

Annual Report on the operations of the Transparency Register
2016

**Presented by the Secretaries-General
of the European Parliament and the European Commission**

to

Ms Sylvie Guillaume, Vice-President of the European Parliament
and
**Mr Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European
Commission**

As laid down in **Paragraph 28 of the revised Interinstitutional Agreement (IIA) on the Transparency Register**, signed on 16 April 2014 (as a joint instrument for the European Parliament and European Commission), this **Annual Report provides an account of the operations of the Transparency Register during the year 2016**.

This Report presents statistics on the operations of the Register from January to December 2016 and describes the activities undertaken by the Joint Transparency Register Secretariat, in particular with regard to ensuring an optimum quality of data and raising awareness of the tool.

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Acronyms used in the report:

EP = European Parliament

EC = European Commission

EU = European Union

GSC = General Secretariat of the Council

IIA = Interinstitutional Agreement

IT = Information Technology

JTRS = Joint Transparency Register Secretariat

MEP = Member of the European Parliament

NGO = Non-Governmental Organisation

Register = Transparency Register

Transparency Register website: <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister>

I. INTRODUCTION

The Transparency Register (hereinafter: the Register) was set up as a joint scheme by the European Parliament (EP) and the European Commission (EC) in 2011 through an Interinstitutional Agreement (IIA). It represents one of the key tools for implementing the commitment of these two institutions to transparency. The Register applies to all interest groups engaging in activities carried out with the objective of influencing the law-making and policy implementation processes of the EU institutions. By shedding light on what interests are being pursued, by whom and with what level of resources, the Register allows for increased public scrutiny, giving citizens, the media and stakeholders the possibility to track the activities and potential influence of interest representatives. The Transparency Register includes over 10 000 entities, all signed up to a common Code of Conduct¹, making it one of the biggest of its kind in the world.

II. STATE OF PLAY OF THE TRANSPARENCY REGISTER²

There are six sections for registration in the Register. In 2016, the largest section, representing just over half of all registrants, was Section II: *'In-house lobbyists and trade/business/ professional associations'* (see table 1). Within this section, the main sub-section, *'Trade and business associations'*, represents almost 43% of all in-house lobbyists and trade/business/professional associations (see table 2, Section II).

'Non-governmental organisations' (Section III) was the next most common type of registrant, representing over a quarter of all registered organisations. *'Professional consultancies, law firms or self-employed consultants'* (Section I) came next, representing almost 12% of all registrants. Smaller categories of registrants were *'Think tanks, research and academic institutions'* (Section IV), followed by *'Transnational associations and networks of public regional or other sub-national authorities'* (Section VI) and *'Organisations representing churches and religious communities'* (Section V).

