



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**EPACA welcomes the European Parliament vote of 8 May on the Stubb Report relating to interest representatives (lobbyists)**

*Brussels, 8 May 2008*

The European Public Affairs Consultancies' Association (EPACA) welcomes the adoption today of the European Parliament Report on the activities of interest representatives in the EU institutions as part of the broader European Transparency Initiative (ETI).

We believe that **the European Parliament is the most open institution in the European Union** and one of the most democratic parliaments in the world. Today's report has been based on **the recognition that lobbying plays an essential role within a democratic system, and is an important source of information for MEPs**. Lobbying is not just for consultancies such as EPACA members, but is also pursued by NGOs, think-tanks, corporations (large and small), trade associations, unions, law firms, local, regional and national representations, and other interest groups.

EPACA has always maintained an open and constructive attitude towards the European Parliament and its Members, and we have previously communicated our views on some of the key contentious points present in the Stubb Report:

**On financial disclosure**

**We welcome the withdrawal of the amendment suggesting very narrow (almost intrusive) parameters which would have required disclosure of commercially sensitive information for consultants.** Asking registered consultancies to reveal voluntarily such information, to the benefit of non-registered consultancies or other lobbyists, would run counter to the very idea of transparency. **EPACA believes any financial disclosure should respect contractual and privacy obligations between clients and their consultants.**

**On the level-playing field (difference in definitions on interest representation/ lobbying)**

**We are concerned that the report may disrupt the level-playing field in terms of the definition of who exactly is a lobbyist.** Currently the report puts into question whether lobbying by lawyers can be excluded from the transparency requirements on the basis that it is 'legal advice'.

EPACA has stated in the past that ensuring a level playing field, with all lobbyists treated equally, is essential. This is especially pertinent when considering that **the aim of this process is to ensure that any individual seeking to communicate with European decision-makers is doing so ethically and transparently.**



Consequently, EPACA intends to produce guidance to help its members find some answers to the many questions that may arise should the Commission's upcoming guidelines for its register omit a practical and exhaustive definition of lobbying.

As public affairs professionals **we already have our own EPACA Code of Conduct and created a Professional Practice Panel to hear possible complaints regarding malpractice.** Indeed, our Code of Conduct was used as the basis for the European Parliament's own code.

In conclusion, **we believe that transparency on interactions between lobbyists and the EU institutions is welcome as it can help to build trust between the EU and its citizens.** As the European Commission moves forward with the establishment of a register of lobbyists, EPACA looks forward to continuing its dialogue with the European institutions on the proposals and welcomes the addition of the European Parliament report in this process.



**José Lalloum, Chairman of EPACA:**  
*"Transparency is our license to operate"*

***If you would like to speak to the Chairman of EPACA, or another EPACA Board Member, please call José Lalloum on +32 (0)478 440 229 or Dominic Robinson on +32 (0)479 248 974 to arrange for an interview.***