

LOBBY TRANSPARENCY ACROSS THE EU

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LOBBY TRANSPARENCY IN THE EU

INTRODUCTION

The Qatargate scandal and its fallout have sparked renewed scrutiny of the role of lobbyists in their interactions with public authorities¹. Lobbying is one of the pillars of any 21st-century democracy. It helps decision-makers navigate various policy options and diversifies their sources of information, which in practice leads to better outcomes². However, lobbying can have adverse consequences, such as legislation catering only to special interest groups, unaccountable environmental and socio-economic harm and, as seen in Brussels, can lead to actual instances of corruption. The threat of undue influence from lobbyists, be they domestic or foreign, looms over policymaking across the EU. Regulation is therefore essential to safeguard the integrity of public decision-making and sanction unethical or even criminal behaviour. As the debate on undue influence picks up in Brussels, this analysis focuses on the state of play of lobbying rules across the EU and its Member States. The aim is to raise awareness on key best practices for protecting our democracies from both domestic and foreign malign actors.

THE REGULATION LOBBYING TO PREVENT UNDUE INFLUENCE

Lobbying can be defined as any communication conducted by or on behalf of an organised interest group that is made with the specific intent to influence public decisions. This can take the form of direct contact with policymakers through in-person meetings, calls and email exchanges. Indirect forms such as publications, events and advertising should also be considered lobbying, as they instrumentalise considerable resources to get a policy message across. Both forms of lobbying activities serve one principal purpose: to influence decisions made by public authorities and achieve preferred legislative outcomes.

While benign-sounding, lobbying can potentially pose serious ethical risks, as exemplified by a string of scandals that have shaken citizens' trust in their representatives. The Dieseltgate scandal highlighted the cosy relationship between regulators and the automobile industry, where the former simply "looked the other way" while the latter sold millions of highly polluting cars³. This is a relationship that is ongoing, with potentially dire consequences for public health and the environment⁴. The so-called Uber files brought to public attention the ride sharing juggernaut's dubious lobbying practices⁵, including the hiring of former digital policy Commissioner Neelie Kroes that raised serious ethical concerns⁶. Finally, the Qatargate

¹ Alexander Clapp, New York Times, It's a spectacular scandal, and a warning to Europe, 15 March 2023:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/15/opinion/european-parliament-qatargate.html>

² OECD, Lobbying in the 21st century: transparency, integrity and access, introduction:
https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/c6d8eff8-en/1/3/1/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/c6d8eff8-en&_csp_ =381daa981c42f6b279b070444f653f78&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book#section-d1e459

³ Kay-Alexander Scholz, Dieseltgate scandal: cosy ties on show, 8 February 2017:
<https://www.dw.com/en/dieseltgate-the-cozy-ties-between-germanys-car-industry-and-berlin-exposed/a-39927429>

⁴ Anna Krajinska, Transport & Environment, Return of the "big bad" car industry as auto lobbyists water down pollution standards, 29 November 2022:
<https://www.transportenvironment.org/discover/return-of-the-big-bad-car-industry-as-auto-lobbyists-water-down-pollution-standards/>

⁵ Sydney Pr. Freedberg, Nicole Sadek, Brenda Medina, Agustin Armendariz & Karrie Kehoe, ICIJ, The lobbying machine, 10 July 2022:
<https://www.icij.org/investigations/uber-files/uber-global-rise-lobbying-violence-technology/>

⁶ Lucinda Pearson, Transparency International EU, Uber lobbying scandal shows European Commission rules are not up to scratch, 11 July 2022:

scandal exposed the myriad of loopholes through which ill-intentioned actors can operate without proper due diligence on their activities. These are loopholes that are still present today after one year of flawed reforms inside the European Parliament⁷.

These are just a handful of examples of how undue influence, or a concentration of influence, fuels a negative public perception of public-private interactions. In a recent Eurobarometer, 78% of citizens responded that too close links between businesses and public institutions can lead to corruption. 57% of respondents agreed that close political ties are the only way to succeed economically⁸. While lobbying should never be confused with corruption, citizens' opinions coupled with damaging scandals across the Union point towards a need to bring transparency, integrity and accountability to the sector. Our international standards for lobbying regulation⁹ set out four core principles for a sound legal framework:

- i.** A broad definition of lobbying that encompasses all organised interest groups seeking to influence decision-making. This should include at minima companies, business associations, civil society organisations, consultants, law firms, think tanks, academic institutions and wherever possible, organised labour and religious groups.
- ii.** An open public mandatory register in which organisations must disclose key information pertaining to them, such as basic identification, interests represented, financial and human resources involved, sources of funding, clients and associated organisations wherever applicable.
- iii.** An enforceable Code of Conduct that bans certain behaviours, such as providing misleading information, paying for access, achieving legislative outcomes through financial or lavish “quid pro quo” gifts, or lying about the actual interests that a given organisation is representing (i.e.: ‘astroturfing’).
- iv.** A lobbying footprint in the form of open and accessible pro-active publication of meetings or lobbying activities

Taken together, these standards ensure that lobbyists can play a constructive role in society while protecting public institutions from practices that breach the threshold of undue influence and, in some instances, corruption or regulatory capture. According to the OECD, “despite mounting evidence of the impact of lobbying on the economy and policy areas of all kinds, its associated risks appear to be underestimated”¹⁰. To what extent does this apply to EU Member States and institutions? Are public institutions across the Union adequately protected from undue influence across the EU?