Table 1: Distribution of interest representatives

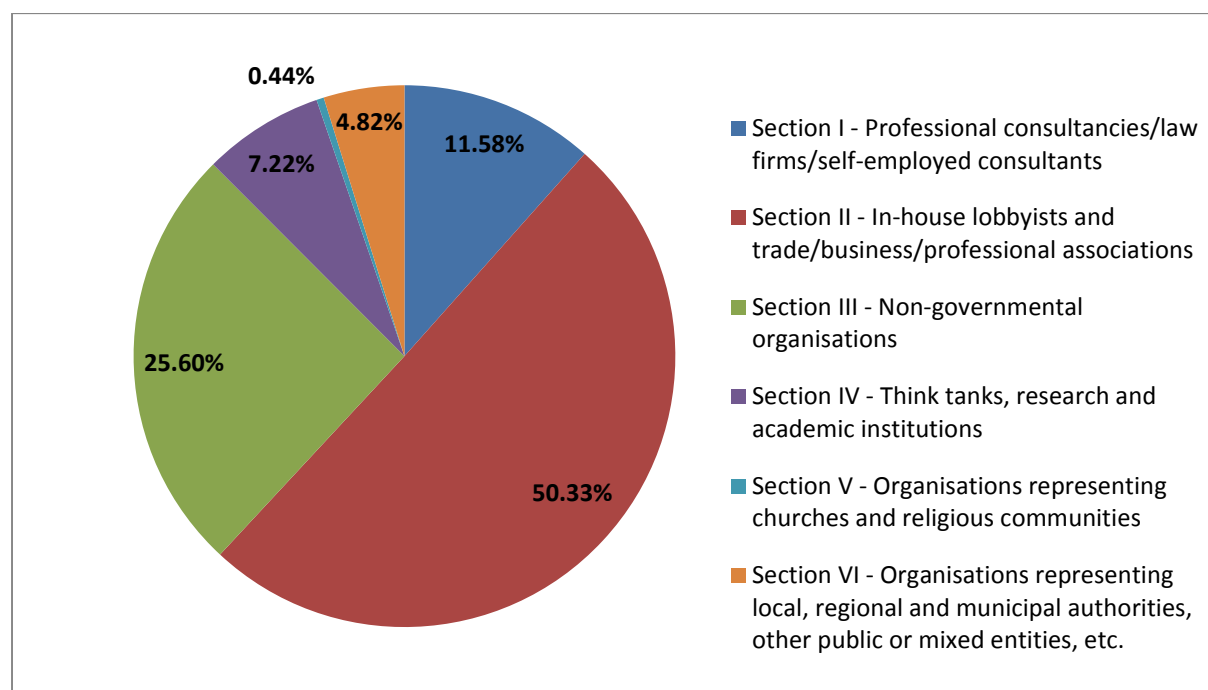
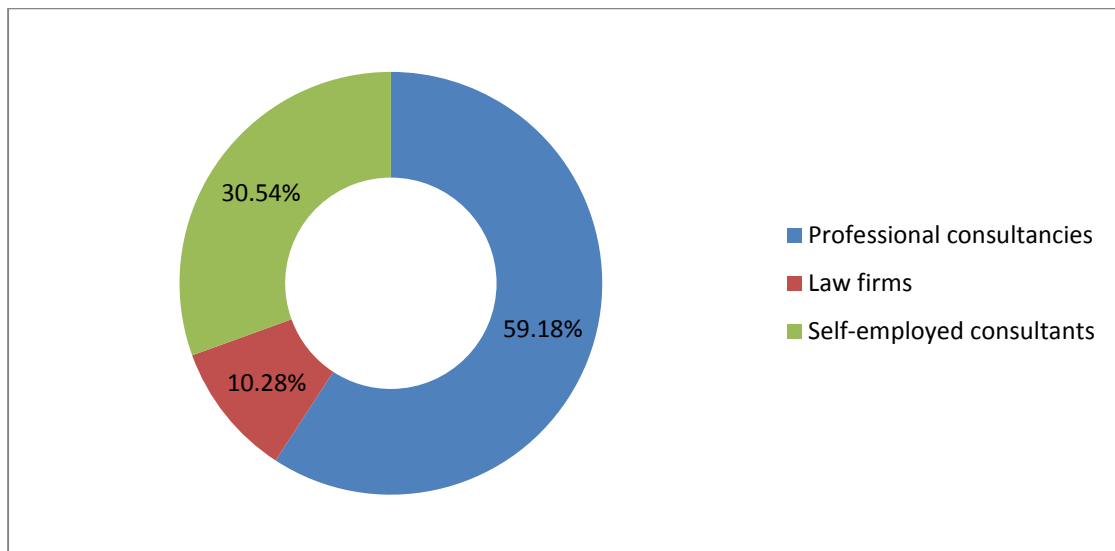


Table 2: Breakdown per sub-section³

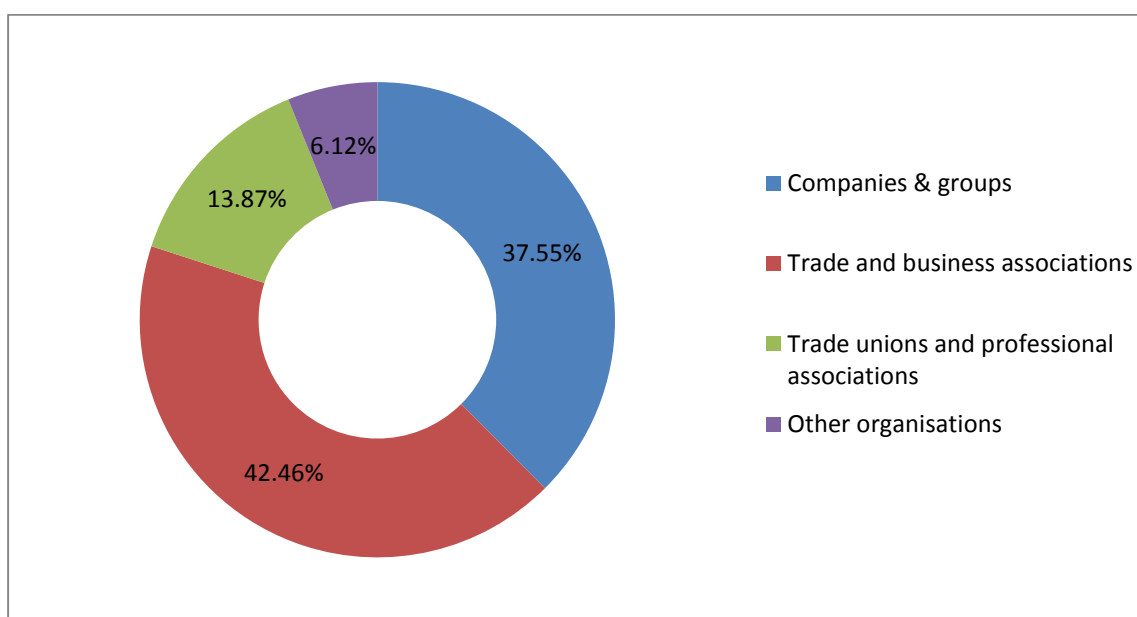
¹ Counting only entities that were registered and active on 31.12.2016.

