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Consultancies Make New Proposals to Commissioner Kallas

Representatives of the 31 companies in the European Public Affairs Consultancies' Association (EPACA) yesterday met Commissioner Kallas to offer support in advancing the European Transparency Initiative which he has championed.

In a letter to EPACA in November 2005, Mr Kallas welcomed the organisation's proposal that all EU lobbying groups be brought together in a European Public Affairs Council, facilitated by the Commission. The objective would be to identify a common core code of conduct for all those who engage in lobbying. The Commissioner said this was 'the inclusive approach I have advocated'.

John Houston, Chairman of EPACA, said: 'The aim is to agree clear basic principles of behaviour for legitimate interest representation and to secure the co-operation of the EU institutions in making sanctions effective. Our EPACA Code already has substantive disciplinary provisions, including public expulsion, which is a real professional deterrent, and an independent panel to review any cases. But the Commission and other institutions can help to reinforce this by administrative measures to encourage all lobbyists to operate within a code of conduct. We hope the Commission will take the lead in establishing and policing a workable system.'

In an important policy clarification, EPACA Vice-Chairman Jeremy Galbraith said: 'We will support a mandatory registration system for all Brussels lobbyists if a fair and viable system applying to all lobbying groups - lawyers, accountants, management consultants, NGOs, trade unions, corporate lobbyists, trade associations, think tanks, and professional consultancies - can be identified and agreed between the EU institutions. However, a common code of conduct is as important - if not more so - since all lobbyists must be required to state the interest they represent whenever they lobby the EU institutions. EPACA's code already requires that, and we hope the Commission will press others to do the same.'

EPACA has recommended that a good starting point for such a common code, since it already has the approval of the only directly elected EU institution, would be the code set out in the European Parliament rules of procedure which is identical to the EPACA code. EPACA is pursuing dialogue with other lobbying groups to promote a consensus on working towards such a common overarching code.



Notes to Editors:

The European Public Affairs Consultancies Association (EPACA) is the representative trade body for public affairs consultancies working with EU institutions. www.epaca.org

Contact: John Houston - 02 230 0814
Jeremy Galbraith - 02 743 6628