<https://transparency.eu/uber-lobbying-commission-ethics-not-up-to-scratch/>

⁷ Pia Engelbrecht-Bogdanov, Transparency International EU, Qatargate’s first anniversary: the more things change..., 7 December 2023:

<https://transparency.eu/qatargates-first-anniversary-the-more-things-change/>

⁸ Eurobarometer, Citizens’ attitude towards corruption in the EU in 2023, April-May 2023, page 8:

<https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2968>

⁹ Transparency International, Access Info Europe, Sunlight foundation, International Standards Lobbying Regulation, 2015:

<https://lobbyingtransparency.net/>

¹⁰ OECD, Lobbying in the 21st century: transparency, integrity and access, chapter 1:

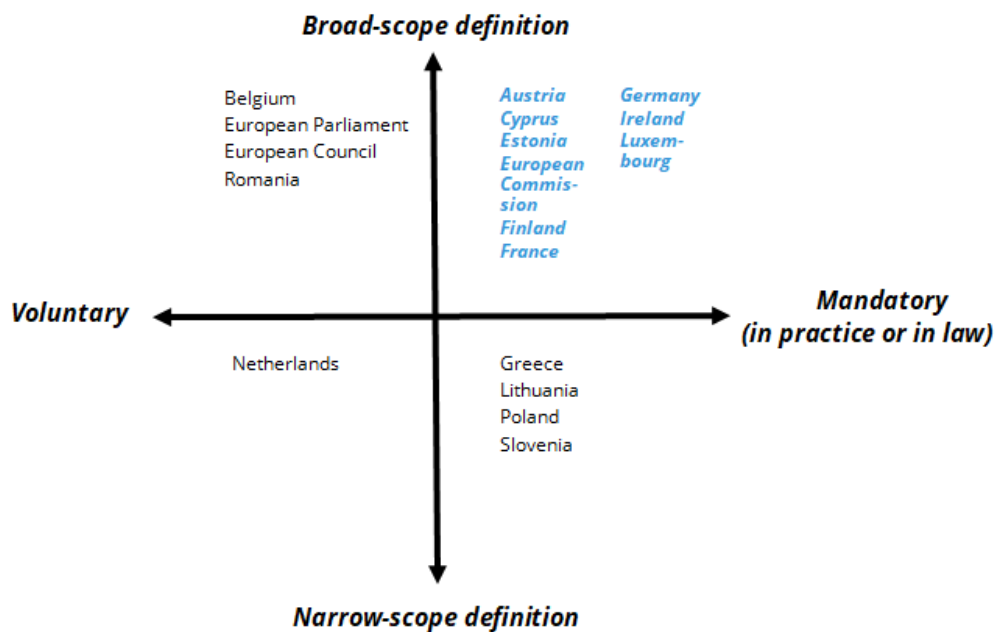
https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/c6d8eff8-en/1/3/1/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/c6d8eff8-en&_csp_=381daa981c42f6b279b070444f653f78&itemIGO=oecd&itemContentType=book#section-d1e459

A FRAGMENTATION OF RULES ACROSS THE SINGLE MARKET AND EU INSTITUTIONS

For this analysis, we surveyed the regulatory frameworks of 27 EU Member States as well as those of the three main EU institutions. An initial overview shows promising results, with 15 EU member states having adopted mandatory or partially mandatory provisions related to lobbying. The remaining 12 Member States have voluntary or no provisions at all. The issue with voluntary systems is that it makes it practically impossible to enforce and sanction unethical behaviour.

A broad-scope definition of interest representatives

The question of who a lobbyist is, or which type of organisation carries out lobbying activities, is one of the most crucial ones. Simply put, this pertains to the definition determining who is required to be transparent about their influencing activities, should be bound by a code of conduct and therefore should be accountable for their actions.



A restrictive definition essentially creates a legal loophole for certain actors to avoid public scrutiny associated with a mandatory framework. For example, the Polish parliament’s definition only applies to private consultants, meaning that a mere 19 individuals are said to be officially influencing public decisions in a country of 37 million¹¹. Similarly, the Dutch Parliament’s register contains 72 lobbyists in total¹² as it invites, on a voluntary basis, “umbrella” organisations to register for an access badge.