² Figures presented in this report reflect the situation on 31.12.2016.

Section I: Professional consultancies/law firms/self-employed consultants

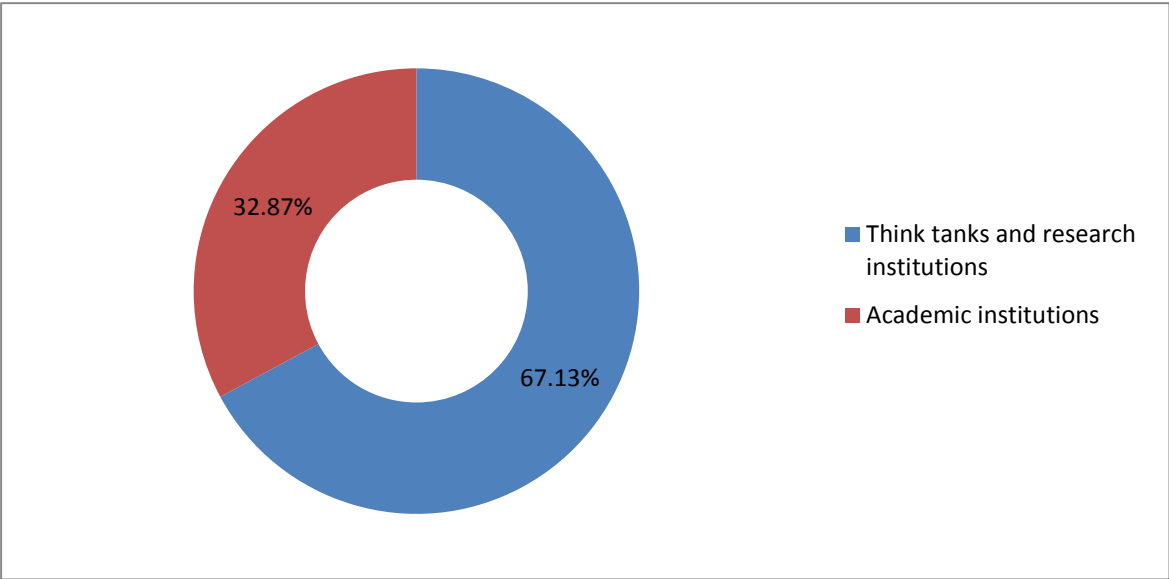


Section II: In-house lobbyists and trade/business/professional associations



³ Sections III and V do not have sub-sections.

Section IV: Think tanks, research and academic institutions



Section VI: Organisations representing local, regional and municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.

