



Demand Fair Lobbying!



Delna is the Latvian Chapter of the global anti-corruption NGO Transparency International. We were established on August 27, 1998. Delna is the chief anti-corruption watchdog NGO in Latvia, working with a broad spectrum of issues and audiences. Strengths of the organization include its broad competence and ability to adapt to current problems. Among many other activities Delna monitors the national anti-corruption framework, is a prominent voice in media and expert forums, watchdogs political parties, engages youth, and does strategic litigation. Delna supports strengthening of an open, just and democratic society that is free from corruption in politics, business and mutual relationships.

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- **Handbook on citizen initiatives promoting lobbying transparency, lobbying integrity and equality of access**



- **Index of 60 citizen initiatives**

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I Introduction

Lobbying is an important part of a healthy democracy, closely related to universal values such as freedom of speech and the right to petition of government. It allows different interest groups to give their views on public decisions that ultimately affect them. Lobbying can also strengthen the quality of decision-making by providing channels for the input of expertise on technical issues to legislators and decision-makers.

Despite this, multiple scandals around the world demonstrate that without clear and enforceable rules, a select number of voices with better resourcing and contacts can come to dominate political decision-making. At the very least, this can skew individual decisions, and at the worst, it can lead to wide-scale institutional and state capture. Lobbying is any direct or indirect communication with public officials, political decision-makers or representatives for the purposes of influencing public decision-making,

and carried out by or on behalf of any organised group.

Lobbying must be carried out transparently and guided by clear, enforceable ethical standards. Additionally, equal participation for all interest groups in political decision-making should be guaranteed. Only then can public policy serve the public good, and the term “lobbying” can be associated with participatory democracy.

Can civil society organisations do something to work towards this goal? Yes, they can. This handbook showcases some best practice examples of civil society initiatives that illustrate how this can be done.

This handbook has been created by Transparency International Latvia for civil society organisations that aim to improve the lobbying environment either in their respective countries, or in international institutions, or even globally. These efforts may focus on promoting lobbying transparency – so that we know

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who is influencing political decisions, with what resources and with what outcomes. The handbook also looks at those initiatives that work towards improving the integrity of the lobbying process, for example, by exposing unethical behaviour. Initiatives which seek to level the playing field between interest groups have also been included in this handbook. The handbook has been produced within the framework of a European-wide project carried out by Transparency International, assessing the regulation and practice of lobbying in 19 countries and at the EU level. Through engagement of the public sector, pri-

vate sector, civil society, media and citizens, Transparency International has been pushing for reform on lobbying throughout Europe.

METHODOLOGY

There are two preconditions for each initiative appearing in this handbook: a civil society actor must be part of the story, and the initiative itself must have some connection with lobbying. Some of the initiatives included in this handbook have made a huge difference, while the impact of others is more intangible – for instance, they have made the public more aware of the need for better lobbying regulation. Sometimes the most

valuable lesson lies in a mistake made or in discovering the reason why something has not (yet) worked out. When working with lobbying related issues, a 100% success or 100% failure is very rare.

Not all of the initiatives have lobbying as their sole focus – there are initiatives profiled in this handbook where the beneficial effect on the lobbying environment might not have been anticipated. For example, communication platforms that have been established between Members of Parliament and citizens have resulted in a more level playing field between an average citizen and a corporate lobbyist.

There are a number of excellent civic initiatives of high public value that have been excluded from this handbook because their connection to lobbying is too distant – such as civil society advocacy campaigns for credible election campaign finance regulation, investigations of conflicts of interest, and

general attempts to improve citizen involvement in decision-making via referendums. All of the initiatives profiled in this handbook fall under three broad categories:

- Those that attempt to promote the transparency of lobbying. The extent of transparency indicates how open decision-making is and to what extent the public can access information on who is lobbying public officials and representatives, on what issues, when and how they are being lobbied, how much is being spent in the process, and what the results of these lobbying efforts are.
- Those that attempt to promote the integrity of lobbying. The level of integrity demonstrates how effectively countries ensure ethical conduct among public officials, representatives and lobbyists.
- Those that attempt to promote equality of access. The degree of equality of access shows how well a system allows for a plurality of voices in public decision-making and the

contribution of ideas and evidence by a broad range of interests.

USING THE HANDBOOK

The handbook has been created on the basis of more than 60 case studies: it has been written with the intent to help civil society organisations plan their own initiatives. That's why we have included an analytical section: there you'll find a summary of the most successful initiatives, a toolkit for organizing similar actions, recommendations and warnings of roadblocks you are almost guaranteed to encounter on your way. For those of you who would like to know even more, we've added an index of 60 case studies each described using a common template. All initiatives included in the index are easily searchable via 20 keywords.



II Vision

Most civil society actors who have been engaged in a best practice lobbying initiative see their successes as a work-in-progress. For example, those who have achieved regulation for lobbying disclosure now focus on monitoring its implementation – this will allow them to come up with even better suggestions in the future. Those who have successfully created a thorough wiki-page containing exhaustive information on lobbyists are looking for ways to share their experience with activists in other countries while continuing to build additional functionalities and add content to their data repository.

In many ways the work done by civil society organisations can be compared to building a house simultaneously in multiple locations and at various speeds. Nevertheless, there seems to be an overarching vision of the end result. If we generalize about the best practice case studies covered in this handbook, this is what that collective vision looks like.

GLOBAL LEVEL

Civil society organizations have developed global standards on the transparency and integrity of lobbying that serve as a blueprint for the adoption of new lobbying-related regulation at a national and international level. These standards have been endorsed by influential international organisations.

Civil society organisations that work on promoting lobbying transparency, integrity, and equality of access are interlinked – they communicate both online and at various meetings, sharing information, technical advice, supporting each other in their campaigns and coordinating their campaigns.