By comparison, Ireland with a third of the population, applies a broad-scope definition, resulting in 2430 registered organisations in 2022¹³. Similarly, both the French and German systems apply a broad-scope definition, resulting in respectively 6026 and 3046 organisations being covered by their mandatory rules. Part of the large difference between the two owes to the fact that France applies a threshold below which

¹² Dutch lower chamber lobby register: https://www.tweedekamer.nl/contact_en_bezoek/lobbyisten

¹³ Irish lobby register annual report, page 10: <https://www.lobbying.ie/media/6322/register-of-lobbying-annual-report-2022-english-and-irish-reports.pdf>

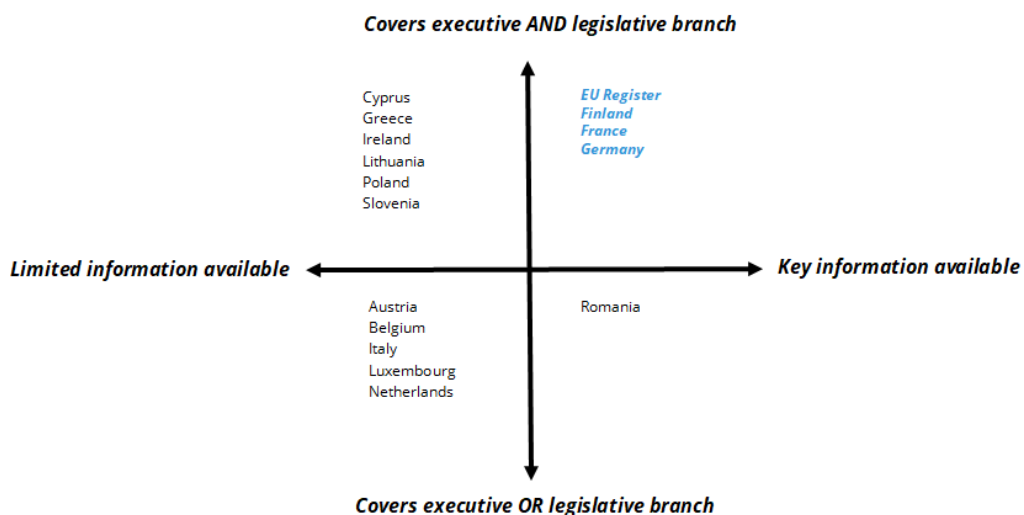
organisations are not considered interest representatives¹⁴. Other systems create exemptions by only partially covering certain institutions under their mandatory provisions. This is for example the case of Luxembourg, Estonia, and the EU institutions.

The EU central register of lobbyists encompasses all organisations that seek to influence decision-making in Brussels, except for citizens and religious organisations. The problem here is that mandatory registration – also known as the conditionality principle – is only applied by the European Commission and the European Parliament, albeit inconsistently. Organisations must register prior to any meetings with high-ranking officials (Commissioners, Cabinet Members and Director-generals) MEPs, however, may meet with unregistered organisations and are therefore not consistently exercising due diligence on their interactions with lobbyists. Registration is only mandatory for organisations seeking to speak at committee meetings, support or participate in intergroup or unofficial groups activities. Finally, the Council is labelled as a voluntary system in our analysis, as the application of the conditionality principle is left to the discretion of each Member State’s Permanent Representation. Overall, only eight EU Member States and the EU institutions abide by the best practice of applying a mandatory broad-scope definition of lobbyist in their regulatory framework.

A publicly accessible register of interest representatives

A central register of interest representatives informs the public about which organisations seek to influence the decision-making process. Simple identification, such as name and address, is insufficient to truly understand the full scope of interests that are represented.

Organisations should also be categorised, disclose which interests they represent, which policies they target, their human and financial resources and, where applicable, their sources of funding as well as clients in the case of intermediaries. It is, however, very rare for all registers to require the disclosure of the full range of key information. Registers should also cover lobbyists targeting public officials in both the legislative and executive branches. For this analysis, registers which require the disclosure of at least 4 datapoints including financial data are considered as making basic information on lobbyists available to the public.



We find that 15 EU Member States maintain, in one form or another, a public register of lobbyists¹⁵. Most of these unfortunately fall short of TI’s benchmark of standards. Only France, Germany, Finland and the EU Transparency Register come close to providing adequate information as well as covering close to the full

¹⁴ See Annex I for details.

range of public institutions targeted by lobbyists, though the Finish register has only become fully operational on the 1st of January 2024¹⁶. Austria, Lithuania and Ireland come close to the ideal ruleset but omit some key information. The Cypriot register stands out as it appears, on paper at least, to contain an extensive range of information including requiring disclosing beneficial owners of lobby organisations. Unfortunately, a total of zero organisations have registered since its inception in May 2023, pointing toward a serious lack of enforcement¹⁷. The Greek register, while fully operational, only contains a limited set of 17 registrations so far, pointing to a similar enforcement issue¹⁸. France, Germany and the EU Register also apply the best practice of requiring lobbyists to disclose their connections to other organisations, whether as clients, business associations or civil society coalitions. This makes it significantly easier to track the full network of possible entry points with public officials, especially when trying to uncover undue influence by malign actors.

The Transparency Register at EU level stands out as one of the most advanced registers in the world. Lobbyists provide an extensive amount of information, including their sources of funding in the case of civil society organisations, or revenue gained from clients in the case of intermediaries. While not mandatory to all EU institutions, its size has grown to over 12000 organisations, covering a sizeable proportion of lobbyists active in Brussels. Unfortunately, the EU Register also highlights a key pitfall of applying rules that are not based on empirically sound practice, namely, that of asking different reporting requirements depending on the type of organisation. On the one hand, organisations representing commercial interests are required to report the estimated yearly costs tied specifically to their lobbying activities, amounting to 1.7 billion euros in 2023¹⁹. On the other hand, a total of 312 billion euros is reported by non-commercial entities, as their disclosed financial data covers their total global operating budget and bears no relationship to their actual influencing activities in Brussels. This makes it impossible to compare different types of actors, especially when seeking to analyse whether resources translate into a monopoly on the decision-making process for certain policies or legislative files.