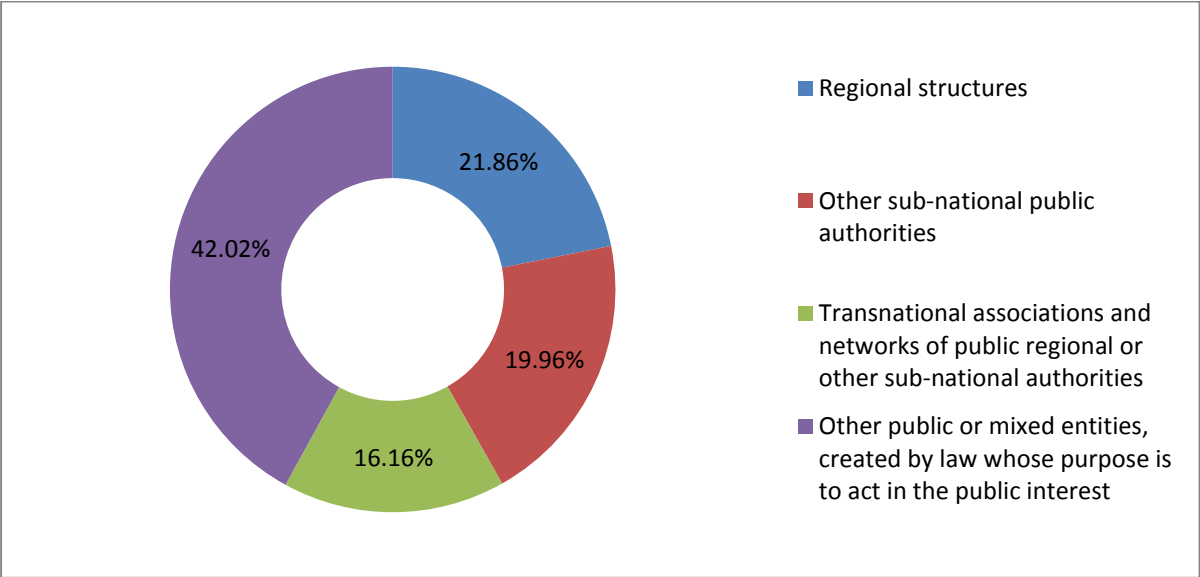


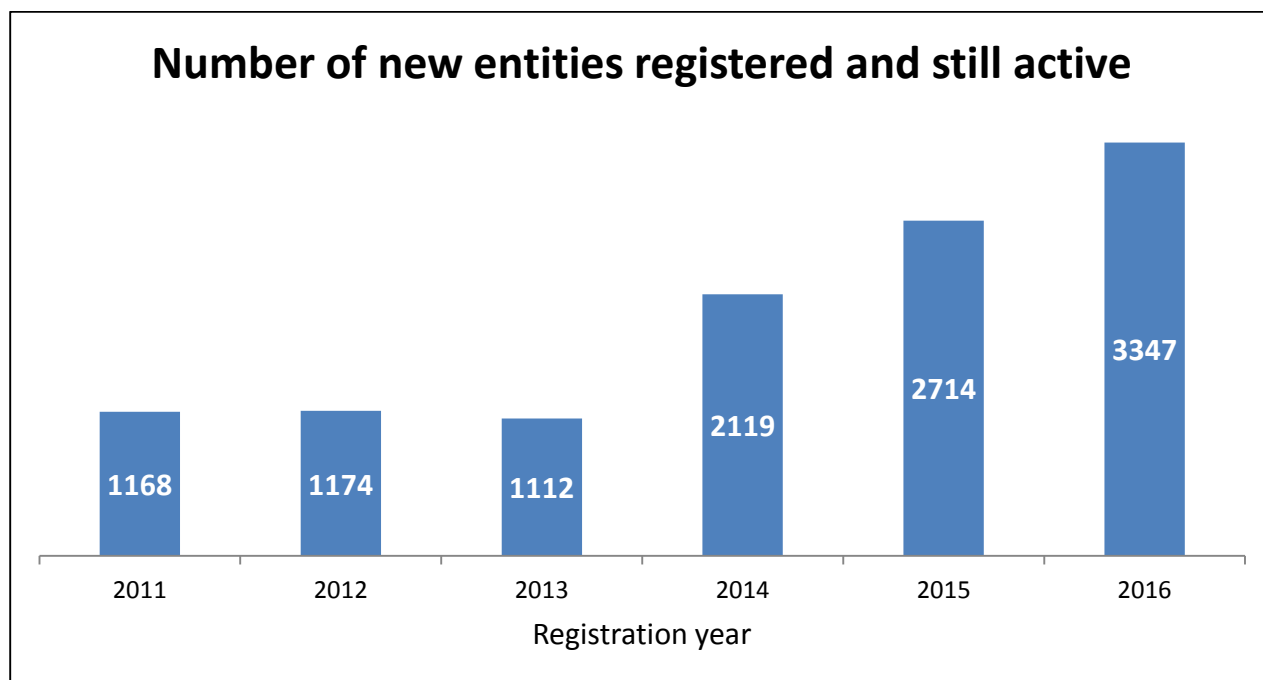
Table 3: Distribution of registrants on 31.12.2016

