inform policy, legislation and regulation".

Let me make clear from the outset that our Group does not question the existence of an educational programme promoting better understanding between Parliamentarians and business.

Nevertheless we consider that the organisation's claim to be "non-lobbying" not to be true in reality.

The Common Code of Principles of the International Association of Business and Parliament (IABP), which manages the EBPS programme, states *inter alia* that "The programmes ensure that enterprises undertake not to use their relationship for lobbying".

The invitation by Mr Vidal Quadras Roca, Chairman of the Board of EBPS, to Members to visit "our member companies with activities in Peru" seems at odds with the code. These member companies include Suez, BBVA, BP and Telefónica, all of whom are mentioned specifically; Telefónica will host an event informing participants of how the company promotes the abolition of child labour.

Our group fully supports the principles of corporate responsibility. However, the companies mentioned have been severely criticised for some of their practices in Peru and other Latin American countries. Therefore, we believe that such "information" events will most likely be interpreted as a positive public relations exercise to foster public goodwill for their company.



From the EPBS website we also learnt that you, like two other former Presidents, are the patron of the EBPS, and moreover that under your Presidency, the IABP has been given an office in the European Parliament and use e-mail addresses ending with europarl.europa.eu, giving the impression that the IABP is an official European Parliament body. The decision to attribute an office to IABP was taken by the Quaestors on 26 September 2007, overruling earlier negative decisions by the Quaestors of 5 September 2007 and 13 December 2006.

The Bureau Decision on patronage of 9 June 1997, consolidated on 1 May 2004, states that "Parliament's patronage shall be lent to specific events only. Such arrangements may not be permanent" It also says "the President may lend his patronage to an activity and designate a Vice-President to represent him; such arrangements must not have additional budgetary implications for Parliament" Events may "not have any commercial purpose"

*Aside from the question of whether the rules allow the President to be patron of the EBPS or IABP, the provision of rent-free offices in the Parliament, with no charges for the use of IT and telecommunications, has to be considered as **support "in kind"** and if this were the case, would be **against the EP rules** on patronage, as well as against the Financial Regulation.*

Moreover, on 13 December 2006, the Quaestors:

- rejettent le projet de réglementation [sur la mise à disposition de bureaux situés dans les locaux du Parlement pour les organes externes], en rappelant que l'espace de bureaux du Parlement doit être réservé principalement aux affaires parlementaires et aux activités administratives du Parlement, invitent les services à procéder graduellement à la récupération de tous les bureaux fournis à des organisations ou des associations dont l'activité n'est pas inhérente aux affaires du Parlement;

- décident de ne pas approuver la proposition du Secrétaire général consistant à mettre un bureau à la disposition à l'IABP et chargent le secrétariat de préparer un courrier en ce sens.

In view of all the above we would like to ask you, President, for an explanation of the situation; we would be interested in knowing what you intend to do address a situation that we consider highly problematic and that could further undermine the Parliament's standing to the general public. We would be very grateful to receive a swift reply and kindly ask you to put the matter on the agenda of the Conference of Presidents.

Yours sincerely,

*Monica FRASSONI
Co-President*