REGIONAL/NATIONAL LEVEL

Regulation and its Implementation

Each country and international organisation has a credible lobbying regulation and this works in practice. It is not created pro forma, but truly guarantees lobbying disclosure: citizens are aware of who is involved in shaping public policy and what his/her interests are. The implementation of this regulation is effectively monitored either by state institutions or civil society organisations. Unethical behaviour – such as dubious cases of revolving-door career changes or possible quid-pro-quo donations of lobbyists to political parties – is quickly exposed to the general public by investigative journalists and civil society organisations.

Information on Lobbyists

Citizens have easy-to-use visualized opportunities to collect extensive information on

lobbyists: including, for example, information on the lobbyists' business partners. Investigative journalists and civil activists cooperate in order to update such information and make it even more accessible to the general public.

Equality of Access: in Law and in Practice

Equality of access to lobbying means regular citizens enjoy equal rights and opportunities to contact any political office holder.

Business sector lobbyists do not enjoy privileged access to documents and the legislative process. Public institutions and/or civil society organizations have provided citizens with easy to use and comprehensive opportunities to follow and track the legislative process. Major imbalances in diversity of lobbying efforts get exposed quickly by civil society organisations, and in due time remedied by the public institutions.

When deliberating on a new policy, civil society organisations are involved as early as possible – and certainly not later than business sector lobbyists. Their engagement is organized in a meaningful way: so as to collect the most useful input from everybody involved at an early stage of policy development.

Civil society activists have plenty of opportunities to suggest new policies and legislation, along with business lobbyists. For this reason, there are public hearings, idea/bill crowd sourcing activities, e-petition opportunities provided by governmental institutions or civil society organisations.



best practice so far

III Best practice so far

Lobbying-related issues are a complicated, usually highly politicized topic – so many civil activists despair at not seeing the results of their work even after many years of sustained advocacy efforts. Monitoring and identifying results of advocacy campaigns is not always easy; sometimes achievements are there, but they are not obvious. That's why it is even more important to showcase those initiatives that have had the most successful results, or are impressive in some other way.

3.1 CIVIL INITIATIVES ON LOBBYING TRANSPARENCY

There can be different types of civil society initiatives that promote lobbying transparency. They do not necessarily have to expose a specific lobbying related episode. Sometimes it is even more important to strive for systemic change in relation to lobbying transparency. For example, a civil society organisation might be successful in pushing for a new lobbying law or obligatory disclosure of the legislative footprint (a clear record of consultations with all shapers of a particular law, especially lobbyists).

Table 1. Lobbying transparency: systemic change

Achievement	Description of the initiative
A new lobbying transparency law	Several civil society organisations were advocating for a new lobbying law in Chile. The new law was adopted. These organisations consider the new law imperfect as it only provides for voluntary disclosure of lobbying. They perceive it as a successful first step in a longer process which will eventually produce an even better lobbying regulation.
Commitment of European Commission to lobbying disclosure	In a large part due to awareness raising campaigns (both at national and EU level) and pledge collection before the European Parliament elections of 2014 organized by the civil society network ALTER-EU and its members, the new president of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker has committed the European Commission to better lobbying disclosure. For example, all contacts of Commissioners, their cabinet employees and directors-general with lobbyists are now published online. Jean-Claude Juncker has also made other commitments with regard to lobbying, and the civil society organisations are campaigning for even more.
Voluntary lobbyist register	Transparency International France pushed for a new lobbying regulation for the French Parliament (National Assembly). TI France achieved a voluntary lobbying register with more lobbying (objectives, clients, lobbying budget) disclosure. They continue to advocate for a mandatory lobbyist registration.
Mandatory disclosure of the organisations consulted by the government	Latvian civil society organisations have managed to get legislation passed that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • makes it obligatory for ministries to describe what (if any) consultations were organised during the drafting stage of new laws and policy documents (legislative footprint); • requires reasons to be stipulated for not consulting civil society organisations, if no consultations have taken place; • mandates the most important drafts to be available online for public consultation two weeks prior to being submitted for coordination with other ministries.

Lobbyist proposals to the parliament available online	<p>A Latvian campaign (organized by local TI branch “Delna”) led to all legislative proposals received by parliament either from members of parliament or lobbyists for a specific draft law being made available on the website of the Latvian parliament. The names of participants in parliamentary committee meetings are now also available online.</p>
Government’ s commitment to lobbying transparency and legislative footprint under OGP	<p>Irish civil society, including Transparency International Ireland activists, ran a three month consultation in 2013 to seek input into Ireland’s first Open Government Partnership Action Plan. The new action plan commits the Irish government to introduce a legislative footprint and reinforces the commitment to develop a Transparency Code in relation to working groups and task forces appointed by the government.</p>

Sometimes civil society organisations organize advocacy campaigns not in order to push for systemic change, but in order to increase the transparency of lobbying efforts behind a specific legislation or policy that is in itself of strategic significance. A particularly impressive effort has been the civil society call for full transparency about the EU-US trade negotiations that consisted of several public statements, some of which were signed by more than 250 civil society organisations representing different countries. This initiative was led by Friends of the Earth and Corporate Europe Observatory. It called for public availability of all written communications, agendas and minutes of meetings between the European Commission and third parties (including industry and lobby organisations) on free trade negotiations between the US and EU. This public statement got a lot of publicity. In November 2014 the new European Commission announced that there will be more transparency regarding these negotiations, even though it didn’t commit itself to publishing all the documents that civil society organisations requested.

In order for civil initiatives on lobbying transparency to be successful, it is helpful if there is some assistance from other organisations or some international benchmarks. There are several successful networks working on lobbying transparency related issues.

