

Question for written answer E-014546/2015
to the Commission
Rule 130
Philippe Lamberts (Verts/ALE)

Subject: Conflict of interests - former Commissioner De Gucht

In summer 2014, following a request by DIGITALEUROPE, an association representing the digital technology industry, Commissioner De Gucht announced that the TTIP negotiations would include a chapter on the digital economy; this represented a departure from the mandate issued to the Council one year before.

Once he had left his post as Commissioner, Karel De Gucht was appointed a director of the telecommunications company Proximus.

His appointment was approved by the current Commission on 25 March 2015, subject to certain conditions.

It now appears, however, that De Gucht's pro-digital activism in disregarding the Council mandate during the TTIP negotiations may have been a move to secure his current well-paid position, especially as, according to the chair of Proximus's board, he was by no means the best candidate for the role.

1. What view does the ethics committee take of situations such as these where conflicts of interest emerge after the event?
2. How can the Commission ensure that new Commissioners do not use their discretionary powers to give preferential treatment to former Commissioners?
3. How can such situations, which damage the Commission's reputation as 'defender of the public interest', be avoided in the future?
4. Given that lobbying occurs behind closed doors, how can the Commission ensure that the conditions it lays down are met?