

The Modern Experience of Lobbying Interests in Europe

OKSANA KOVALOVA

PhD student, Department of the Political Theories, National University Odessa Academy of Law,
UKRAINE

ORCID identifier: 0000-0002-5138-0918

ELLA MAMONTOVA

Doctor of Political Science, Professor, Department of the political theories
National University Odessa Academy of Law Odessa, UKRAINE

ORCID identifier: 0000-0003-2761-8217

ZORIANA BURYK

Doctor of science in Public Administration, Professor, Department of Management and Business
Administration, Institute of Graduate Studies and Preuniversity Education, Vasyl Stefanyk
Precarpathian National University, Lviv, UKRAINE

SERGIY VONSOVYCH

PhD in Political Science (Department of Political Science and Philosophy), Department of Political
Science and Philosophy, Kamianets-Podilskyi National Ivan Ohienko University, UKRAINE

ORCID identifier: 0000-0001-9657-0902

TATIANA VOROPAYEVA

PhD in Psychology, Associate Professor, Senior Researcher, Center for Ukrainian Studies, Faculty of
Philosophy, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, UKRAINE

ORCID identifier: 0000-0001-8388-7169

Abstract: The current experience of lobbying interests in Europe requires a detailed study of legislation to provide open public access to the Transparency Register and to promote the use of lobbying transparency mechanisms in European countries and EU institutions. These mechanisms ensure the implementation of relevant regulations and political decisions by political actors with the assistance of interest groups for the effective implementation of public policy. The purpose of the study is to establish the patterns of implementation of interest lobbying policy in Europe and assessing the reliability of lobbying activities in European countries and EU institutions to check the effectiveness of lobbying interests' modern experience in Europe and mechanisms in ensuring transparency and its integrity in the EU. Research methods: comparative analysis; regression analysis; systematization, generalization. Results. Availability has established the relationship between disclosure by lobbyists and oversight of compliance with the rules of the register and transparency in lobbying. Lobby transparency has been identified as too weak across Europe, as the implementation of the Transparency Register, which aims to regulate lobbying, has not protected against its excessive influence. The largest expenditure on EU lobbying for the period 2017-2018 falls on countries such as Belgium, Germany, and Italy. The current expenditure of EU member states is 91%, more than €2 billion. It was found that lobbying in Europe helps to solve current problems by further improving the legislation that will ensure the implementation of effective EU policy, where the main topics on the agenda are the implementation of the Law on Digital Services and overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been established that lobbying in Europe should address barriers to access to public sector information and public data faced by citizens, and require the implementation of measures to regulate the further activities of officials between the public sector and lobbying.

Keywords: lobbyists, lobbying, lobbying of interest, lobbying activity, lobbyists' registers, Transparency Register, EU institutions, EU countries, European Union, integrity mechanisms, technology companies.

Received: March 29, 2022. Revised: March 19, 2023. Accepted: April 25, 2023. Published: May 31, 2023.

1. Introduction

Over the last decade, the number of states and transnational political institutions, such as the European Union, that have an interest in regulating lobbying to reduce political propaganda by interest groups has increased. The implementation of relevant legislation will help increase transparency in the legislative decision-making process. The creation of open national registers of lobbyists involved in regulation in the EU is based on the idea that transparency is a determining factor of accountability and subcontracting is the ability of the public to follow the process of lobbying to influence the European political system (Korkeaho, E., 2021).

The participation of outside interests in the political process corresponds to the legitimacy of both input and output data. At the same time, however, lobbying can create problems of unequal access, bias, and even corruption. Thus, the need to regulate these activities is now a widely accepted process, with the result that international bodies such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and, more recently, the Council of Europe have issued recommendations and guidelines on lobbying. Public registers of lobbyists, often supplemented by codes of conduct, where the most commonly used tools for such regulatory efforts (Chari et al., 2010; OECD, 2014), reflect the belief that transparency provides accountability and ultimately increases citizens' confidence in the EU political system (Năstase, A. and Muurmans, C., 2020).

Political organizations such as business associations, trade unions, civil society organizations, and social organizations have aggregate political goals (Beyers et al., 2008), where one of the main goals of interest lobby groups is to influence political decisions (Dür, 2008a; Klüver, 2011). However, understanding lobbying is problematic for democratic governance because politics tends to perceive certain interest groups that can undermine majority power and jeopardize public interests (Stevens F., De Bruycker I., 2020). Nevertheless, lobbying has become indispensable in modern society as it helps companies and NGOs to put pressure on their interests. Lobbying of interests wins the favor of politicians by using strong arguments and without any tangible or intangible incentives. Interest lobbying is a discussion between civil society and government about how processes can be managed better and more effectively, which problems to ignore and which to solve. Due to the observance of legal

norms and rules, lobbying will be defined as a basis of a healthy civil society of the XXI century. Thus, lobbying in Europe is seen as a very important factor for the development of European public policy (Růžicková, K., 2010).

