

KIM Trends

The lobby concept in R&D projects



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According to the most widely-held view, lobbyists are a pressure group that only seeks a result which will benefit their own industry. However, this traditional view is no longer consistent with a reality where institutions and knowledge platforms collaborate in an increasingly mature and transparent fashion in drafting laws and funding programmes.

Tools such as the Transparency Register or technology platforms show a clear political desire to ensure consistent cooperation among stakeholders.

The experts who attended the KIM Conference 2015 issued guidelines to overcome poor practices and to benefit fully from this necessary interaction between society and the state.

What is understood by “lobbying” and what is it in reality?

We must escape from the traditional view point that a lobby is a tool for winning proposals

The Association of Professionals for Institutional Relations (APRI) define lobbying as the **transfer of private interests to public institutions**. Accordingly, lobbying is considered a rapprochement of civil society, companies, and various social groups, to the laws and regulations that are approved in a democratic system.

Its **objective**: to promote dialogue and interaction between the research community and institutions in order to identify common challenges and **design funding programmes which are aligned with the real needs of the market**.

However, there are other definitions of the process which make us think of concepts such as “**influence**” and “**personal gain**””, which tarnish the reputation of lobbying. For example, according to the European Council, lobbying is “any activity whose objective is to attempt to influence policy design or decision-making in order to obtain a specific outcome.”

Unfortunately, this second definition has had a greater influence on public debate and has ensured that the practice of lobbying remains under critical analysis in relation to its limits and legitimacy.

Lobbying allows the European Commission to identify the main priorities of their funding and strategic programmes

In any case, we must not lose sight of the fact that the European Commission (EC) considers **lobbying activity as “legitimate and necessary** within a democratic system that helps to draw the attention of institutions to important matters”, and it points out that in the next few years this activity will play a vital role in **creating new laws and in developing democracy**.

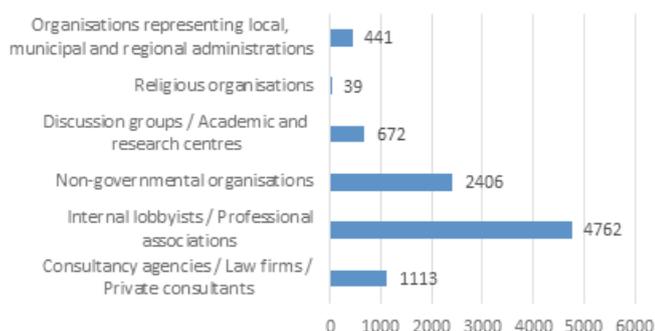
Transparency Register: the democratization of lobbying

Increasingly more social and economic stakeholders, including the European institutions, are overcoming existing prejudices and are starting to perceive lobbying as a vital element for combining social needs with policy design, and so they have started to dedicate their efforts towards defining a lobbying policy that is more open, transparent and crosscutting.

An example of this is the recent creation of the **Transparency Register** by the EC—a register which compiles, by way of open data, the **civil society contributions** towards defining, adapting and creating EC policies. By using this database and via prior registration, any European organisation has the chance to give their opinion in a transparent fashion and to take part in various consultative processes promoted by the EU.

These efforts are aimed at facilitating access to the lobbying activities of certain stakeholders who, motivated by a perceived lack of transparency, were reluctant to take part in the process. So, on 15 March 2016, the Transparency Register database¹ classified the **entities registered in the process as follows**:

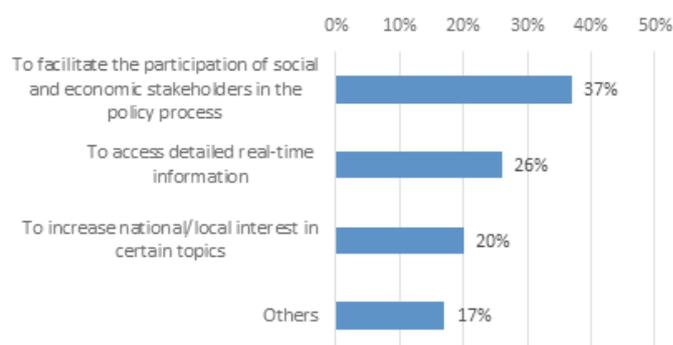
Lobby stakeholders in the EU



1. http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/civil_society/public_consultations.htm

As well as the wide variety of stakeholders that take part in the lobbying process, it is important to highlight the various **motives** that they hide behind. According to a study published by the European Parliament, the main positive aspects of participating in lobby activities were identified as:

Positive aspects of lobbying



The role of agencies as intermediaries

In order to reinforce this cooperative lobbying vision, the role of **national agencies**, who act as **intermediaries between the knowledge platforms and groups and European institutions**, must be highlighted. The fact that a large part of European funds are managed by member states, as well as their greater rapprochement with market agents, further strengthens the institutional lobbying role they are developing.