An enforceable Code of Conduct

It is vital for lobbyists to follow a set of standards and guidelines that govern their interactions with public officials. In most instances, this takes the form of a Code of Conduct that not only professionalises their activities, but also seeks to prevent unethical behaviour. An ideal situation exists when the Code of Conduct or set of standards are outlined in an official binding instrument overseen by an independent authority. The authority must be vested with investigative and sanctioning powers to pursue organisations that breach ethics rules. Independent oversight ensures that all lobby organisations operate on a level-playing field, enforcing a culture of integrity outside of the political arena. Out of all systems surveyed, only five EU Member States have a central binding code overseen by an independent authority²⁰:

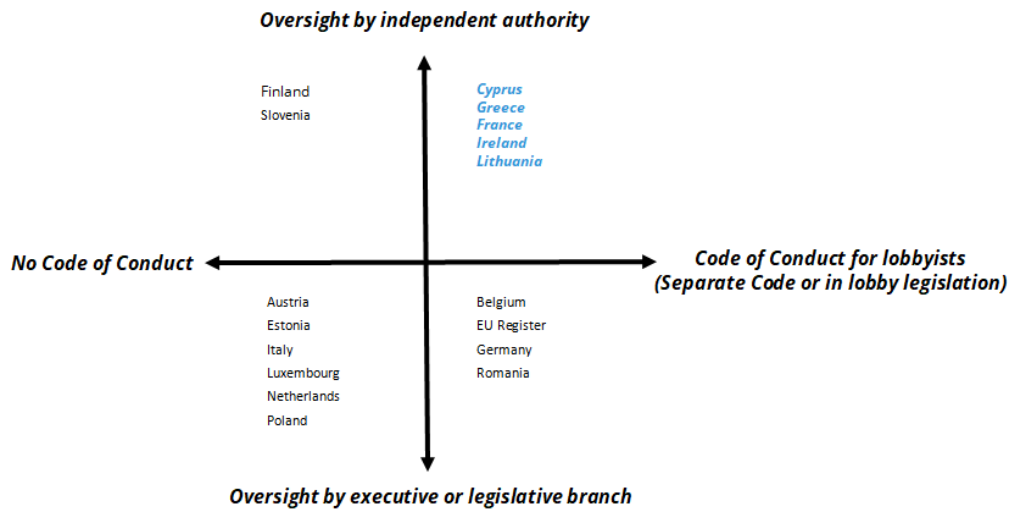
¹⁶ Finish Transparency Register, operational since the 1st of January 2024:
<https://avoimuusrekisteri.fi/en>

¹⁷ Cypriot Lobby Register with 0 entries:
https://www.iaac.org.cy/iaac/iaac.nsf/table3_el/table3_el?openform

¹⁸ Link to Greek register with 17 entries:
<https://lobbying.aead.gov.gr/dsae2/transparency-registry/search.xhtml>

¹⁹ Sourced from Integrity Watch on 1st of December 2023

²⁰ While Cyprus is included in this list, as mentioned previously it currently oversees 0 registered lobby organisations. Furthermore, while the Lithuanian legislation mentions a dedicated Code of Conduct, this is in practice not enforced.



Independent watchdogs can also actively pursue lobbyists who fail either to register or to declare their activities when mandated to do so by law. This further ensures that all entities involved in influencing activities are bound by ethics rules. For example, the Irish Standards in Public Office Commission issued a total of 189 notices of potential prosecutions to lobbyists who failed their reporting obligations in 2022, resulting in a near total compliance by offending parties²¹. The French High Authority in Transparency in Public Life inspected, in the same year, 77 entities, resulting in 61% of them registering. The French authority is also notable for being one of the first documented cases of opening an investigation for providing false or misleading information to public officials.

A lack of resources to conduct investigations cripples authorities' abilities to enforce Codes of Conduct. This is the case of the EU system that is plagued by underfunding, preventing it from correctly enforcing its comparatively robust ethic ruleset for lobbyists²². It stands out, as a mere ten full-time staff members oversee the activities of the over 12000 organisations active in Brussels²³. This still resulted in 68 investigations for alleged breaches of the Code, of which 55 were initiated following complaints lodged by external parties²⁴. Of the non-independent systems, Germany is notable for proactively publishing on its Register organisations that failed to comply with their obligations. This comprises a staggering 17% of all entries, with the majority of these flagged for refusing to provide financial data²⁵.

An interest representative's footprint covering all decision-makers.