Table 2. Lobbying transparency networks

Achievement	Description of the initiative
International working group to share information on lobbying regulation	Two civil society organisations – Open Knowledge and Sunlight Foundation – have created a global internet Google Group on lobbying transparency. Group members are representatives of different civil society organisations from across the world. They share their ideas and experiences on common topics related to transparency of lobbying.
International lobbying disclosure guidelines	In 2004 the Sunlight Foundation, in collaboration with other organisations, elaborated International Lobbying Disclosure Guidelines. The drafters agreed on a common set of benchmarks for lobbying data disclosure, oversight and sanctions. Even when they were only at the drafting stage, the guidelines were already available to the public and had been used by different organisations and even governmental institutions when elaborating their lobbying regulations.
International standards on lobbying regulation	A group of international NGOs (Transparency International, Sunlight Foundation, Access Info Europe, ALTER-EU and Open Knowledge Foundation) have been collaborating to develop international standards on lobbying regulation, to be launched in 2015.
Alliance for lobbying transparency (joining UK organisations)	Alliance for Lobbying Transparency is a network which consists of 15 UK civil society organisations. It has been advocating for mandatory lobbyist registration since 2008 – it has placed this issue on the UK's political agenda and has proven itself a trusted resource to the media.
A large alliance on lobbying transparency at the EU level	At the European Union level, the largest network of pro-lobbying transparency organisations is The Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation (ALTER EU) which is a coalition of more than 200 civil society groups, trade unions, and other civil society activists.

A different approach used by many civil society organisations is not to demand more lobbying transparency, but rather to work with information that is already out there (or investigate some shady lobbying cases), and make this information more interesting and easier to obtain for the general public.

Achievement	Description of the initiative
Database of lobbyists' positions	<p>Transparency International France has launched in May 2014, in partnership with the organization Contexte, the website “Contexte Positions” – a database of lobbyists' positions on EU decisions. This database collects all contributions and PR arguments published by a specific organisation in a particular debate. Altogether there are more than 400 organisations being monitored daily (companies, trade associations, trade unions, civil society organisations). Interest groups can also directly send their positions/contributions for publication in the database.</p>
Database of lobbyists and lobby networks	<p>There are several such databases available online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency International Slovenia has created a visualisation tool of lobbying contacts/influences in Slovenia – the website kdovpliva.si. By the end of 2014 it contained data from around 700 lobbying reports submitted between 2011 and 2014. The platform is mainly used by journalists, bloggers and NGO representatives. • LobbyFacts is a database which compiles existing data on European Union lobbying in a way that is easy to use: to compare, order and analyse data on lobbyists and their influence at the EU level. This is a joint project of the Corporate Europe Observatory, LobbyControl and Friends of the Earth Europe. • For German lobbyists there is Lobbypedia. This is a wiki-based database on German lobbyists (including their relations with politicians) created by lobbycontrol.de. • For Chile, Venezuela and Colombia there is Poderopedia. It relies heavily on crowd sourcing, and it focuses on relations between individuals and organisations in the public and private sectors. • Powerbase.info is a British guide (wiki database) to networks of power, lobbying, PR communication activities of government and other interests. There are profiles for particular lobbyists. • Quienmanda.es is an online database created by Civio Citizen Foundation (Spain) that exposes links between Spanish lobbyists and public officials • Source Watch is a collaborative wiki operated by the Center for Media and Democracy. It is a directory of PR firms, think-tanks, industry funded organizations and industry funded experts that influence public opinion and public policy on behalf of corporations and special interest groups.

Investigative articles on concrete cases of lobbied policies	The US-based Center of Public Integrity is a civil society organisation that publishes investigative articles on abuses of power, corruption, and betrayal of public trust by powerful and private institutions (including in the context of lobbied policies). The center has won more than 50 different awards for its investigative work.
Uncovering legislative proposals created by lobbyists	LobbyPlag/Lobby Cloud initiative operates at the European Union level, and it has already uncovered legislative proposals that have been created by lobbyists.
Explore foreign lobby influence on US governance	An interactive tool, Foreign Influence Explorer, was created by Sunlight Foundation. This tool empowers citizens to find out which foreign companies lobby the US government.
Uncovering attempts to lobby school teachers/administrators/universities	<p>Education is a lucrative business in Germany – an illuminating research report by LobbyControl on various business interests infiltrating the schools, led to an open letter (signed by almost 10 000 citizens) and a public debate on the subject.</p> <p>Transparency International Germany has created a database on the connections between businesses and scientists – Hochschulwatch.de.</p>

Making lobbying real

There are several organisations that follow very closely problematic revolving-door activity (switching public office to/from lobbying). For example,

- The Sunlight Foundation has written a series of case studies on revolving-door activities: “Retired staffers land on their feet, several already on K Street” ; “Whose former staffers make the most as lobbyists?”
- The Corporate Europe Observatory has a database called Revolving Door Watch. This is a database on former EU officials who have started to work as lobbyists and lobbyists who have started to work in EU institutions. The organisation also writes investigative articles on the phenomenon.

Exposing problematic links (raising suspicions of quid-pro-quo) between campaign contributions, lobbying activities and public decisions

There are two interactive tools developed in the USA that allow a citizen to see links between campaign contributions of lobbyists and public voting (or public contracts, earmarks):

- The Open Secrets website pools information on campaign funding and lobbying on particular legislation (and the voting decisions).
- Influence Explorer is a project by the Sunlight Foundation and it pools information on campaign finance, lobbying spending, public contracts and earmarks in the US.

Punishment for an unethical conduct

The German civil society organisation LobbyControl helped bring about the resignation of a former tobacco lobbyist from a committee of ethics of the European Commission. He had previously been engaged in dubious revolving-door misconduct.

3.2 CIVIL INITIATIVES ON LOBBYING INTEGRITY

When comparing the number of civil society initiatives on lobbying transparency with the number of initiatives that promote lobbying integrity, one perceives that the second category is smaller. Nevertheless, civil society organisations do attempt to safeguard lobbying integrity by, for example, exposing unethical conduct or by advocating for a new code of ethics for lobbyists.