The need to implement public policy is caused by the idea of harmonization of economic, political, social, and environmental components, which become especially relevant, namely in solving social and state problems, using effective experience in lobbying.

The importance of the practical use of research results lies in the further application of modern experience of lobbying in Europe to promote the implementation of state policy, which provides "a way of state development where public affairs will be managed to take into account the interests of society" (Brundtland, G., 1987).

The aim of the study - to establish regularities of realization of policy of lobbying of interests in Europe and assessing the reliability of its activities in European countries and EU institutions to check the effectiveness of modern experience of lobbying interests in Europe and mechanisms in ensuring its transparency and integrity in the EU.

Research objectives of the article:

1. Analyze the distribution of the current composition of registrants in the Register of Transparency and the Percentage of these registrants, according to the location of the head office within the EU.

2. To analyze the number of lobbying meetings of registrants and determine in which areas these meetings were held in the field of lobbying.

3. Identify lobbying transparency mechanisms in European countries and EU institutions and integrity mechanisms designed to promote ethical lobbying among lobbyists and decision-makers in European countries and EU institutions.

4. Analyze the costs of EU countries for lobbying, as well as the costs of lobbying by large technology companies in Brussels.

5. Conduct a comparative analysis of the activities of the Juncker Commission and the von der Leyen Commission in the field of lobbying.

6. Investigate the relationship between the results of registration and disclosure by lobbyists and the supervision of the rules of the register and transparency of lobbying activities in European countries and EU institutions.

2. Literature review

Lobbying is part of any healthy democracy, but Transparency International EU (henceforth - TI EU) makes every effort to ensure the transparency and ethics of such activities at the EU level. Brussels is the second capital of the world in terms of lobbying interests after Washington. At least 48,000 people work in this European capital in organizations that seek to influence EU institutions and decisions, with 7,500 of them having an accredited lobby to the European Parliament. About 12,000 organizations on the EU's current register of lobbyists say the lobby's total annual budget is € 1.8 billion (estimated costs of the annual lobby; Transparency International EU, 2021).

At the EU level, lobbying is not regulated comprehensively. For example, the Council does not have a system of protection against unethical lobbying. Parliament and the Commission have a common voluntary register of lobbyists, which lacks adequate resources to supervise registrars properly. In the last mandate, the European Commission proposed to regulate this sector through a mandatory register common to all three EU institutions, which is a long-term policy perspective. Unfortunately, despite many years of negotiations, the "mandatory EU Transparency Register" is not yet a reality. The European Parliament and the European Commission established the Transparency Register as a joint scheme in 2011 through an Interinstitutional Agreement. It is a key tool, which allows these two institutions to meet their obligations of transparency in their relations with stakeholders involved in influencing decision-making and policy implementation in the EU institutions. All registrants have signed a common code of conduct (EUR-Lex, 2014). By disclosing what interests are being pursued, by whom, and with what level of resources, the Transparency Register allows for stronger public scrutiny (European Commission, 2009). This allows citizens, the media, and stakeholders to monitor the activities and potential influence of stakeholders on the formulation of EU legislation (The Joint Transparency Register Secretariat, 2019).

While researching the issue of lobbying interests, it is necessary to provide an interpretation of its concept. "Lobbying is an influence on the government by certain methods to comprehensively cover the problems of stakeholders in political decision-making." (Leif & Speth, 2006). Many definitions of lobbying include such an aspect as a particularly desirable influence on policy decisions

(Kleinfeld, Willems & Zimmer, 2007; Michalowicz, 2004; Greenwood, 2007). When it comes to the details of lobbying, the opinions of experts are even more contradictory. Kleinfeld et al. (2007) view lobbying as a legitimate attempt to influence policy outcomes and recognize criticism of lobbying as justified only in isolated cases. Leif and Speth (Leif & Speth, 2006), on the other hand, even critically call lobbying a "fifth force", where for them those who try to influence political decisions through lobbying are not part of the decision-making process, whereas Redelfs suggests that politicians may also represent the interests of certain interest groups (Redelfs, 2006). Busch-Janser S. and Vondenhoff C. concluded, "Lobbying is a mediator between society, business and politics. It does not only enable those who represent themselves to have a voice in political decisions but also translates the code of policy" (Busch-Janser, S., Vondenhoff, C., 2008). They think, like Althaus (Althaus, 2001), that lobbying is not only a process of influencing politics but also a mediator between politics, business, and society, while Leif and Speth (Leif and Speth, 2006) clearly distinguish between lobbying and representation of interests. In their view, lobbying is a diffuse representation of interests as well as values and ideologies in the political space (which, from their point of view, including the public) (Scheske, S., 2011).

