

Transparency International EU

The global coalition against corruption

Reports of undue influence by tobacco industry strengthen the case for mandatory EU lobbying register

Alessandro · Thursday, March 12th, 2020

The European Commission needs to strengthen mechanisms for preventing covert lobbying and regulatory capture, said Transparency International EU today, following [new reports](#) that detail how the tobacco industry undermined the creation of a robust EU infrastructure to curb the illicit trade in cigarettes.

“It is unacceptable that the tobacco industry has reportedly turned an EU process meant to tackle the illicit trade in cigarettes to their own advantage,” said Vitor Teixeira, Policy Officer at Transparency International EU. “These investigations raise serious questions regarding the extent to which EU policy and decision making is protected from abuse by powerful private interest.”

The EU should also consider the global ramifications of its apparent failure to adopt sound measures against tobacco smuggling. The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) investigations reveal that governments in Asia and Africa are planning to replicate the flawed EU system in their own countries following lobbying from tobacco companies. The reports about a representative of the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) promoting EU’s reportedly flawed Track and Trace system outside of the EU are also worrisome.

“It is especially crucial that decisions with serious impact on public health are made with utmost integrity. One of the first urgent steps to ensure regulatory processes are not captured by the tobacco industry is to reform EU’s lobbying transparency rules,” argued Teixeira.

Transparency International EU has long criticised the vulnerabilities of the EU Transparency Register and proposed ways for [ending secret lobbying](#).

“The EU has a reputation for expertise and integrity in policy making that makes it a high value target for multinational corporations that want to set global regulation on a course that suits their interests,” said Vitor Teixeira. “For the EU to really deserve its leadership position, it has to do more to prevent the kind of undue influence and regulatory capture shown in these latest reports. Adopting a mandatory Transparency Register which effectively protects decisions makers from all three EU institutions is the first urgent step.”

Notes to editors:

Transparency International and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) have been partnering as part of the [Global Anti-Corruption Consortium](#) since 2016.

See more on Transparency International EU's work around lobbying [here](#).

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