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International standards for lobbying regulation

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The 38 standards set out here build on best practice from existing lobby regulations and also reference various existing international standards on the matter. However, they go beyond what is already available by addressing three critical and inter-related areas of effective regulation of lobbying: transparency, integrity and participation, and in this way go further than previous initiatives. They aim at internationally applicable standards, but with an awareness and respect for national differences.

As of May 2015, at least 20 countries worldwide have a specific lobbying regulation in place at the national level,1 though the quality of regulation varies widely. Even though lobbying regulations are found mostly in industrialised regions, they are relevant for any country: lobbying scandals all around the world including in developing countries are testimony to the need for better regulation2 and a number of publications launched in recent years are proof of the growing interest in lobbying regulation.3 The purpose of lobbying regulation is to ensure transparency of the impact of lobbying on the decision-making process, as well as accountability of decision-makers for policies and legislation enacted. Lobby regulation should aim to ensure a level playing field for all actors to participate in the decision-making process on an equal footing, and there should be specific mechanisms in place to prevent potential conflicts of interest that may arise from attempts to influence the decision-making process. It is important to note also that regulation is only one element of a strategy to ensure fair lobbying, and that enforcement of any regulation, but also a broader willingness by all actors involved to act ethically, will be crucial to creating an environment of ethical and fair lobbying and public decision-making.

These standards remain under ongoing review and any suggestions for their further development or refinement are welcome.

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