On 31/12/2016, there were 10 911 registrants in the Register spread across the following (sub)sections:	
I – Professional consultancies/law firms/self-employed consultants	1 264
Professional consultancies	748
Law firms	130
Self-employed consultants	386
II - In-house lobbyists and trade/business professional associations	5 492
Companies & groups	2 062
Trade and business associations	2 332
Trade unions and professional associations	762
Other organisations	336
III - Non-governmental organisations	2 793
Non-governmental organisations, platforms and networks and similar	2 793
IV - Think tanks, research and academic institutions	788
Think tanks and research institutions	529
Academic institutions	259
V - Organisations representing churches and religious communities	48
Organisations representing churches and religious communities	48
VI - Organisations representing local, regional and municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.	526
Regional structures	115
Other sub-national public authorities	105
Transnational associations and networks of public regional or other sub-national authorities	85
Other public or mixed entities, created by law whose purpose is to act in the public interest	221

Statistics on new registrations in 2016

There were 3 347 new registrations in the Register in 2016⁴. Of these, 451 entities registered in Section I; 1 511 in Section II; 902 in Section III; 283 in Section IV; 11 in Section V and 189 in Section VI. The average number of new registrations per month was 279, with varied intensity during the year (table 5).

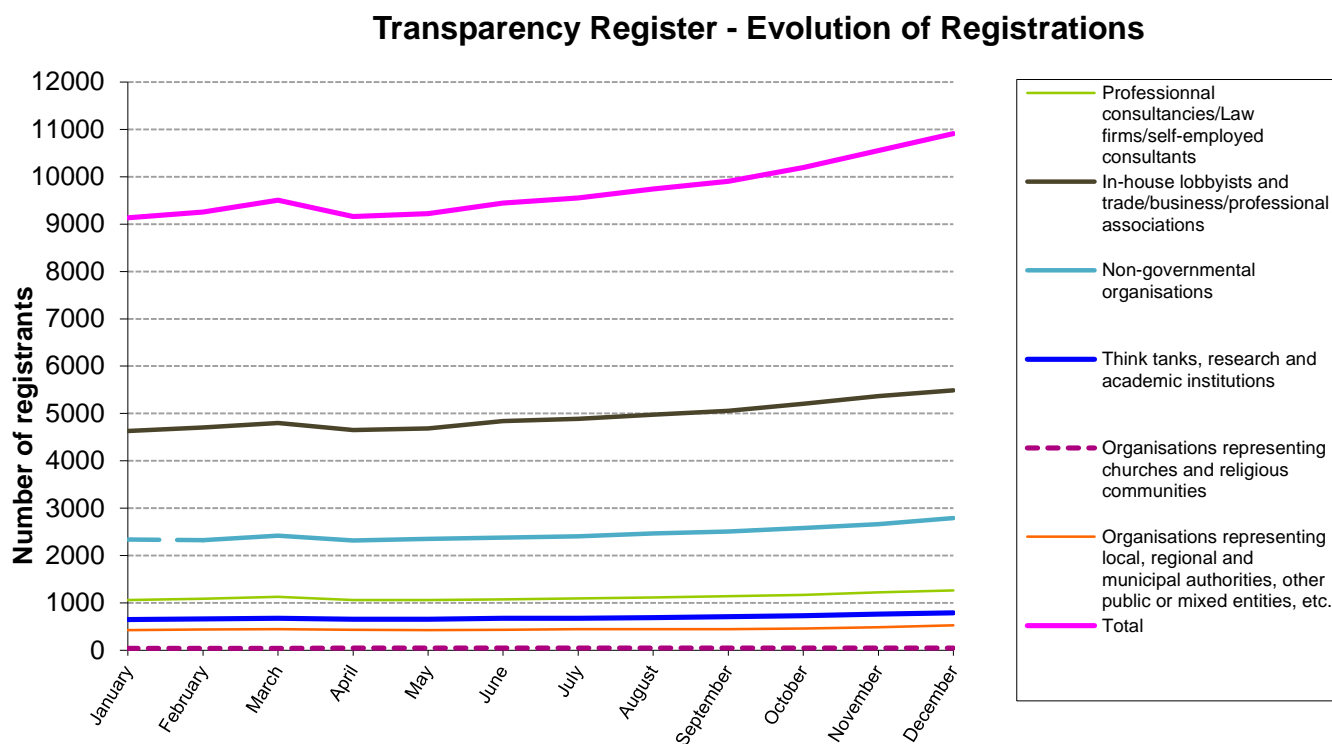
Table 4: New registrations per year



Note: For yearly statistics since 2011, please refer to the Register website – <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/statistics.do?locale=en&action=prepareView>

⁴ Counting only entities that were registered and active on 31.12.2016.