The national agencies play an important role as intermediaries between the knowledge platforms and groups and European institutions

One of the efforts made by the EU in order to achieve useful, transparent and legitimate participation of knowledge agents in the process is the promotion of specific (not individual) consultative processes, which help both national and community agencies to define strategic methods adapted to the real economic and research environment.

Technology platforms as a tool

Technology platforms are one of the **most appropriate mechanisms for taking part in the aforementioned consultative processes**. These platforms, designed to be of “industrial” benefit to the members, and which are never based on individual interests, **facilitate interaction between its members and management authorities**, and

at the same time **strengthen the spirit of cooperation** between the various platform members. Not only do these accommodate large companies and research centres, they also include a significant number of SMEs.

As a result, European programmes are becoming increasingly focused on the **participation of small and medium enterprises** and they also encourage the participation of business partnerships (thereby representing the whole industry value chain, from research and development to marketing).

It is important to highlight the **need for these platforms to act strategically** so that **the needs of all its members are considered** and **coherent action is ensured**. To do this, it is important to strengthen network activities and cooperation between the various industry stakeholders, and that the latter consider the development of cooperative lobbying activities as a key element of their strategic

The only element that should ensure the success of a proposal is its quality and how it fits with the priorities of the programme

plan.

Finally, and again making reference to strategic planning for lobbying activities, **it is important that industry stakeholders have a financially-stable workforce** and, where necessary, an external support service, **so that they are able to correctly identify the priorities of the European programmes, ensuring coherence between these and the project**, and always managing technical and administrative information quickly. This can be ensured through regular participation in lobby associations and platforms, as well as the allocation of strategic, human and economic resources.

The problems

After the round table discussions, the problems can be identified into two specific categories: problems of **conception** (lobbying related to obtaining R&D funding) and problems of **application** (the most appropriate channels and mechanisms for developing these activities).

The following section notes the main problems identified by the authors which determine the effectiveness of the organisation's lobbying processes.

Lack of a concrete definition of the lobbying process in relation to R&D&I

The myths surrounding the lobbying process need to be demystified which portray it as an exercise of individual benefit in that the aim is to influence decision-making by fund management authorities. This vision, completely removed from reality, significantly limits the “**genuine**” **lobbying activities**, which are considered as those **focused on promoting dialogue and interaction between the knowledge generators and European institutions for the purpose of designing funding programmes aligned with the real needs of the market**.

Lack of a clear road map for the development of lobbying activities

Misinterpretation of the lobbying process usually comes from insufficient process planning. **Identifying the strategic objectives of an organisation and aligning them with the priorities of EU programmes is fundamental** so the organisation can use R&D funds more effectively.

Carrying out the lobbying process when the decision-making process has already begun

The result of a lobbying process must never be considered short-term; the lobby process, **which is intended to inform EU funding programmes**, will have to create an impact when the next funding programme is published. The ultimate purpose of lobbying activities is to ensure the alignment of the organisation's priorities and those of future strategic/financing programmes.

Incorrect identification of the contact person, body or department

Being unable to identify **the contact person, body or department** are some of the problems encountered by organisations. This can be due to insufficient proactivity of the organisation when it comes to identifying contact agents (often, no special attention is paid to local contact agents) or accessing consultative platforms.

Insufficient resources to implement an effective lobbying strategy

In some cases, organisations don't have, or don't make use of the **resources necessary** to carry out lobbying processes. Accordingly, some organisations only consider the use of internal resources for the development of these activities, when the use of external resources (knowledge platforms, contact networks, external intermediaries, etc.) would be more successful.

This new conceptualisation of lobbying must serve as an incentive for defining a strategic corporate lobbying model based on a **long-term vision, bidirectional integration of lobby results and cooperation**, both at lobbyist agent and political strategy level.

ISSUES FOR DEBATE

1. What should be the proper lobbying approach for the 2016-2020 period?
2. How should an organisation plan its lobby activities?
3. How to adapt our road map if the decision-making process has already begun?
4. How to identify the right contact for communicating our needs?
5. How to manage resources to achieve an effective lobby strategy?

KIM Recommendations

After analysing current lobby barriers and potentialities, it is possible to identify the key points which must be reviewed in order to achieve a more realistic and effective positioning, as well as to identify any fundamental recommendations to overcome each of the barriers::

1. Lack of a concrete definition of the lobbying process in relation to R&D&I

1.1. To never consider lobbying as a way to obtain a more favourable assessment of a project.

1.2. To consider lobbying as a proactive organisational activity in ongoing dialogue between the research community and European institutions.