Table 4. Initiatives on lobbying integrity

Achievement	Description of the initiative
Code of conduct for lobbyists	<p>Transparency International France convinced and trained a corporate social responsibility rating agency Vigeo to evaluate lobbying integrity as part of their assessment of French companies. As a result of this initiative, several French companies have developed their own codes of conduct of lobbying or have made public commitments on lobbying integrity.</p> <p>ALTER-EU has advocated for a revision of the European Parliament's Code of Conduct. For this purpose they analysed the shortcomings of the existing code and provided guidance to Members of the European Parliament on its 'gray zones', especially related to lobbying</p>
Exposing worst EU lobbying practices	<p>The worst lobby award was a humorous once-a-year event organised by several civil society organisations at the European Union level from 2005 – 2010. It aimed to expose the dirtiest lobbying practices and illustrate how NOT to lobby.</p>

Exposing problematic revolving-door activity

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3.3 CIVIL INITIATIVES ON EQUALITY OF ACCESS

There is a variety of ways how civil society organisations can contribute to more equal access to decision-makers between corporate lobbyists and the average citizen. One such method, used by several organisations is uncovering and exposing the domination of a major lobbying group regarding important public decisions.

Table 5. Exposing a dominant lobbying group

Achievement	Description of the initiative
Exposing the domination of a business lobby	<p>There have been several cases where a civil society organisation has exposed the domination of some big-business interest group in decision-making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In 2012 ALTER-EU produced research on the composition of expert and advisory groups for the European Commission's DG Enterprise and Industry. It uncovered that expert groups are dominated by the business lobby. In October 2014, The European Parliament voted to freeze the budget of those expert groups, citing as one the reasons the unbalanced stakeholder representation. The European Ombudsman in 2015 is expected to come up with recommendations to remedy the problem.• Over the years the Sunlight Foundation has published quality articles and infographics on the overwhelming influence of some lobbying groups on decision-making in the US. For example, the food industry, telecoms, and big pharma.• The website lobbycontrol.de produces similar stories for Germany – there are around 688 descriptions of various cases per year, and many get coverage in the traditional media.• At the EU level, the 'Corporate Europe Observatory' follows the issues and produces its own articles and infographics on big business lobby domination. For example, it has published quality articles on the free trade agreement between the EU and US, tobacco, and revolving door activity.• The organisation 'Corporate Europe Observatory' has even sued the European Commission for its practice of sharing sensitive information with the business lobby but not with the general public.

There are a growing number of civil society initiatives that aim to open up the access to public officials to everyone, not just to big business.

Achievement	Description of the initiative
Nudging MP's to be open to the general public	<p>The Canadian charity 'Samara' created a scorecard of Canadian Members of Parliament websites that also included information on the location of their offices and their office hours, thus nudging them to be more open to the public. Several MP's have since added this information to their website.</p> <p>Before the 2014 general elections, Latvian civil society organisations the Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS and Delna (the local branch of Transparency International) came up with a scorecard of the most responsive MPs during the previous parliamentary term. Among the criteria used was the MP's activity in social networks, whether or not they participate in online discussions, etc.</p>
Providing opportunities for direct and transparent communications with public officials	<p>There is a variety of websites in various countries that have been created by civil society activists and which allow voters to ask questions to Members of Parliament and other high officials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most thorough initiative is Parliament Watch which started in Germany, but has since been expanded to Austria, Luxemburg, Ireland, Tunisia, and France. In Germany 95% of MP's use the website, 80% of questions get answered. • Al Bawsala is a similar initiative in Tunisia. Nearly all members of parliament post there. • Nouabook.ma is getting traction in Morocco. • Vouliwatch is a successful communication and idea crowd sourcing platform in Greece.

Facilitated submission of freedom of information requests

There are at least three impressive initiatives which allow a regular citizen to submit a freedom of information request:

- WhatDoTheyKnow.com is run by a charity in the UK. Approximately 15-20% of all freedom of information requests to the UK Central Government are made through this site. A similar initiative in Germany, <http://fragdenstaat.de/>, created by a group of civic activists including Open Knowledge Foundation and Transparency International Germany, receives one third of all freedom of information requests that are sent to German federal institutions.
- The software that powers the WhatDoTheyKnow website is available free and open source under the name 'Alaveteli'. It is now used to power similar websites in Australia, Bosnia, Brazil, the European Union, Germany, Israel, Kosovo, New Zealand, Romania, Serbia, Spain, and Uruguay.
- One of the Alaveteli powered websites is AskTheEU.com, which is a project of 'Access Info Europe', an organisation that is using data provided by the information requests via this website in order to research trends and engage in targeted advocacy to make European Union decision-making more open.

Equality of access cannot be ensured if there are only some organisations that have the capacity to follow the (usually highly complicated) legislative process. There have been several attempts to remedy this problem.

Table 7. More openness in the legislative process

Achievement	Description of the initiative
Legislative process: easier to understand and follow	<p>In South Africa, specific parliamentary monitoring groups are organized to monitor parliamentary committee meetings and produce a report for each of these meetings.</p> <p>More commonly, civil society organisations work with data available online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In France, the initiative “La Fabrique de la Loi” provides software that enables following specific amendments to a draft law. Visitors can also read the discussion among MP’s on the amendment. • “Accountability initiative” is an organisation in India that, among other activities, reorganizes governmental data into a searchable, sortable database
Benchmarks on good practices in the context of openness	<p>There are several civil society initiatives proposing new benchmarks for openness in the public sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Declaration on Parliamentary Openness unites a community of several hundred civil society organisations and benchmarks good practices in parliamentary openness (including easy access to parliamentary documentation and lobbying transparency). • Opendata is a popular and influential international initiative that promotes eight principles of governmental openness. • A Czech civil society organisation has come up with a methodology (scorecard) for evaluating the openness of regional assemblies, including the openness of minutes and agendas.