Table 5: Number of registrants in 2016



The overall number of new registrations per year has continued to rise. This upward trend is most likely due to the continued implementation by the two institutions of strong incentives for registration.

A Commission Decision adopted in May 2016 made registration a precondition for the appointment of certain types of Expert group members. This newly-created synergy between the Transparency Register and the one on Expert groups led to increased registration rates in the second half of the year. Public consultations launched by the Commission under various policy areas also triggered new registrations as interest groups responding are actively encouraged to join the Transparency Register in order to distinguish their contributions from those of individual citizens.⁷

Registration is a precondition for organisations and self-employed individuals whose representatives have been invited to speak at committee hearings of the European Parliament or who seek facilitated access to the Parliament's premises. Accreditation can be granted for a period of up to 12 months and is renewable. Over 7 400 authorisations for access for individuals were granted in 2016 by Parliament, for representatives of approximately 2 350 organisations in the Register (either as a new request or a renewal).

In 2016, the Register website received about 250 000 unique visitors⁵ or 41 250 visits per month⁶. Up to 27,7 % of visits came via Europa, while almost 30 % reached the website via search engines.

⁵ The 'unique visitor' is the uniquely identified client viewing pages within a defined time period (one day in this case). A unique visitor is counted once in the considered period whereas the visitor can have several visits. As identification is done on visitor's PCs, the same visitor using more than one PC is counted more times.

⁶ A 'visit' is defined as a series of page requests from the same uniquely identified client.

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE JOINT TRANSPARENCY REGISTER SECRETARIAT

The Joint Transparency Register Secretariat (JTRS) is made up of a team of officials from the EP and the EC. Including Heads of Units, a total of 10 officials are involved, 6 at the EC and 4 at the EP. For JTRS-related tasks, their work amounts to approximately 5.5 full time equivalents (FTEs).

The JTRS is in charge of the day-to-day management of the Transparency Register; it provides a helpdesk service, issues guidelines for registration, undertakes data quality checks, handles alerts and complaints received, coordinates IT development and maintenance of the system and carries out awareness-raising and other communication activities to promote the scheme. The JTRS operates under the coordination of the Head of the Transparency Unit in the EC's Secretariat-General; Council is an observer to the meetings of the JTRS.

1. Monitoring of data in the Register

One of the main tasks of the JTRS is to monitor the quality of data in the Register by performing quality checks and ensuring appropriate follow-up to alerts and complaints. In addition, the JTRS performs a basic check of every new registration in the Transparency Register for eligibility. To manage this demanding task more efficiently IT development started in 2016 to help analyse the quality of data provided by registrants in an automatised manner. The objective is to launch a new and improved version of the Transparency Register in the first half of 2017 to increase the overall quality of data, by facilitating the registration/updating process for new and current registrants.

1.1 Quality checks

A '*quality check*' is a set of verifications carried out by JTRS to ensure the quality and accuracy of the data submitted by registrants under Annex II to the IIA, so as to avoid factual mistakes and non-eligible registrations. In the event of non-compliance with the requirements set out in Annex II to the IIA, the JTRS initiates correspondence and starts a dialogue with the registrants to identify possible solutions.

In 2016, the JTRS performed 5 032 quality checks, almost double the number performed in 2015 (2 591) due to increased efforts to ensure that all new registrations are checked. With regard to the 5 032 quality checks performed, under half of the registrations were deemed to be correct (2 261), while the remaining entities were contacted with regard to eligibility or inconsistencies of the data contained in their entries. Of the 2 771 entities contacted, 961 entities were removed from the Register for one of the following reasons: inconsistent, incorrect or incomplete data, failure to update, and ineligibility.

1.2 Alerts

'*Alert*' is a mechanism that allows third parties to inform the JTRS about registrations of one or more entities that may contain factual mistakes or be non-eligible. Of the above-mentioned 5 032 quality checks, 407 were undertaken in follow-up to alerts received by the JTRS. In 2016, 16 individual alerts were received by JTRS (of which one was inadmissible). These alerts concerned a total of 40 organisations, as some alerts concerned more than one entity.

