

## **Trade Unions and civil society organisations demand budget freeze on expert groups**

(26 September 2014) Civil Society organisations and trade unions (national and European) have sent a letter to Members of the European Parliament demanding another freeze of the budget of expert groups.

Sunday 31st August saw the close of the European Ombudsman's public consultation on the topic of advisory groups, formally known as 'Expert Groups'. It is part of Ombudsman O'Reilly's first Own Initiative Inquiry on the topic, and one that all the signatories of this letter have contributed evidence to, in light of their importance. EPSU was on the organisations to reply to such consultation.

We are worried about the current adrift of the 'comitology' in Europe. Expert Groups are often formed at the beginning of the Commission's legislative process to provide expert opinion and guidance. However, of these influential groups, many have traditionally been dominated by industry interests to the detriment of the public interest, including in policy areas as important as banking regulation, taxation and emissions reductions.

When lifting the budget freeze in September 2012, Parliament gave the warning that if its conditions were not met during the 'informal dialogue' that followed, the Expert Groups budget would be refrozen. Two years have passed and unfortunately not only has the informal dialogue crumbled, but the budget freeze remains the only tool to have elicited action from the Commission.

In that sense EPSU will continue to campaign for transparency and against the corporate domination of the EU expert groups.

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