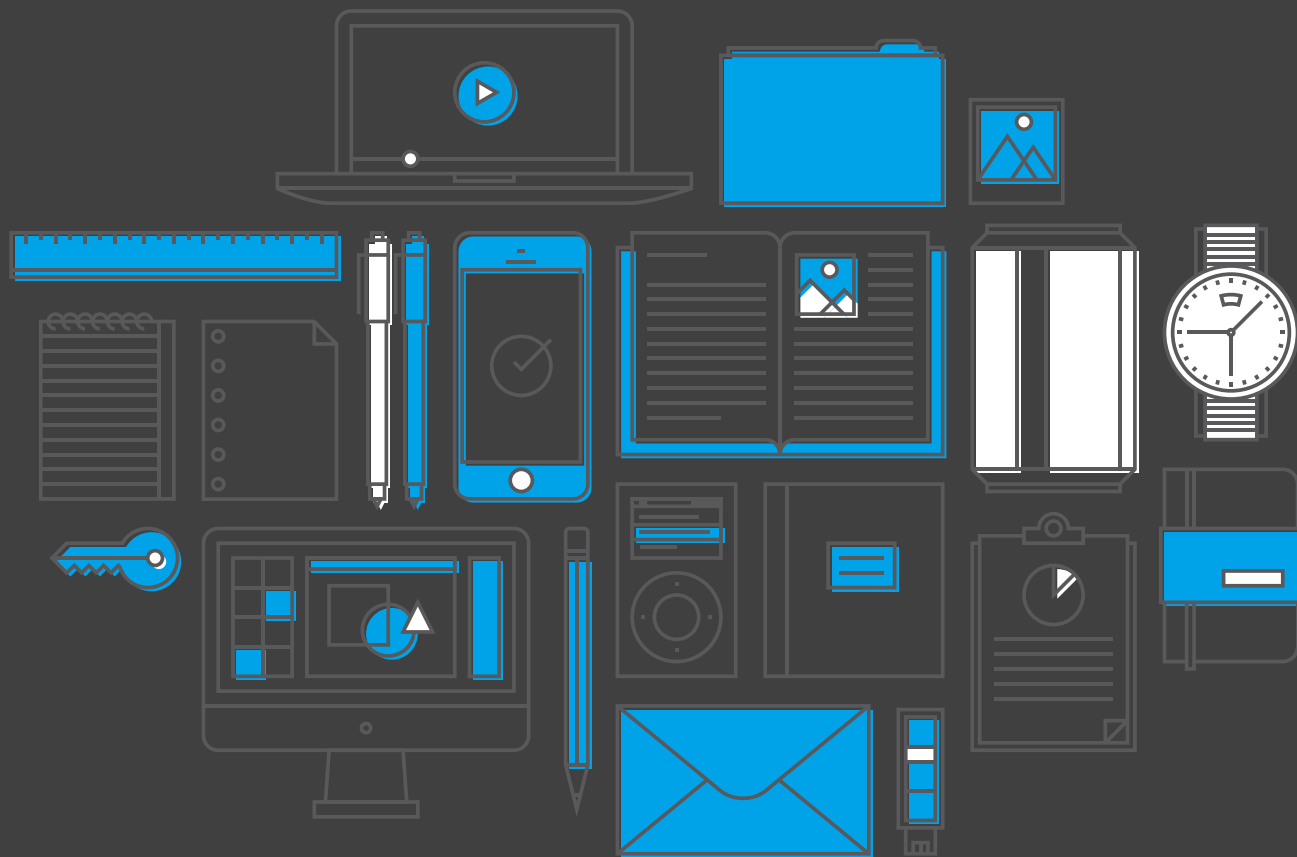
**Making parliament data
open and easy to use**

There is a variety of civil activists who run websites that enable everyone to access information on parliaments:

- In the US: Opencongress
- In Poland: Sejmometr
- In the Czech Republic and Slovakia: Kohovolit
- In Colombia: Congresovisible
- In South Africa: Mzalendo
- In Italy: Openparlamento
- In France: Nosdeputes.fr and Nossenateurs.fr

The general public does not need to be just a passive observer of the legislative process, it needs opportunities for meaningful engagement. Some examples of initiatives that strive to provide such opportunities are included in this handbook.

Achievement	Description of the initiative
E-petitions by the public have to be considered by the parliament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manabalss.lv is a successful Latvian e-petitioning platform and an advocacy campaign that managed to achieve the right for Latvian citizens to e-petition the parliament and ensure that their request has to be considered in public by a responsible parliamentary committee. • There was a similar initiative in Finland that also ended with new e-petitioning rights being granted to Finnish citizens.
Success in crowd sourcing policy proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rahvakogu is an Estonian idea crowd sourcing initiative to improve the state of democracy in Estonia – some of the crowd sourced suggestions have been implemented into law. • In the Philippines, a bill on Internet Freedom was crowd sourced via internet.
Citizens contribute to new legislation/policy ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • France's 'Parlement&Citoyens' allows citizens to contribute their analysis and ideas to MPs when they develop new legislation. • In Brazil, citizens can use E-democracia Project not only to engage with Congress, but also to propose and debate solutions to policy problems (wiki format). • The Indian project 'Praja' collects citizen inputs on what matters most to them (including solutions), then brings those insights to governmental authorities.



toolkit

IV Toolkit

This part of the handbook will be particularly useful to those civic activists who are considering organizing their own campaign in order to change the lobbying environment.

What can you do to increase the fairness of lobbying in your country or, maybe, on an international level? There are a variety of methods: for example, direct advocacy, writing investigative articles, collecting pledges from decision-makers, even engaging in strategic litigation. This chapter lists different methods that could be used for such a campaign. If you have an in-depth interest in some of the best practices profiled here, please proceed to the index of case studies at the end of this handbook to learn more about these cases.

1. DIRECT ADVOCACY IN GOVERNMENT/PARLIAMENT

From time to time civic activists need to work directly with the government and parliament in order to convince decision-makers that they should focus on creating a better regulation on lobbying-related issues. That means participation in governmental working groups, meeting members of parliament, maybe giving evidence or providing expertise to governmental or parliamentary committees.