The publication of interactions between public officials and lobbyists is often the last piece of the puzzle to complete the system of transparency and integrity the governs interest representation activities. The

²¹ Irish lobby register, Register of lobbying annual report 2022, p 15:

<https://www.lobbying.ie/media/6321/register-of-lobbying-annual-report-2022-english-and-irish-reports.pdf>

²² Transparency International, political corruption in Europe: a threat to more than public funds:

<https://www.transparency.org/en/news/political-corruption-in-europe-threat-to-public-funds-integrity-watch>

²³ Transparency Register Management Board, Annual report on the functioning of the Transparency Register 2022, p4:

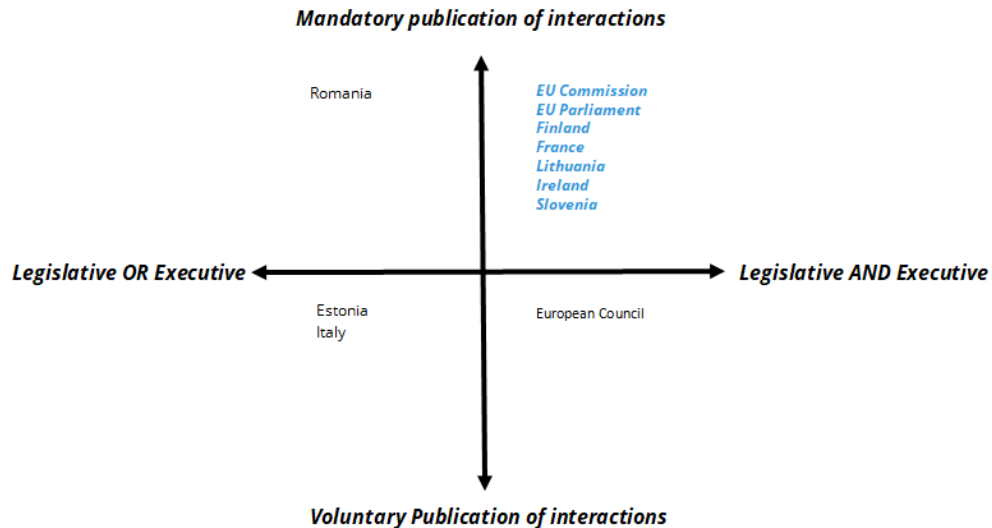
https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/staticPage/displayStaticPage.do?locale=en&reference=ANNUAL_REPORT

²⁴ Idem, p 11.

²⁵ German lobby register, accessed on 1/12/2023, list of stakeholders who refused to provide information, violated the Code of Conduct or did not update in a timely manner:

<https://shorturl.at/jkyFZ>

publication of interactions provides citizens and other interested stakeholders with key information to hold their representatives to account. It also provides valuable insights on who receives access to public officials, providing empirical evidence when certain organisations monopolise the decision-making process. Overall, we found five EU Member States and two EU institutions that pro-actively publish such interactions:



The form of disclosed interaction differs greatly: for example, French citizens can track lobbying activities through the 66900 reports published on the Register since its inception. The reports contain information on the targeted policy or legislation, the purpose of the activity, and the category of interaction (i.e.: direct meetings, regular correspondence, or publication of reports). Ireland and Lithuania similarly publish lobbying activity reports, with the latter having a unique cross-verification system whereby both public officials and lobbyists are mandated to publish their interactions, including providing the exact legal references of the targeted legislation. Slovenia, Romania, the European Commission and the European Parliament publish direct lobby contacts (either in person or via electronic means) with the purpose of the meetings being provided. For the European Commission, this results in 21191 meetings published since the beginning of the Von der Leyen mandate, while the Parliament published 56892 meetings over the same period²⁶.

Conclusion

On paper, the situation across the EU seems promising. Over half of the Member States have some forms of rules in place to lobbying activities. However, in practice, the majority of frameworks assessed are not sufficient to protect public authorities from undue influence. This is due to a combination of shortfalls in their definitions, lack of disclosed information on their registers, unenforceable codes or the absence of publication of interactions with lobbyists²⁷. A situation that translates into a patchwork of misconceived rules across the single market, not only creating a significant compliance hurdle for cross-border organisations but also significant loopholes to be exploited by malign domestic and foreign actors. It is worth pointing out that for countries without any kind of legal framework, three are on the verge of

²⁶ It is worth noting that for the Commission, only high-level meetings are published (Commissioners, Cabinet Members and Director Generals). For the Parliament, publication only become mandatory in November 2023. Up until then, only MEPs with a central legislative role (rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs and committee chairs) had to publish their meetings.

²⁷ Seen Annex I for a full overview.

adopting dedicated legislation. If this were to come to fruition Croatia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic would join the top rankings in terms of lobby transparency.

TOWARDS AN EU-WIDE REGULATION OF INTEREST REPRESENTATION?

As many Member States embark on their reform process to adopt sound lobby transparency regulation, they often look to the EU for inspiration. For example, the German register is a practical carbon-copy, both in scope and function, of the EU one²⁸. This poses the key question as to why there are no EU-wide standards for lobby transparency. This is even more puzzling as nearly all country-level Rule of Law Reports²⁹ – designed to assess Member States' compliance with their EU Treaty obligations – consistently mention progress on regulations on lobbying. In fact, 20 out of the 27 reports make specific recommendations on lobbying, with the other seven acknowledging the existence of lobby transparency rules in the country concerned.

