

EU breached tobacco lobbying rules: watchdog

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The EU has failed to be transparent about its dealings with the tobacco industry, in breach of UN rules, the bloc's watchdog said Monday after a lobbying scandal claimed a top Brussels official.

In unusually strong comments, the European Ombudsman said that Brussels must now publish all [meetings](#) with tobacco lobbyists and described its previous efforts as "inadequate".

EU health commissioner John Dalli resigned in 2012 after a probe ordered by then Commission head Jose Manuel Barroso linked him to a tobacco lobbyist at a time when the EU was introducing tougher anti-smoking legislation.

But the ombudsman's inquiry also found fault with the Commission led by Portugal's Barroso, whose term of office ended in 2014, and who was replaced by Jean-Claude Juncker.

"The Barroso Commission was not transparent enough about its meetings with the [tobacco industry](#)," ombudsman Emily O'Reilly said.

"The Commission is not fully implementing UN World Health Organisation rules and guidelines governing transparency and tobacco lobbying."

It said the Commission—the executive arm of the 28-nation EU—generally only published information about meetings with lobbyists

after requests for documents or questions from European lawmakers, and that it did not qualify meetings with tobacco industry lawyers as lobbying.

The Commission's approach to publicising details of these meetings was "inadequate, unreliable and unsatisfactory," the report said.

The Juncker Commission should "from now on proactively publish online all meetings with tobacco lobbyists, or their legal representatives, as well as the minutes of those meetings," the ombudsman added.

O'Reilly gave the Commission until December 31 to explain how it would implement her recommendations and requested an update on its plans for a mandatory register of lobbyists.

Dalli, a Maltese politician, resigned in hugely controversial circumstances in late 2012, claiming Barroso had forced him to step down as the lobbying scandal blew up.

A probe by the EU's OLAF anti-fraud office said Dalli had links to a Maltese entrepreneur who had exploited these contacts to seek a bribe from a Sweden's Swedish Match in return for changes to draft tobacco legislation.

Dalli categorically denied all wrongdoing, saying he had been set up by the tobacco lobby in order to delay the new regulations.

His case put the spotlight on the thousands of lobbyists who work in Brussels to promote a myriad of interests, from giant auto and aerospace companies to small environmental NGOs, all seeking to get their point across.

The EU has a lobby register which can be seen at—

[ec.europa.eu/transparencyregis...r/public/homePage.do](https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/homePage.do)

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