Some of the best practice:

- The UK's Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and the organisation Unlock Democracy have plenty of useful experience for engaging in direct advocacy to fight for mandatory lobbyist registration.

- The European alliance ALTER-EU has extensively lobbied the European Union institutions for better lobbying regulation. For example, it has called for meetings and made recommendations to top EU officials.
- A loose alliance of Latvian civil society organisations has achieved substantial progress during the last 15 years on equalizing engagement opportunities between the big business lobbyists and civil society organisations – this was done via continuous lobbying of governmental officials and members of parliament.
- In Chile the attempt of several civil society organisations to push for a new lobbying law was successful.

2. COLLECTING PLEDGES

A very effective yet frequently undervalued method is to collect pre-election pledges from election candidates to parliament or some other high public body. This is a great moment when the would-be candidates are more receptive to public opinion. Later they can be held accountable for their pre-election promises.

Some of the best practice:

- An impressive campaign by ALTER-EU and its associated national-level organisations to collect pledges from candidates to the European Parliament (in the 2014 elections) which included some commitments on lobbying transparency. More than 1300 signatures were gathered, and approximately one fourth of the elected members of European Parliament signed a pledge.

- In a successful campaign called ‘Reconstruction of the State’ in the Czech Republic, activists collected pledges from election candidates stating that they will support democracy-strengthening initiatives (including on lobbying). This campaign proved to be a very good idea for the visibility of the initiative and later work in the parliament when parliament was elaborating concrete suggestions.

3. COLLECTING SIGNATURES/ COLLECTIVE PETITIONS

Sometimes it is important to show that it is not just you who supports an idea on promoting lobbying transparency, integrity of lobbying interactions or equality of access. The collection of signatures is used by civil society organisations as a tool in their advocacy efforts and a testimony to multitudes of supporters. Some of the best practice:

- In 2014 Friends of The Earth and Corporate Europe Observatory were the leading organisations behind a very impressive initiative where more than 250 civil society organisations (among those, the most recognisable lobbying transparency promoters) signed an open letter to the European Commission in favour of more transparency on the negotiations of the European Union - US free trade agreement, including on lobbyist involvement in the talks.
- The Latvian civil initiative manabalss.lv managed to collect more than 10 000 signatures in favour of a proposal addressed to Latvian parliament which suggested that Latvian citizens should have the right to have their policy proposals considered by parliament if the proposal is signed by a certain number of citizens. Latvian parliament amended the law in order to grant Latvian citizens such e-petitioning rights.

- The British organisation Unlock Democracy convinced around 1300 of its supporters to submit their views on the need for better regulation of lobbying transparency to the government via the Unlock Democracy website and induced 74 000 of its supporters to sign a petition for improved lobbying transparency.

4. ACTION PLAN FOR THE OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is an international initiative that already unites more than 60 countries and this number is still growing. This organization seeks strong commitments from participating governments that promote transparency, increase civic participation, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to make government more open, effective, and accountable. Governments are free to choose their own commitments, but in this process they are strongly encouraged to consult civil society. In some countries (for example, UK, Ireland, Estonia, Latvia) civil society organisations use this opportunity to influence the agenda of their government

Best practice:

- The Irish branch of ‘Transparency International’ organized a public consultation with citizens and civil society to seek input into Ireland’s first Open Government Action Plan (for 2014–2016). The website was then taken over by a civil society forum that continued to work on the Action Plan. The Irish government agreed to several commitments for the new Action Plan, among those – a commitment to introduce a legislative footprint.
- In 2014 Estonian civil society organisations convinced their government to commit to create ‘a non-governmental web-based discussion environment to give citizens an opportunity to initiate, compile and then submit digitally signed, collective memoranda to state and local authorities.’

5. WATCHDOG-TYPE ACTIVITIES

A civil society organisation – in reaction to a case of unethical lobbying – might engage in a campaign to ensure that appropriate governmental action is taken as a response to such behaviour.

Best practice:

- The German lobbycontrol.de brought about the resignation of a former tobacco lobbyist from a committee of ethics in the European Commission after it was revealed that he had switched jobs from the European Commission to being a lobbyist in a tobacco company.

6. RESEARCH REPORTS

Research reports produced by civil society organisations that work on promoting lobbying transparency are a very powerful tool to ascertain the depth of a problem, convince both the opinion-makers and other social activists that the problem is real and to come up with implementable recommendations. Depending on circumstances, research reports may be extensive or may only be a few pages long – what matters most is their quality and whether they are well-timed. They may also appear under the name of ‘policy paper’, ‘discussion paper’, etc.

Some of the best practice:

- The ALTER-EU 2012 research report on the composition of expert and advisory groups for the European Commission’s DG Enterprise and Industry showing the dominance of big business representatives;

- A research report (discussion paper) on lobbying in the education sector and schools by the German lobbycontrol.de.
- Research on lobbying in France, where Transparency International France proved that 62% of parliamentary reports did not disclose the names of the lobbyists consulted.

7. INVESTIGATIVE ARTICLES

In order to expose unethical or suspicious lobbying activity, there might be no need to write a thorough research report. Sometimes a quality investigative article is sufficient.

Some of the best practice:

- The multiple award-winning US-based Center for Public Integrity publishes investigative articles on abuses of power, including in the context of lobbied policies. See, for example, “Lobbyists Swarm Capitol to Influence Health Reform”, “Top Five Lobbyist Bundlers Revealed; Four Worked Exclusively for Democrats.”
- Lobbycontrol.de publishes hundreds of articles every year on German lobbyists.
- The Sunlight Foundation has written several case studies on revolving-door activities: “Retired Staffers Land on Their Feet, Several Already on K Street”; “Whose Former Staffers Make the Most as Lobbyists? ”

8. MEDIA EVENTS

There can be a variety of events organized with the main purpose of attracting media and public interest towards lobbying transparency or integrity. They do not necessarily have to be based on a research report, some investigation or a collection of pre-election pledges.