However, these recommendations, or lack thereof, are highly inconsistent. The “Swedish culture of openness” is deemed sufficient to guarantee lobby transparency without any kind of regulation in place. France, on the other hand, is faulted for not consistently applying existing mandatory rules to all relevant decision-makers³⁰, despite having one of the most advanced frameworks in the EU. Eleven Member States are asked to adopt legislative provisions, though only four of these specifically mention the setting-up of a public register and/or a legislative footprint. There appear to be no specific benchmarks in place by which the performance of national lobby provisions is assessed. This results in rules that are often not fit for purpose despite getting the greenlight from the European Commission.

The time is therefore ripe for adopting EU-wide standards on lobbying. This would, at minima, guarantee a baseline level of transparency and integrity across all EU Member States, enabling citizens across the continent to hold their public officials to account. It would also protect public institutions from undue influence from domestic or foreign malign actors in a time of considerable geopolitical strife. To this end, Transparency International EU recommends the adoption of an EU-wide legislative instrument on interest representation covering:

1. An EU-wide definition on interest representation which includes all organisations seeking to influence public decision making, independent of their financial and legal status.
2. Setting up of national registers publishing key harmonised data for all interest representatives in open and accessible formats. This should include unique identifying numbers for organisations active in different Member States and/or at EU level.
3. Enforceable Codes of Conduct for interest representatives based on common ethics and integrity standards, as well as strong and independent monitoring and compliance mechanisms.
4. Proactive publication of interactions between decision-makers and interest representatives, published in open and accessible formats.



The Integrity Watch 3.0 project is co-funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund — Police.

²⁸ Though the German register does not apply different reporting financial with all organisations reporting their lobbying budgets.

²⁹ European Commission, 2023 Rule of Law Report – the situation of the rule of law in the EU, 5 July 2023: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023DC0800>

³⁰ The report also noted that the French system has cumulated loopholes in its framework (especially regarding granularity) making the numerous data hard to exploit.

Annex I Assessment of lobby rules across EU27

Country	Mandatory / Voluntary	Definition	Comments	Register of Lobbyists (Y/N)	Register scope	Register categories	Limited or Key information available	Public access to register (Y/N)	Code of Conduct (Y/N)	Independent authority overseeing lobby activities (Y/N)	Publication of interactions (Y/N)	Interactions scope
Austria	Mandatory	Broad	Only 137 lobbyists on the register. Each organisation defines their own code of Conduct	Y	Executive	identification, business registry number, field of activity, lobbying costs or revenue for intermediaries, category	Limited	Y	N	N	N	N/A
Belgium	Voluntary	Broad	Only applies to Parliament, entirely voluntary.	Y	Legislative	Identification, field of activity	Limited	Y	Y	N	N	N/A
Bulgaria	No rules	N/A	EC RoL progress report asked BG to adopt a law on lobbying, due for December 2023. No such draft law was found.	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N	N	N/A	N	N/A
Croatia	No rules	N/A	Draft law on lobbying in final legislative stages. Would include broad definition, register and Code of Conduct. Unclear when it will pass / adopted	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N	N	N/A	N	N/A
Cyprus	Mandatory	Broad	Law entered into force on 1st of January with broad definition, public register, code of conduct and declaration of interaction but the register has 0 lobbyists.	Y	Legislative & Executive	Identification, category, field of activity, interests represented in case of intermediaries	Limited	Y	Y	Y	N	N/A
Czech Republic	No rules	N/A	Draft law published in November 2023 with broad definition of lobbyists, register, code of conduct and publication of interactions by lobbyists. Under consideration by legislators.	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N	N	N/A	N	N/A
Denmark	No rules	N/A	EC RoL report: no progress on adoption of lobby regulation despite recommendation to do so.	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N	N		N	N/A
Estonia	Voluntary	Broad	Good practice rule to publish interactions between lobbyist and public officials, creating	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N	N	Y	Executive

			publicly available registers for Ministries: Members of the Ministries Leadership (Ministers, Chancellor, Deputy Chancellor, Political Advisors) as well as Leadership of government agencies and their deputies.									
EU	Partially mandatory	Broad	The three main EU institutions have a different rule set. Only EC and EP have consistent mandatory publication of interactions with lobbyists. The conditionality principle is also applied differently: while the EC requires prior registration before any high-level meeting, the Parliament requires prior registration for speaking at Committee hearings or participating in group activities. Some Permanent Representations of Member States publish and/ or apply the conditionality principle on a voluntary basis.	Y	Legislative & Executive	Identification, category, targeted legislations or policies, publications, contributions to public consultations, participation in EU structures, persons involved, access badge holders, fields of interests, connected organisations, financial (either costs tied to lobbying, revenue generated for intermediaries or total operating budget for CSO's), sources of income, public funding received	Key information	Y	Y	N	Y	Executive & Legislative (partial)
Finland	Mandatory	Broad	Min. 5 lobby contacts with public officials per calendar year. Register has been operational since the 1 st of January 2024 (130 registrations at the time of publishing this report). No Code of Conduct foreseen on register. Disclosure of interactions available from 1 st of July 2024.	Y	Legislative & Executive	Identification, activity field, connected orgs, intermediaries: client names & turnover	Key information	Y	N	Y	Y	Executive & Legislative (partial)
France	Mandatory	Broad	Thresholds for mandatory registration: at least one lobbyist of the lobby had 10 lobby contacts with public officials in the past	Y	Legislative & Executive	Identification, ID of persons involved, category, activity sector, lobbying	Key information	Y	Y	Y	Y	Executive & Legislative