Lobbying at the European level, in particular by corporate interest groups, has led to claims that lobbying reduces the transparency of European Union governance and opens the door to the possibility of writing legislation that is contrary to or ambiguous about the public interest (Chambers, A., 2016). Given the different views on lobbying, it should be seen as a whole as an attempt to influence policy-making against the background of a certain public interest (Scheske, S., 2011).

The lobbying activities of interest groups were seen as destructive to the democratic functioning of the entire EU. Understanding the interests of different Member States in EU institutions such as the European Parliament is important for the EU, which, despite sharing many attributes of the political system, is not a state (Hix and Hoyland, 2011). Due to differences in regulatory levels and regulatory measures in EU member states, political negotiations in Brussels often have to find compromises between different political parties and national interests (Berkhout et al., 2015). In such negotiations, interest-bearing organizations not only act on behalf of specific political interests but may also represent individual national approaches to address a particular policy

issue (Brendan J. & Rasmussen A., 2017). With the right lobbying, this process will play an important role in shaping and improving public policy, as civil servants cannot be experts on every issue (Burson Marsteller, 2013). Nevertheless, for lobbying to play a constructive role and become legitimate in society, it must be regulated adequately and properly enforced (Transparency International EU, 2021).

An in-depth analysis of the issues outlined in the scientific article allows us to conclude that the topic of the modern experience of lobbying interests in Europe, in terms of in-depth integration of national economies into the structure of world socio-political, foreign, and Ukrainian scientists study economic space sufficiently.

Thus, the problem of promoting the experience of lobbying interests in Europe is widely reflected in scientific publications in the form of theoretical research and practical research. However, the issue of promoting the modern experience of lobbying in Europe remains relevant and open for further research, taking into account the reports of the European Commission, the European Parliament, and Transparency International EU on the application of modern experience of lobbying in Europe.

3. Methods and Materials

The realization of the purpose of this exploration involves the involvement of such research methods as:

- analysis of countries' spending on lobbying and current national lobbying registers in Europe;
- system and logical analysis, method of information synthesis;
- systematization, summarization of the latest scientific publications and statistics published by governments and accountable organizations on the specifics of lobbying transparency mechanisms in European countries and EU institutions, integrity mechanisms designed to promote ethical lobbying among lobbyists and decision-makers in European countries, and EU institutions.

To identify certain features of interest lobbying, there was used a method of generalizing the regulatory practice of applying lobbying transparency mechanisms in European countries and EU institutions. The use of the comparison method made it possible to draw a parallel in the activities of the Juncker Commission and the von der Leyen Commission, on the implementation of

relevant acts and decision-making in the field of lobbying.

The statistical analysis method was used to display statistics on the distribution of the current composition of registrants in the Register of Transparency, Percentage of Registrants, Headquarters within the EU, EU lobbying costs, lobbying costs of large technology companies in Brussels. Regression analysis was used to reflect the relationship between the results of registration and disclosure by lobbyists and the monitoring of the rules of the register and transparency of lobbying activities in European countries and EU institutions.

4. Results

According to statistics, the Transparency Register has grown significantly since its inception and as of April 06, 2021, includes almost 12,475 entities, consisting of 6 sections and 14 subsections. In 2019, the total number of registrants remained unchanged at 1,592 new registrations. The registrants, in which the head office is located within the EU, make up almost 91% of all registrations, as in 2018, and the other registrants are 9% distributed in 87 countries. The largest number of registered interest representatives, about 51%, is located in the following countries: Belgium, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. (see Figure 1) (The Joint Transparency Register Secretariat, 2019).

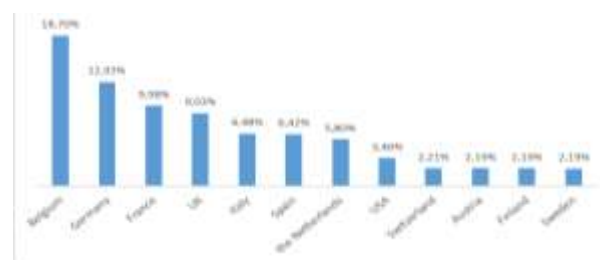


Fig. 1. Registrants per location of head office

Source: Compiled by the authors by official data of The Joint Transparency Register Secretariat (2019).

From the beginning of January 2017 to September 2018, more than €2 billion (€2.3 billion) were spent on EU lobbying, most of which was spent by entities within the European Union. The current share of lobbyists outside the European Union is not so significant and is only 9% of the subjects in the Transparency Register, with a total cost of 11%.

EU law extends to EU member states, which means that the subjects of these countries

have a greater interest in lobbying EU political and legislative issues. The largest expenditure on EU lobbying for the period 2017-2018 falls on Belgium, Germany, and Italy, where of the top 30 countries that have spent money on EU lobbying, five countries that are not part of the EU and namely the USA, Switzerland, Norway, Japan, and China (see Fig. 2).