Best practice:

- The worst lobby award by several high-profile civil society organisations at the European Union level from 2005 – 2010. This annual media event exposed the most problematic lobbying practices and got wide media coverage.

9. STRATEGIC LITIGATION OR COMPLAINTS

Sometimes the fight for more lobbying transparency needs to be won in a court by challenging the legality of key decisions made by public officials, so that practices are amended and a wrong interpretation of the law is discontinued.

Some of the best practice:

- The organisation ‘Corporate Europe Observatory’ battled against the European Commission in court, challenging the Commission’s practice of sharing sensitive information with the business lobby, but not with the general public.
- Access Info Europe successfully litigated in the European Court of Justice on access to national positions of European Union member states’ governments. The organisation has been engaged in strategic litigation on other subject matters as well.

10. MAKING LOBBYING MORE REAL

Even though many activities of contemporary civil society organisations happen online, why not organize quirky ‘real life’ events that would make lobbying more real and understandable to the general public?

Some of the best practice:

- During 2012-2014 around 8840 people have taken tours of the Berlin lobby scene. Tours are organized by the civil society organisation LobbyControl;
- Corporate Europe Observatory’s lobbyist theme tours in Brussels are very popular and diverse regarding their subject matter.
- Corporate Europe Observatory has also written a guidebook on geographic locations of various lobby groups in Brussels that anyone can use when walking around this city.

11. INFOGRAPHICS (DATA VISUALISATIONS)

A well-made infographic might tell a story better and in a more vivid way than a hundred-page document. Infographics and data visualisation in general is one of the methods used by the strongest lobbying transparency organisations.

Some of the best practice:

- Transparency International Slovenia, in a successful collaboration with partners skilled in the areas of machine learning, data mining, semantic technologies and data visualization, created a website kdoapliva.si, where data from many hundreds of lobbying reports are visualized.
- Exceptional infographics (visualisations) are created by the Sunlight Foundation. See, for example, an infographic on immigration lobbying or on the financial sector's revolving doors.

- Corporate Europe Observatory creates effective infographics: for example, on lobbying on the EU-US trade agreement, or on the corporate backgrounds of new EU commissioners.

12. CREATING/USING BENCHMARKS

A very useful tool for civil society organisations engaged in advocacy is benchmarking. Benchmarks can be used as a point of comparison, in order to convince a government to change its laws or practice. Benchmarks are all the more important in the context of lobbying transparency as there are no formal international agreements that would be binding to member states.

Some of the best practice:

- International Lobbying Disclosure Guidelines were developed in a collaborative online process by the Sunlight Foundation and other civil society organisations.
- The Declaration on Parliamentary Openness benchmarks good practices on parliamentary openness, including lobbying transparency.
- Opengovdata promotes eight principles of governmental openness.
- A group of international NGOs (Transparency International, Sunlight Foundation, Access Info Europe, ALTER-EU and Open Knowledge Foundation) have been collaborating to develop international standards on lobbying regulation, to be launched later in 2015.

13. CREATING GOOD PRACTICE ON YOUR OWN

Do you feel confused by the legislative process? Do you have no real opportunities to communicate with members of parliament? If so, why not create such platforms yourself? This is exactly what many civil society initiatives are all about.

Some of the best practice:

- German Parliament Watch – currently the world’s best platform for communication with members of parliament.
- Latvian Manabalss.lv – currently one of the world’s most successful e-petitioning websites for developing policy proposals (that are then considered by the Latvian parliament).
- US Open congress – a huge website holding extensive information on US Congress in a very clear manner.

- Estonian Rahvakogu.ee – a showcase initiative that came up with suggestions on improving Estonia’s democratic institutions, some of which were later adopted by the parliament. It masterfully combined online idea crowd sourcing, expert involvement and advocacy activities to achieve this goal.

14. CREATING/USING DATA REPOSITORIES (DATABASES)

Some organisations that were dissatisfied with the amount and quality of information available on lobbyists and cases of lobbied decisions ventured to create such databases themselves.

Some of the best practice:

- LobbyFacts – a database which uses existing data on European Union lobbyists but in a way that is easy to use.

- Lobbypedia – a wiki-based database on German lobbyists (including their relations with politicians) created by lobbycontrol.de.

- Spinwatch focuses on public opinion that is “produced” by powerful lobbying interests.

- Powerbase.info – a guide (wiki database) to networks of power, lobbying, PR communication activities of government and other interests.

- Transparency International’s (France chapter) “Contexte Positions” (in French), a database of lobbyists’ positions on EU level decisions.

- Transparency International Germany has created Hochschulwatch.de , which shows the influence of business companies on German universities.

15. USING/SHARING FREE SOFTWARE

There is free/open access software available that could be used by organisations that are working for lobbying transparency or integrity. It would be a good idea, when creating a new website/software, to consider whether the same programming code could be shared with other organisations working on the same cause in different countries.

Some of the best practice:

- Poderopedia software, that is suitable for visualising lobbyists and who they are working for.
- Alaveteli software for making freedom of information requests – it is already used in more than 10 countries.



moving forward

V Moving forward

1. Be prepared for a sustained effort

Achieving fairness in lobbying is not a walk in the park. Civil society organisations working on these issues usually encounter, at best, indifference or sometimes even downright hostility.

It usually takes time, lots of effort and a readiness to make the most out of the rare and unpredictable window of opportunity to make a change. The successful system-change initiatives that have been described in this handbook have taken years, sometimes decades. That's why it is so important to not give up when, for example, a new lobbying disclosure law does not materialize after the first advocacy attempts. For example, ALTER-EU and other organisations have been fighting for lobbying transparency at the European Union level for many years – and only at the end of 2014 there was a highest level political commitment

to make EU lobbying more transparent. But were it not for the efforts of those organisations, such a moment might never have transpired.