			12 months OR the lobby employs a lobbyist dedicating at least 50% of its working time to lobbying activities. Lobbying exchanges following a communication initiated by the public official must not be disclosed. Register also covers lobbyists targeting local authorities.			expenses, turnover (if applicable), clients (for intermediaries), list of connected organisations (incl. if registered or not)						
Germany	Mandatory	Broad	Currently in the process of adopting a reform that would have some form of legislative footprint	Y	Legislative & Executive	obbyists identification, sources of income (limited), public funds received, donations received, areas of interests, targeted legislations or policies, connected organisations, targeted legislations	Key information	Y	Y	N	N	N/A
Greece	Mandatory	Narrow	Law exists since 2021 incl. register but enforcement very limited with only 17 registrations so far.	Y	Legislative & Executive	Identification, areas of interests	Limited	Y	Y	Y	N	N/A
Hungary	No rules	N/A	EC RoL progress reports notes no Code of Conduct, no register and no legislative footprint. Latest anti-corruption strategy suggests these will be governed by soft-law tools with no dissuasive sanctions foreseen. Currently, employees of state agencies are only permitted to meet interest representatives with the consent of their superiors, who may deny the request or may expect the presence of a third person at the lobby meeting. This is regulated in a brief, sanction-free decree that does not provide for any	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N	N	N/A	N	N/A

			level of transparency regarding such interactions, nor does it expand the afore mentioned requirements to members of the hierarchy									
Ireland	Mandatory	Broad	Threshold sets out that only organisations with more than 10 employees or where one employee is communicating with public officials to influence decisions is covered by the definition. Interactions published in the form of activities. Lobbyist info basic	Y	Legislative & Executive	Identification, areas of activities, id of responsible person	Limited	Y	Y	Y	Y	Executive & Legislative
Italy	Partially mandatory	Broad	Applies only to chamber of deputies and is not strictly enforced. the number of those registered is not particularly high: to date there are 439 registered "interest holders" (365 legal entities and 74 natural persons). While not national law exists, some Ministries have some voluntary provisions, most notably the Ministry of Enterprise with a lobby register and publications of interactions.	Y	Legislative	Identification, category, ID of responsible individual, description of activities, activity reports	Limited	Y	N	N	Y	Legislative
Latvia	Legislative only	N/A	Full law enters into force in 2025 with broad definition, lobby register, code of conduct and transparency of interactions.	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lithuania	Partially mandatory	Narrow	Mandatory provision applicable to professional consultants, businesses and business associations only with conditionality principle. CSO's encouraged to register as "influencers". Very extensive system of legislative footprint including cross-declaration of contacts by lobbyists and public officials (including elected	Y	Legislative & Executive	Identification, category, field of activity, areas of legal regulation, violations	Limited	Y	Y	Y	Y	Executive & Legislative

			representatives) and publication of targeted legislations by lobbyists and influencers / and lobbied officials (including exact legislation being targeted). Furthermore, while the Lithuanian legislation mentions a Code of Conduct, this is not enforced in practice.									
Luxembourg	Partially mandatory	Broad	Only applies to Parliament. Extremely limited information.	Y	Legislative	identification, legal form, purpose, name of third party	Limited	Y	N	N	N	N/A
Malta	No rules	N/A	EC RoL report notes the Commissioners for Standards in public life call for comprehensive regulation of lobbying. No draft law has been published	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N	N	N/A	N	N/A
Netherlands	Voluntary	Narrow	Register only covers lower chamber of Parliament. The register is voluntary in nature and contains only 72 lobbyists. The Dutch government pro-actively publishes Ministerial agenda's that contain some lobby meetings and a legislative footprint for public consultations. Both instruments fall short of a dedicated lobby transparency tool but could form the basis of future reforms.	Y	Legislative	Access badge holder name, organisation name, interests represented	Limited	Y	N	N	N	N/A
Poland	Mandatory	Narrow	Definition covers only professional lobbyists. Separate registers for Upper house, lower house and Government. Only Parliament register available online with 19 lobbyists. RoL report indicates that no effort is done for enforcement of current registers. Neither upper house and gov register could be found.	Y	Legislative & Executive	Could not locate register but categories in law are identification	Limited	Y	N	N	N	N/A

