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Legislative Footprint close to becoming reality in the EP

During this week's special session of the Budget Control Committee, Secretary General Klaus Welle replied to the questions of MEP and co-chair of the intergroup, Dennis de Jong, that he is preparing the technical options for including a legislative footprint on the EP's website for Rapporteurs on a voluntary basis. De Jong: 'I am very grateful for this breakthrough. Mentioning lobbyists who have had a significant impact on reports of the EP is very important to enhance transparency. I asked the SG to not limit this facility to Rapporteurs. Also colleagues who want to list all main contacts with interest representatives in general, should be able to mention these on their personal pages on the EP's site'.

The path towards a legislative footprint has been a long one. In 2008, 2011 and 2014, the EP already called for a legislative footprint, in the form of a voluntary annex added to reports in which rapporteurs mention the interest representatives who they had consulted and had a major impact on their report. However, in order to enhance transparency; not only Rapporteurs but all MEPs should be able to list publicly important contacts with interest representatives. De Jong: 'It is excellent that there are already initiatives for interested MEPs to do so on their personal or other websites, but the citizens expect from us that they can find all relevant information on the website of the EP itself. Hence the importance of the announcement by SG Welle'.

The information soon to appear on the EP-site is also relevant for the transparency register. If MEPs mention contacts with interest representatives on specific issues, the transparency register should contain similar information. This will provide an incentive for all concerned to keep the information in the register up-to-date and complete.

The *report on the Protection of the EU's Financial Interests - fight against fraud* by MEP and intergroup Bureau member Benedek Jávor also contains a reference to the legislative footprint. According to the report, which was adopted by the Budget Control Committee on 28 January, the EP calls for a legislative footprint 'with the objective of switching from a voluntary to a mandatory EU register for all lobbying activities for any of the EU institutions'. Benedek Jávor, rapporteur of the report, is an advocate of the footprint: "there is no reason left for Mr. Welle to not implement the long-standing request for a legislative footprint urgently".