Partly pending from September 2015, was a mass alert concerning 4 253 entries. This alert reported three types of erroneous entries: (i) no relevant activities described; (ii) implausibly high spenders; and (iii) implausibly low spenders. Given the high number of entries concerned, the JTRS provided follow-up by prioritising certain criteria. A total of 433 organisations were contacted in three phases (two phases were completed in 2015, one was completed in 2016).

The *results of phase III* relating to apparent underreporting of costs are reported here, as announced in the previous Annual Report:

Apparent underreporting of costs

347 organisations were contacted in January/February 2016;
277 (80%) made satisfactory updates;
70 (20%) were removed from the Register due to unsatisfactory reaction or no reaction at all.

The following criteria were applied to this category: registrants in Sections I, II & III; with a Belgium office; with a number of FTE superior or equal to two; with estimated costs attributable to activities inferior or equal to 10 000 EUR.

1.3 Complaints

'Complaint' is a notification alleging a breach by a registrant of any of the obligations under the Code of Conduct, except for allegations concerning factual errors. In 2016, JTRS received 7 complaints, of which 4 were admissible as 'complaints' and one was re-qualified as an 'alert'. Non-admissibility is for instance determined where there is no relation to an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct for registrants or no substantial proof or evidence provided with regard to the allegations made.

The admissible complaints referred to possible breaches of the clauses of the Code of Conduct, and most frequently of clause (d) *“ensure that, to the best of their knowledge, information, which they provide upon registration, and subsequently in the framework of their activities covered by the register, is complete, up-to-date and not misleading; accept that all information provided is subject to review and agree to co-operate with administrative requests for complementary information and updates”*, closely followed by clause (c) *“not claim any formal relationship with the European Union or any of its institutions in their dealings with third parties, or misrepresent the effect of registration in such a way as to mislead third parties or officials or other staff of the European Union, or use the logos of EU institutions without express authorisation”*.

After investigation by the JTRS, and contact with the registrants concerned, 3 of the 4 admissible complaints were closed with updates by the registrants concerned and the remaining registrant was removed from the Register for non-eligibility.

2. Guidance and awareness-raising

The JTRS regularly carries out training and communication activities with the aim of raising awareness of the Register and to promote its use. In 2016, the EP organised nine internal training sessions for staff and Members' assistants. The EC organised seven full-day training courses for staff entitled "Dealing Appropriately and Effectively with Lobbyists", which featured a presentation and a case study on the Transparency Register. In addition to these internal presentations, 24 presentations were delivered to stakeholders and visitor groups by the two institutions. Two presentations were made to national parliamentarians in the Member States on invitation: the Portuguese Ad Hoc Committee for Enhancing Transparency in September and the Belgian Defence Committee in December.

To assist organisations in the registration process, and in addition to the detailed Implementing Guidelines, a shorter guidance entitled “How to achieve a good registration & avoid common mistakes” was made available online.

IV. CONCLUSION

Growth in registrations has continued in 2016, with more than 3 300 new entities joining during the course of the year. At the same time, the JTRS further increased its efforts to ensure an optimum quality of data in the system, by performing more quality checks and by ensuring timely follow-up to alerts and complaints received. The JTRS was invited on a regular basis to present the Transparency Register to various audiences and to engage in debates about the running of the system and its evolution. The constantly rising number of new registrants, as well as the increased visibility and importance of the Register, highlighted again the need to allocate appropriate human and IT resources to the JTRS for its efficient operation and the general credibility of the system.

A number of events worth mentioning took place in 2016. The Commission held a 3-month public consultation to gather input on the current Transparency Register and on its potential development⁷. European Parliament Vice-President Sylvie Guillaume and Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans hosted a joint public debate on 2 May about the transparency regime for interest representatives in the EU⁸ and on 28 September, the Commission submitted a proposal for a new Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory Transparency Register to the European Parliament and the Council.⁹

- END -

⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/info/consultations/proposal-mandatory-transparency-register_en

⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/staticPage/displayStaticPage.do;TRPUBLICID=prod=kBRD5-5YVNWJrNp6fOmURgGs3kYZ9nRiw5jaWenJqutaYpv24Pdf!1731521210?locale=en&reference=NEWS>

⁹ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-3182_en.htm