1.3. To see the lobbying process as an opportunity to help identify common challenges.

1.4. To participate, with the help of lobbying, in the design process of multiannual work programmes as a positioning and information access system.

1.5. To make use of the lobbying processes to ensure the matching of the strategic objectives of the organisation and the R&D&I priorities of the EU (Horizon 2020).

2. Lack of a clear road map for the development of lobbying activities

2.1. To analyse the strategic objectives and priorities of the organisation in detail before carrying out a lobbying activity.

2.2. To ensure the matching of priorities for the organisation and existing funding channels.

2.3. To prioritise the objectives for accessing the organisation's funding based on this matching.

2.4. To develop a realistic, long-term action plan that defines the organisation's activities in line with future operational programmes.

2.5. To set a minimum time period of two years for obtaining results from the European lobbying plan.

3. To carry out the lobbying process when the decision-making process has already begun

3.1. It is advisable to participate in work programme preparation processes from the initial consultative stages.

3.2. To take part as an individual organisation or as part of a thematic network in the open consultation stage.

3.3. To get in touch with local contact agencies in order to gain access to important information.

3.4. To make use of knowledge platforms to improve access to the information and strengthen access capability.

4. Incorrect identification of the contact person, body, or department

4.1. To validate the suitability of the contact departments or managers at a national/European level.

4.2. To use the national contact networks as an intermediary with the European institutions.

4.3. To communicate the organisation's message in a clear and understandable way to ensure reciprocity.

4.4. To define the strategic projects based on the recommendations made during the information exchange stage.

5. Insufficient resources to implement an effective lobbying strategy

5.1. To make use of the organisation's contact network in order to participate in knowledge platforms.

5.2. To consider both internal and external resources in the strategy definition stage.

5.3. To develop an annexed strategy for outsourcing lobbying activities.

KIM Recommendations

5.4. To generate synergies with third parties to maximise the impact of the results.

5.5. To incorporate an experienced, professional team into the organisation.

5.6. To define the strategic projects based on the recommendations made during the information exchange stage.

5.7. To play a proactive role in network, platform and agency participation at a regional, state and European level.

To summarise, it is important to reinforce a new perspective of lobbying activities and show their potential importance for a **more mature relationship between civil society and community institutions**.

All sides must join forces to present the lobbying activities as a mutual rapprochement process, which allows **the European Commission to receive direct information on the latest developments in research and social processes so it can make them the main priorities for its strategic and funding programmes**.

Therefore, social stakeholders and knowledge generators will benefit from European policies and programmes that are better suited to their recent developments and needs.

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KIM would like to thank the experts whose opinions and knowledge have made the preparation of this report possible:

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With Bachelor's degrees in International Relations from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), and Intercultural Communication from the University of Turku in Finland, as well as a Master's degree in Geopolitics from the University of Paris-Est, she has wide-ranging experience in both the public and private sector, in areas such as: ICT and health project administration, social sciences, the high tech industry (teledating, neuroscience, robotics, etc.), international cooperation projects, etc. Today, she heads the European and International Projects Office of the Fundació Clínic per a la Recerca Biomèdica, a position she holds alongside that of internal expert for the EC.

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Since 2014 he has been the departmental head of the EU Executive Agency for SMEs (EASME) and is responsible for the "LIFE, H2020 Energy, Environment and Resources" department. Prior to this, he was director of the Joint Undertaking for ITER and the development of fusion energy, an instrument created by the Euratom Treaty and launched to provide the European contribution to ITER, the international project for the development of fusion energy, which involves the EU, United States, Russia, Japan, South Korea, China and India. He is the author of numerous publications on physics, cooperative science, knowledge proliferation, and the management of large scientific projects.

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An engineer with a PhD and almost 15 years' experience with the EC and other international funders such as UNDP, WBG, AfDB and GIZ, he has worked in Italy, Belgium, Ukraine, Egypt, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ivory Coast, Seychelles, etc. Since 2006, he has held the position of CEO at European Consulting Brussels, an international consultancy firm which works on EU-related matters, creating financing opportunities for prestigious public and private clients. He also has experience as a project manager and designer, and a lobbying professor, and is also a member of the council of experts for the Sustainable Infrastructure Practice Group (SIPG) at UNOPS.

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Owner of CNS Consultores, leading company of a small group of specialised consultants in projects financed by the EU. Since 2007, he has worked as an expert for the DG NEAR (previously DG DEVCO), supporting the launch and execution of the ENPI-CBC programmes. With wide-ranging experience as an expert for the European Commission, he also worked for the DG REGIO and DG ENV. He has almost 20 years' experience in supporting projects financed by the EU within INTERREG, ERDF, CULTURE, LIFE and ENPI-CBC. He has also worked as an expert for the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).