

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003003/26  
to the Commission  
Jean-Paul Garraud (PfE)  
(16 July 2026)**

*Subject:* Foreign influences in Brussels: who is paying to sway EU decisions?

Non-EU governments can use consultancies, lobbyists or other intermediaries to defend their interests, or to influence or destabilise the EU institutions.

The EU is currently discussing new transparency rules for influence activities carried out on behalf of non-EU countries. However, certain activities, including diplomatic, media, legal or academic ones, would not be included in the proposed arrangements.

At the same time, it has been highlighted, in various investigations and through other parliamentary work, that intermediary structures — consultancies, think tanks, non-governmental organisations, law firms and academic institutions — are increasingly being used to act, directly or indirectly, on behalf of foreign interests, without the real principals always being clearly identified.

1. Does the Commission support the creation of a single public register indicating which foreign governments are seeking to influence EU decisions, through which intermediaries and for what sums?
2. Will it publish the list of meetings between the representatives of those foreign interests and Commissioners, their cabinets and senior Commission officials?
3. How will it prevent the exceptions for certain activities from being used to hide influence operations, especially those conducted through consultancies, non-governmental organisations, think tanks or academic institutions?

Submitted: 16.7.2026

**Answer given by Mr McGrath on behalf of the European Commission  
(14 September 2026)**

To increase transparency and democratic accountability of activities impacting EU decision-making processes, the Commission presented, in December 2023, a proposal for a directive on interest representation carried out on behalf of third countries <sup>(1)</sup>.

The proposed harmonised transparency requirements rely on a framework of national registers and would apply to entities carrying out interest representation on behalf of third countries, regardless of their legal form.

The proposed directive concerns economic activities in the internal market, which could cover activities carried out in the context of research and education, such as the dissemination by think tanks of papers recommending or favouring the adoption of a specific public policy.

It contains limited exceptions, in particular with regard to activities connected to the exercise of official authority, including the exercise of diplomatic relations or the provision of legal and other professional advice during legal proceedings.

The proposal is currently being discussed by the co-legislators.

Pursuant to the Interinstitutional Agreement on the Transparency Register <sup>(2)</sup>, legal entities (such as public affairs consultancy, law firms), offices or networks without diplomatic status or intermediaries representing public authorities of third countries are eligible to register in the Transparency Register.

As stated in the Transparency Register guidelines <sup>(3)</sup>, information relating to such interest representation activities is to be duly reported.

The Commission applies strict rules on its contacts with interest representatives <sup>(4)</sup>. Information on and minutes of those meetings are published in accordance with Commission Decisions (EU) 2024/3081 <sup>(5)</sup> and 2024/3082 <sup>(6)</sup>.

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<sup>(1)</sup> COM(2023) 637 final.

<sup>(2)</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L\\_.2021.207.01.0001.01.ENG](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2021.207.01.0001.01.ENG).

<sup>(3)</sup> [https://transparency-register.europa.eu/guidance/guidelines\\_en](https://transparency-register.europa.eu/guidance/guidelines_en).

<sup>(4)</sup> It requires Members of the Commission, their Members of Cabinet and all Commission staff holding management functions to only meet registered interest representatives.

<sup>(5)</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L\\_202403081](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L_202403081).

<sup>(6)</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L\\_202403082](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L_202403082).