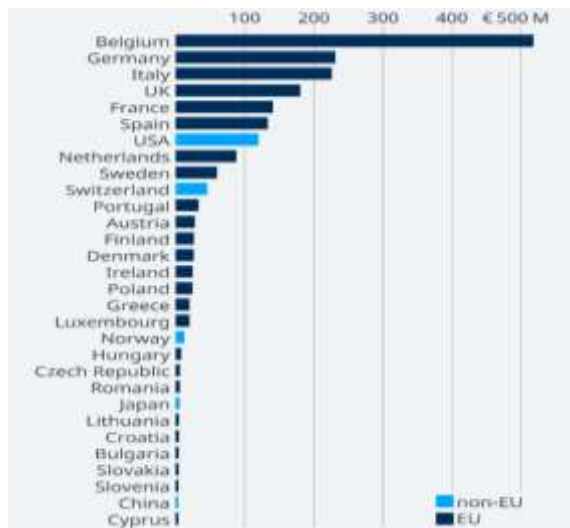


Fig. 2. The 30 biggest lobbying spenders (in millions of €)

Source: Compiled by the authors by official data of Transparency Register (2021).

The total cost of lobbying non-EU companies for lobbying is about 43%. US lobbying spending is highest in Brussels, and higher than in Germany, the United Kingdom, and France. Belgium is the second country in terms of lobbying power to register hundreds of pan-European associations that mark the country as the location of their headquarters (Transparency Register, 2021).

The cost of lobbying by large technology companies in Brussels has increased over the last decade. Google ranks first with a declared cost of €5,750,000 per year, an increase of 360% since December 2014. Apple's lobbying budget has quadrupled in the last six years—from €400,000 to €2,000,000. Only Microsoft's budget has remained relatively stable, increasing by 17% since 2014. Microsoft was already one of the leading lobbyists in Brussels in 2014, thanks to the opening of the first major technology company to be hit by the application of dogmatic EU9 antitrust rules (see Figure 3).

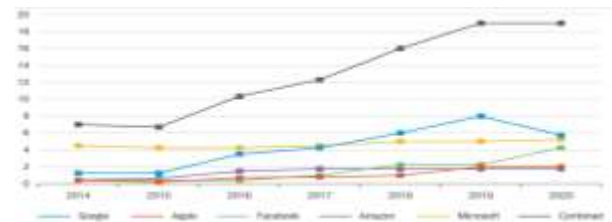


Fig. 3. Increase in in-house lobby budget 2014 - 2020 (in millions of €)

Source: Compiled by the authors by official data of Transparency International EU, (2021).

Google, Facebook, and Microsoft are among the organizations that have published the most lobbying meetings in Juncker's years. The main topic lobbied by these companies was the single digital market, which accounted for 15% of all 540 published meetings, and the next important topic was data privacy. During the Commission, von der Leyen, Google, Facebook, and Microsoft continue to lead the top 10 companies and groups in terms of meetings in all policy areas, while Apple and Amazon lag behind these companies, ranking 39th and 68th, respectively. The launch of the von der Leyen Commission in December 2019 did not significantly change the priorities in terms of digital policy. One of the stated main objectives, together with the European Green Course, is to refine the rules underlying the digital single market. In 2020, COVID-19 is considered a topic for 15% of all meetings held by the Commission, making it, together with the Digital Services Act, a major topic for large technology companies. The trend of the dominance of corporate lobbying continues during the von der Leyen Commission, where business interests represent 75% of the 1212 meetings held by the Commission, which are responsible for digital policy (see Figure 4).

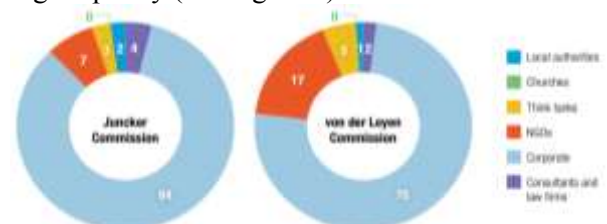


Fig. 4. Increase in in-house lobby budget 2014 - 2020 (in millions of €)

Source: Compiled by the authors by official data of Transparency International EU, (2021).

Although Google, Facebook, and Microsoft are among the top five lobbying organizations, there is a more even distribution of meetings between corporate and civic organizations (44% and 39%, respectively) (Transparency International EU, 2021).

The EU countries surveyed have access to information on legislation, except for Cyprus, but there are significant shortcomings in the EU both in terms of the quality of laws and in terms of their implementation. In all but two countries (Slovakia and the United Kingdom), citizens face barriers to accessing public sector information and public data. In most countries, it is not possible to access information on lobbying, due to requests for

freedom of information, because contacts are not documented and therefore data do not exist, or because such information is made private (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom). Slovenia, Ireland, the European Commission, Lithuania, and the European Parliament have robust transparency mechanisms for lobbying (see Table 1).

