



For Immediate Release

21 March 2007

Public Affairs Consultancies express concern over European Commission proposals

The European Public Affairs Consultancies' Association (EPACA) today expressed concern that the proposals in the Commission's Communication on the European Transparency Initiative do not provide a level playing field.

EPACA has always welcomed the transparency initiative, backed the Commission proposals in relation to transparency on use of EU funds, rules of behaviour in EU institutions, and transparency of lobbying. These include a Commission-run register of lobbyists, with incentives to promote registration by all lobbyists, and a common code of conduct for all lobbyists.

"But the current proposals do not apply these rules equally to all, there is no level playing field" said José Lalloum, Chairman of EPACA. "In particular, the Commission's rules on commercially sensitive financial information are not equally applied and would not contribute to the identification of objectives and interests engaged in lobbying" he added.

"There is not a direct correlation between money and influence. This is not Washington. There is a difference between transparency and voyeurism. There are certain things happening in commercial relationships that have nothing to do with transparency" said Lalloum.

Elaine Cruikshanks, EPACA Board Member, noted: "Given the Commission's broad definition of lobbying it would be difficult to define precise disclosure and would be likely to increase rather than diminish claims and counter-claims between various interest groups".

"EPACA has always argued for a common code and standards and would be willing sign up to such a code and register provided it is properly thought out and applicable to all public affairs practitioners on an equal basis" said Eamonn Bates, EPACA Board Member.



Notes to Editors:

The European Public Affairs Consultancies' Association (EPACA) is the representative trade body for public affairs consultancies working with the EU institutions. Its 38 member companies employ more than 700 staff and represent some 75% of the European public affairs consulting market. www.epaca.org.