Portugal	No rules	N/A	Multiple draft bills regulating lobbying activities were in an advanced stage of the legislative process. However, progress stalled due to the dissolution of the Parliament on the 15 th January 2024.	N	N/A	N/A		N	N	N/A	N	N/A
Romania	Voluntary	Broad	Registering is voluntary in nature. Disclosure of lobby interactions by public authorities inconsistent	Y	Executive	Identification, category, areas of interests, public contracts, public funding, lobby costs, turnover, identity of lobbyists, legislative acts pursued,	Key information	Y	Y	N	Y	Executive
Slovakia	No rules	N/A	RoL report reports no progress and no intention to regulate lobbying. No draft law could be found	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Slovenia	Partially mandatory	Narrow	The register only contains 85 lobbyists, all private consultants. The register of lobbying contacts covers the full range of lobbyists. No information is available for non-professional lobbyists apart from organisation name	Y	Legislative & Executive	Name of professional lobbyist, areas of lobbying, contact details	Limited	Y	Y	Y	Y	Executive & Legislative
Spain	No rules	N/A	Draft lobbying on the verge of being adopted in previous legislature incl. register, broad definition, code of conduct and publication of lobby interactions. It is unclear how the new government will proceed. Note that some regional authorities have adopted advanced regulations on lobbying. These could serve as a model for any future national legislation.	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N	N	N/A	N	N/A
Sweden	No rules	N/A	Parliamentary enquiry launched for adoption of rules, to be published in 2025	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N	N	N/A	N	N/A

ANNEX II 2023 Rule of Law Reports Lobbying recommendations or mentions on lobbying for EU 27

EU Member State	Rule of Law report text on lobbying	Mention or recommendation
Austria	Adopt legislation to strengthen the framework on lobbying, including on its scope, supervision and enforcement.	recommendation
Belgium	Complete the legislative reform on lobbying, establishing a framework including a transparency register and a legislative footprint, covering both members of Parliament and Government.	recommendation
Bulgaria	Strengthen the integrity framework for members of Parliament, in particular by complementing the existing rules as regards revolving doors and lobbying.	recommendation
Croatia	Adopt comprehensive legislation in the area of lobbying, including on persons with top executive positions, and set up a public register of lobbyists.	recommendation
Cyprus	The legislative framework on lobbying continues to improve, the conflicts of interest for members of Parliament are monitored by a parliamentary committee, while no further steps were taken towards a comprehensive legislation on conflicts of interest for the public service	mention
Czech Republic	Strengthen the integrity framework for members of Parliament, in particular by complementing the existing rules as regards revolving doors and lobbying.	recommendation
Denmark	Introduce rules on 'revolving doors' for ministers and on lobbying and ensure adequate control of asset declarations submitted by persons entrusted with top executive functions.	recommendation
Estonia	Fully implemented the recommendation to continue the efforts in effective implementation of the guidelines on lobbying.	mention
Finland	The Transparency Register Act is scheduled to enter into force following parliamentary approval and an electronic register is currently being developed	mention
France	Ensure that rules on lobbying activities are consistently applied to all relevant actors, including at top executive level.	recommendation
Germany	Continue efforts to introduce a 'legislative footprint' to allow for the monitoring and tracing of all interest representatives who seek to influence and contribute to specific legislative texts.	recommendation
Greece	Rules to regulate lobbying are in force but progress to implement an effective register has been slow.	mention
Hungary	Adopt comprehensive reforms on lobbying and revolving doors, and further improve the system of asset declarations, providing for effective oversight and enforcement.	recommendation

Ireland³¹	Strengthen and digitalise the existing ethics framework, on asset declarations and lobbying, including the monitoring and enforcement capacity of the Standards in Public Office Commission.	recommendation
Italy	Adopt comprehensive conflicts of interest rules and lobbying regulation to establish an operational lobbying register, including a legislative footprint.	recommendation
Latvia	Ensure the effective implementation of the legislation on lobbying, including the setting-up of a special lobby register.	recommendation
Lithuania	The current rules concerning lobbying give positive results in terms of submitted declarations	mention
Luxembourg	Evaluate the implementation of the new legislation on lobbying the Parliament and the functioning of the transparency register and ensure that it meets the necessary transparency requirements set out in Parliament's rules of procedures.	recommendation
Malta	No recommendation. <i>Simply mentions a lobbying framework that does not really exist.</i>	mention
Netherlands	Establish stricter transparency rules on lobbying for members of the Government and Parliament.	recommendation
Poland	Strengthen the existing integrity rules by introducing lobbying rules and a standardised online system for asset declarations of public officials and Members of Parliament	recommendation
Portugal	Introduce, without further delay, rules on lobbying for Members of Parliament.	recommendation
Romania	Introduce, without further delay, rules on lobbying for Members of Parliament.	recommendation
Slovakia	Introduce proposals to regulate lobbying and to strengthen the legislation on conflicts of interest and asset declarations.	recommendation
Slovenia	Lobbying reports to the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption have improved but there are issues with the interpretation of the rules.	mention
Spain	Proceed to adopt legislation on lobbying, including the establishment of a mandatory public register of lobbyists.	recommendation
Sweden	Sweden's culture of openness and disclosure of information enables transparency of lobbying, while the public debate on regulating lobbying continues.	mention

³¹ Transparency International Ireland will publish dedicated recommendations to improve the Irish system in an forthcoming report "Cheques & Balance: the regulation of money in Irish Politics". See transparency.ie for more info.



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