Table 2. How reliable are the mechanisms of lobbying transparency in European countries and EU institutions?

| | Access to information | Registration and disclosure by lobbyists | Oversight of register and transparency rules | Pro-active public sector transparency mechanisms including legislative footprint | Overall score |
|---------------------|-----------------------|--|--|--|---------------|
| Slovenia | 67 | 60 | 56 | 50 | 58 |
| Ireland | 67 | 64 | 50 | 13 | 48 |
| European Commission | 67 | 50 | 38 | 38 | 48 |
| Lithuania | 50 | 50 | 56 | 38 | 48 |
| European Parliament | 67 | 50 | 38 | 25 | 45 |
| United Kingdom | 67 | 33 | 25 | 13 | 34 |
| Austria | 50 | 57 | 19 | 13 | 34 |
| Poland | 50 | 27 | 13 | 25 | 29 |
| Latvia | 50 | 13 | 0 | 50 | 28 |
| Netherlands | 67 | 10 | 0 | 25 | 25 |
| Estonia | 50 | 0 | 13 | 33 | 24 |
| France | 33 | 30 | 10 | 21 | 24 |
| Slovakia | 83 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21 |
| Czech Republic | 75 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 19 |
| Council of the EU | 67 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 17 |
| Bulgaria | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 |
| Germany | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 |
| Portugal | 33 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 13 |
| Italy | 33 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| Spain | 33 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| Hungary | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Cyprus | 17 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 7 |
| Regional average | 50 | 22 | 14 | 17 | 26 |

Source: Compiled by the authors by official data of Transparency International, (2016).

Notes: Scale 0-100, where 0 is the weakest and 100 is the strongest. Overall score based on the total average score in four subcategories. The results are presented in descending order, with the EU country/organization receiving the highest score first.

Lobbying registers are fast becoming the most popular transparency tool in the field of interest lobbying. From the 19 countries surveyed, 10 of them have some form of lobbying register,

ranging from mandatory national registries (Austria, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, the United Kingdom) to voluntary registries submitted to specific institutions (the National Assembly and the French Senate, the Netherlands, the EU Transparency Register) or registers targeting institutions at the subnational level (Tuscany, Molise and Abruzzo, Italy and Catalonia, Spain).

Table 2 shows the results of regression modeling, which allows reflecting the relationship

between the results of registration and disclosure of information by lobbyists and monitoring compliance with the rules of the register and transparency of lobbying activities in European countries and EU institutions.

The equation of correlation-regression dependence has the form:

Reliability of lobbying

$= (-2,75) + 53,99$

* Registration and disclosure by lobbyists +

+42,04

* Oversight of register and transparency rules

The obtained results allow us to conclude that the reliability of lobbying activities in European countries and EU institutions depends on the disclosure of information by lobbyists and compliance with the rules of the register and transparency in the field of lobbying. The model parameters are statistically significant, as indicated by tStat in the amount of 8.78 and 7.99 and a P-value of 0,000000018 and 0.00000008.

Table 2. The results of regression modeling

| Table 2: The Results of the Regression Analysis | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Regression Statistics | | | | | | | | |
| Multiple R | | | | | 0.80 | | | |
| R Square | | | | | 0.64 | | | |
| Adjusted R Square | | | | | 0.62 | | | |
| Standard Error | | | | | 14.27 | | | |
| Observations | | | | | 23 | | | |
| ANOVA | | | | | | | | |
| | <i>df</i> | <i>SS</i> | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>Significance F</i> | | | |
| Regression | 1 | 7647.75 | 7647.75 | 37.57 | 0.0000044 | | | |
| Residual | 21 | 4274,25 | 203.54 | | | | | |
| Total | 22 | 11922 | | | | | | |
| | <i>Coefficients</i> | <i>Standard Error</i> | <i>t Stat</i> | <i>P-value</i> | <i>Lower 95%</i> | <i>Upper 95%</i> | <i>Lower 95.0%</i> | <i>Upper 95.0%</i> |
| Intercept | -2.75 | 0.45 | 6.13 | 0.00000 | -3.68 | -1.82 | -3.68 | -1.82 |
| Registration and disclosure by lobbyists | 53.99 | 6.15 | 8.78 | 0,00000 | 41.20 | 66.78 | 41.20 | 66.78 |
| Oversight of register and transparency rules | 42.04 | 5.26 | 7.99 | 0.00000 | 31.09 | 52.99 | 31.09 | 52.99 |

Source: Compiled by the authors based on official data of Transparency International, (2016).

The value of the coefficient of determination indicates that the 62% model explains the relationship between disclosure by lobbyists and monitoring compliance with the rules of the register and transparency in lobbying. This suggests that other factors are influencing the reliability of lobbying in European countries and EU institutions, which are not included in the regression model.

In most countries, there are some forms of restrictions on the follow-up of officials, where the scope, coverage, and length of the period for subsequent employment varies. In 4 of the 19 studied European countries (Austria, Hungary,

Italy, and Latvia) there are no measures to regulate the further activities of officials between the public sector and the lobbying world. Where rules exist, they often do not cover the lobbying goals needed to realize their potential to reduce risk. The main gap is that members of parliament are very rarely subject to restrictions on further employment, even though they are a high-risk category and can engage in lobbying activities. In only one of the 19 countries, in Slovenia, MPs have to adhere to periods for further employment before moving to positions that may create a conflict of interest and our research found that this rule was not applied in practice (see Table 3) (Transparency International, 2016).

Table 3. How reliable are integrity mechanisms designed to promote ethical lobbying among lobbyists and decision-makers in European countries and EU institutions?

| | Post-employment and pre-employment restrictions | Codes of conduct for public sector employees | Code of conduct for lobbyists | Self-regulation of lobbying by professional bodies | Overall score |
|---------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|--|---------------|
| Slovenia | 67 | 75 | 60 | 30 | 58 |
| United Kingdom | 40 | 40 | 33 | 92 | 51 |
| European Commission | 67 | 50 | 30 | n/a | 49 |
| European Parliament | 50 | 58 | 30 | n/a | 46 |
| Latvia | 33 | 67 | 20 | 50 | 43 |
| Austria | 8 | 67 | 60 | 33 | 42 |
| Lithuania | 50 | 58 | 50 | 0 | 40 |
| Ireland | 40 | 42 | 13 | 58 | 38 |
| Netherlands | 8 | 75 | 0 | 67 | 38 |
| Czech Republic | 25 | 50 | 20 | 58 | 38 |
| Spain | 58 | 58 | 0 | 25 | 35 |
| France | 22 | 42 | 7 | 50 | 30 |
| Council of EU | 42 | 25 | 20 | n/a | 29 |
| Estonia | 8 | 67 | 0 | 33 | 27 |
| Italy | 8 | 50 | 0 | 50 | 27 |
| Poland | 17 | 67 | 20 | 0 | 26 |
| Germany | 17 | 42 | 0 | 42 | 25 |
| Bulgaria | 33 | 42 | 0 | 25 | 25 |
| Slovakia | 42 | 42 | 10 | 0 | 23 |
| Cyprus | 58 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 21 |
| Portugal | 42 | 17 | 0 | 17 | 19 |
| Hungary | 8 | 50 | 0 | 8 | 17 |
| Regional average | 32 | 49 | 16 | 36 | 33 |

Source: Compiled by the authors by official data of Transparency International, (2016).

Thus, further improvement of legislation in the field of lobbying in Europe will ensure the implementation of effective EU policy, increase the efficiency of socio-political and economic systems of member states and create favorable conditions for deeper integration of the European economic environment into the world community.

5. Discussion

A study of the current experience of lobbying in Europe shows that lobbying serves an important purpose, namely to provide policy-makers with information to make more informed legislative and policy decisions. These results support the view that the formation of interest lobbying groups in political activity often combines the driving forces of the formation of organizations with the factors underlying lobbying (Baumgartner

& Leech, 2001; Beyers, 2002; Dür & Mateo, 2012; Klüver, 2012; Leech, etc., 2005; Lohmann, 1998). A significant number of researchers explain the dominance of interest groups in the EU by the problems of collective action faced by these groups and note that this dominance is likely to contribute to the formation of effective policy action through the intervention of lobbyists. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the obstacles faced by interest groups during integration into political affairs, and not just to pay attention to their organizational creation and implementation of the strategy. Besides, the study suggests that research projects should be focused more on the activities of registrants in the Transparency Register and ensure their interaction with political actors to implement interest lobbying, which correlates with the results of Jordan & Halpin (2012).

At the same time, the broad distribution of power in the EU not only contributes to the formation of various areas in which lobbyists participate but also ensures certain isolation of European institutions from interest groups, which are usually better organized than others. Agreements between lobby groups and EU institutions may not be long-term, as the focus of decision-making shifts to national arenas. As noted by Greenwood (2002), the European Commission can sometimes isolate itself from pressure from interest groups, thereby undermining the importance of business associations at the European level compared to other lobbying strategies.

It can be argued that lobbying is likely to increase in the future, albeit more slowly than in the last 10-15 years. In this aspect, we can agree with the opinion of De Fouloy (2001), which identified some key factors that will continue to promote lobbying by interest groups: further EU consolidation and the legitimacy of legislation; a harsh economic and political climate in which more interest groups need to be heard to redistribute or preserve monetary income; accelerating the implementation of the latest information technologies; formation of a society where it is necessary to absorb a huge amount of new information; an increase of professional specialization within branch knowledge.

Due to the impact of globalization processes, lobbyists will have to work in a more complex political environment, as the integration of new Member States has a political culture that is significantly different from the culture of current EU members. As a result, interest groups will face new challenges, as the EU institutions and their decision-making mechanisms are determined by European law, which will lead to increased attention to improving legislation in the field of lobbying. Therefore, the research conducted by scientists does not provide relevant information on lobbying interests in Europe.

6. Conclusion

A study of interest lobbying in Europe revealed that the improvement of European legislation in the field of lobbying is becoming increasingly important. In a healthy democracy, groups and individuals should be free to lobby and have access to influential legislators. It is important to uphold this right, but it is equally important to recognize the rights of others to access decisions taken at the European level, ensuring the most transparent contact of outsiders with EU actors and

institutions so that European citizens can influence effective political and legislative decisions. It has been established that it is impossible to make lobbying at any level of European policy completely transparent due to the impractical interpretation of the concept of lobbying, acceptable to all participants, and possible breaches of the confidentiality of individuals who consult with their elected representatives. However, by amending existing legislation and adopting new EU regulations in the field of lobbying, it can make significant progress in improving the transparency of lobbying.

Thus, improving lobbying in Europe can be the latest paradigm of implementation in all institutions of the general principle that politicians (both elected and non-elected) only accept meeting requests from registered lobbyists, and meetings must be formally registered. All lobbyist meetings should be published on a centralized platform in an open search format. EU institutions and policies need to take a more proactive approach to ensure a better balance of lobbying in their meetings with lobbyists. National registers of lobbyists in the EU Member States should facilitate the identification of lobbying activities aimed at influencing EU policy, and the EU Transparency Register should allow participants to refer to national registrations. As a result, the implementation of legislation in the field of lobbying in Europe is becoming a topic of great interest both for the actors themselves and for the public sector as a whole.

The practical significance of the study is that the theoretical provisions, conclusions, and recommendations developed by the author and proposed in the article can be used to improve the system of lobbying interests in Europe, improve organizational links and mechanisms for lobbying transparency in European countries and EU institutions.

Further research could focus on improving EU legislation to promote lobbying policies in Europe, which will stimulate lobbying and improve the economic performance of actors and the current standard of living. Capacity building and widespread use of innovative, policy, research approach to regulating lobbying policies at the interstate level can become the basis of a pan-European strategy for future periods.

References

- [1]. Althaus, M. (2001): *Kampagne!. Neue Strategien für Wahlkampf, PR und Lobbying*. Münster: LIT-Verlag.
- [2]. Baumgartner, F. R., & Leech, B. L. (2001). Interest niches and policy bandwagons: Patterns of interest group involvement in national politics. *Journal of Politics*, 63(4), 1191–1213.
- [3]. Berkhout, Joost, Brendan J. Carroll, Caelesta Braun, Adam W. Chalmers, Tine Destrooper, David Lowery, Simon Otjes, and Anne Rasmussen (2015). 'Interest Organizations Across Economic Sectors: Explaining Interest Group Density in the European Union', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 22:4, 462–480. [10.1080/13501763.2015.1008549](https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2015.1008549).
- [4]. Beyers, J. (2002). Gaining and seeking access: The European adaptation of domestic interest associations. *European Journal of Political Research*, 41(5), 585–612.
- [5]. Beyers, J., Eising, R., Maloney, W. (2008), Researching interest group politics in Europe and elsewhere: Much We study, little We know? *West European Politics*, 31(6): 1103–1128.
- [6]. Brendan J. Carroll & Anne Rasmussen, (2017), Cultural capital and the density of organized interests lobbying the European Parliament, *West European Politics*, Volume 40, Issue 5, pp. 1132–1152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2017.1303243>.
- [7]. Brundtland, G. (1987), *Our Common Future: Report of the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development*; United Nations: Oslo, Norway, pp. 1–59.
- [8]. Burson Marsteller, (2013), *A Guide to Effective Lobbying in Europe: The View of Policymakers*. London.
- [9]. Busch-Janser, S., Vondenhoff, C. (2008): *Praxishandbuch Lobbying*. Berlin: Polisphäre.
- [10]. Chambers, A. (2016), *The Lobbying of the EU. How to achieve greater transparency*. Civitas: Institute for the Study of Civil Society, London.
- [11]. Chari R., Hogan J., Murphy G. (2010), *Regulating Lobbying: A Global Comparison*. Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- [12]. De Fouloy, C.D. (2001), *The professional lobbyist's desk reference*, Gateway, Brussels.
- [13]. Dür, A. (2008a), Interest groups in the European Union: How powerful are they? *West European Politics*, 31(6): 1212–1230.
- [14]. Dür, A., & Mateo, G. (2012). Who lobbies the European Union? National interest groups in a multilevel polity. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 19(7), 969–987.
- [15]. Estimated costs of annual lobby expenditure are declared within a range on the EU transparency register.
- [16]. EUR-Lex, Access to European Union law (2014), Agreement between the European Parliament and the European Commission on the transparency register for organizations and self-employed individuals engaged in EU policy-making and policy implementation, *Official Journal of the European Union*? 19 September, L 277/11, 2014-r, available at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.277.01.0011.01.ENG.
- [17]. European Commission, (2009): Communication from the Commission to the Parliament and the Council. European Transparency Initiative: the Register of Interest Representatives, one year after, COM(2009) 612. Brussels: European Commission. Retrieved from: http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/docs/communication_2009_en.pdf.
- [18]. Greenwood, J. (2007): *Interest Representation in the European Union*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [19]. Greenwood, J. (2002). *Inside the EU Business Associations*, Macmillan, Basingstoke.
- [20]. Hix, Simon, and Bjorn Hoyland (2011). *The Political System of the European Union*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [21]. Jordan, G., & Halpin, D. (2012). Politics is not basketball: Numbers are not results. In D. Halpin & G. Jordan (Eds.), *The scale of interest organization in democratic politics: Data and research methods* (pp. 245–263). Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- [22]. Kleinfeld, R., Willems, U., Zimmer, A. (2007): *Lobbyismus und Verbändeforschung. Eine Einleitung*. In Kleinfeld, R., Willems, U., Zimmer, A. (Eds.): *Lobbying. Strukturen, Akteure, Strategien* (pp. 7–35). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- [23]. Klüver, H. (2011), *The contextual nature of lobbying: Explaining lobbying success in the European Union*. *European Union Politics*, 12(4): 483–506.

- [24]. Klüver, H. (2012). Biasing politics? Interest group participation in EU policy-making. *West European Politics*, 35(5), 1114–1133.
- [25]. Korkea-aho, E. (2021). Legal Lobbying: The Evolving (But Hidden) Role of Lawyers and Law Firms in the EU Public Affairs Market. *German Law Journal*, 22(1), 65-84. doi:10.1017/glj.2020.97.
- [26]. Leech, B., Baumgartner, F. R., Pira, T. L., & Semanko, N. (2005). Drawing lobbyists to Washington government activity and interest group mobilization. *Political Research Quarterly*, 58(1), 19–30.
- [27]. Leif, T., Speth, R. (2006): Die fünfte Gewalt – Anatomie des Lobbyismus in Deutschland. In Leif, T., Speth, R. (Eds.): Die fünfte Gewalt. Lobbyismus in Deutschland (pp. 10-37). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- [28]. Lohmann, S. (1998). An information rationale for the power of special interests. *American Political Science Review*, 92(4), 809–827.
- [29]. Michalowitz, I. (2004): EU Lobbying – Principals, Agents, and Targets. Strategic Interest Intermediation in EU Policy-Making. Münster: LIT-Verlag.
- [30]. Năstase, A. and Muurmans, C. (2020), Regulating lobbying activities in the European Union: A voluntary club perspective. *Regulation & Governance*, 14: 238-255. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rego.12200>.
- [31]. OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), (2014), Lobbyists, Governments and Public Trust, Volume 3: Implementing the OECD Principles for Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying. OECD Publishing, Paris.
- [32]. Redelfs, M. (2006): Mehr Transparenz gegen die Macht der Lobbyisten. In Leif, T., Speth, R. (Eds.): Die fünfte Gewalt. Lobbyismus in Deutschland (pp. 53 – 68). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- [33]. Růžicková, K. (2010), Lobbying European Union Institutions. Brno: Brno University of Technology, Faculty of Business and Management, 90 p. Supervisor doc. Ing. Stanislav Škapa, Ph.D.
- [34]. Scheske, S. (2011): EU Lobbying – Between Pluralism and Criminality? Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster. Institut für Politikwissenschaft. Münster: LIT-Verlag.
- [35]. Stevens F., De Bruycker I. (2020), Influence, affluence and media salience: Economic resources and lobbying influence in the European Union. *European Union Politics*. 21(4):728-750. doi:10.1177/1465116520944572.
- [36]. The Joint Transparency Register Secretariat (2019), Annual Report on the operations of the Transparency Register 2019, available at <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/transparency-and-ethics/lobby-groups/en-annual-report-on-the-operations-of-the-transparency-register-2019.pdf>.
- [37]. Transparency International EU, (2021), Deep Pockets, Open Doors. Big tech lobbying in Brussels, available at https://transparency.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Deep_pockets_open_doors_report.pdf.
- [38]. Transparency International, (2016), Lobbying in Europe, Hidden Influence, Privileged Access, available at http://transparency.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Lobbying_web.pdf.
- [39]. Transparency Register (2021), Transparency and the EU, available at <https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/homePage.do>.

Contribution of Individual Authors to the Creation of a Scientific Article (Ghostwriting Policy)

The authors equally contributed in the present research, at all stages from the formulation of the problem to the final findings and solution.

Sources of Funding for Research Presented in a Scientific Article or Scientific Article Itself

No funding was received for conducting this study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 (Attribution 4.0 International, CC BY 4.0)

This article is published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en_US