2. Think of how this initiative fits with your organisation's overall mission – and try to increase its added value

Initiatives to promote lobbying transparency, integrity or equality of access are seldom effective if they are one-off initiatives or some random project for a civil society organization behind it. The most successful actions are those that are part of a strong organisation's overall mission – for example, if it is a research report or an important pledge from members of parliament then this organisation will continue to reference it in its press releases, events, and advocacy for the next 10 years. This ensures sustainability of the initiative and adds to its value and effect.

This is particularly important for new websites, databases or some other interactive products. The Internet is full of abandoned civic activism websites. The best insurance for the sustainability of a new website: it is managed by a strong organisation which has integrated this website into its daily work. For example, the website AskTheEU.org is managed by Access Info Europe – an organisation that is particularly active on access to information related issues. This means that the value of the website is much more than the opportunities for users to ask questions to European Union institutions – Access Info Europe also learns via data collected from the website whether the EU institutions obey the deadlines, how they apply exceptions to freedom of information requests. The organisation has already identified several areas where exceptions are used very broadly and will complain to the

Ombudsman, and then – to the courts. If necessary, there will be an advocacy campaign to change the regulation. That's a lot of added value from a website.

3. There is nothing more important than the quality (trustworthiness) of your work

Nowadays it is tempting to believe that you only have to start a process and then it will take care of itself. For example, if I create a website on lobbyists and enter information on 100 of them, then the magic of 'wikipedia' will happen and soon there will be thousands of quality articles generated by voluntary enthusiasts without my input. This is not going to happen.

Do use crowd sourcing, but don't rely on it. Even if you do manage to get a lot of citizen input, there has to be at least one, but preferably many experts, sorting out the good input from the unworthy and

contributing quality writing themselves. Otherwise, the whole initiative risks losing credibility. If your visitors/audience uncover shoddy materials or do not find enough quality information, they will not use your initiative.

A good example on how to do crowd sourcing in an appropriate way is the Estonian Rahvakogu initiative that had an aim to come up with suggestions for improving Estonia's political party, election, and public sector ethics regulation. They did include crowd sourcing for the initial idea collection phase (having organized a very effective media campaign to raise awareness of the initiative – with the participation of the president of the country), but then the ideas were sorted out and elaborated on by experts before presenting them to the parliament. Thus quality was ensured.

4. Re-evaluate your advocacy strategy from time to time: be flexible and imaginative on methods

There is usually more than one way to do advocacy, and the best way is highly context specific. A method that has produced a new lobbying transparency law in some country/era might be totally counter-productive in some other country/era.

It is important from time to time to step back and see whether your initial strategy still makes sense. For example, for the ALTER-EU coalition fighting for disclosure of lobbying contacts at the EU level, the initial strategy was talking with bureaucrats. It turned out that the bureaucrats, even though supportive of the cause, were afraid to go ahead as they felt that they required a high level political commitment. As the EU top level politicians were unresponsive to ALTER-

EU's requests, the organisation organized a pledge campaign prior to the 2014 European Parliament elections making this issue very visible. In the end they got a high level political commitment from the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker.

ALTER-EU's pledge campaign was run with the support of approximately 18 local organisations in EU member states. The most successful campaigns were highly skilful in getting the candidates for European Parliament to sign a pledge containing commitments on lobbying transparency. For example, in Spain the campaign was organized by Access Info Europe – they got statements from all the political parties in support of the pledge. How did they do it? They organized a public event (discussion) where they asked the political party representatives to attend, and before the event they

filmed all the representatives making a commitment.

5. Do strive for media partnerships and become a trusted source for media

Always think of the ways how your work might be interesting to media: for example, if you are writing investigative articles on lobbying, maybe it makes sense to publish them not just on your own website, but also in some media that have a broader audience.

This is especially true for large projects – such as lobbyist databases – that have the potential to generate stories for journalists. One of the most successful initiatives in this regard has been the German Parliament Watch – a website where anyone can ask questions to members of parliament. This project has partnerships with all major German media, such as Der

Spiegel, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Die Welt, Frankfurter Rundschau, Der Tagesspiegel. Transparency International Germany, having created a website that exposed the influence that business companies exert on German universities, gained enough credibility in the eyes of the journalists that they are now asked to be the main experts for news stories that have to do with this subject matter.

To add to your organisation's credibility and influence in the eyes of decision-makers, it helps if the media believes that you are a trusted source and refers to you if they need comments on some lobbying related matter. The UK's Alliance for Lobbying Transparency, Spinwatch, and Unlock Democracy are very much in the public spotlight. So are other organisations that have proved their credibility throughout the years – such as Transparency International, Access

Info Europe, ALTER-EU, and the Sunlight Foundation.

6. Be willing to make compromises if they move the preconditions for lobbying transparency forward

One of the most crucial factors mentioned by civil society organisations that have made some progress on lobbying transparency – be ready that the entire 100% of your very well-thought out recommendations will not be taken on board by the government. Sometimes even 10-20% means substantial progress and an opportunity for easier changes in the future.

For example, even though there is a new lobbying law in Chile, civil society organisations would have wished for stronger regulation – and they will try to achieve it in the future. In the Czech Republic, pushing for a whole new

lobbying law proved to be impossible for the time-being. Instead, the government was willing to go ahead with suggestions on better access to documents. It is expected that, after these are implemented, it will be easier to return to the subject matter of lobbying. In the UK, the government adopted a new lobbying regulation that was opposed as ineffective by leading lobbying transparency civil society promoters, such as the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency, Spinwatch and Unlock Democracy. Nevertheless, the civic activists are preparing for the moment of recognition when it turns out that the law does not work (for example some lobbying-related scandal may occur) and they will push for better regulation when this window of opportunity arises.

7. Do engage in coalitions/networks with other civil society activists

No organisation working on lobbying should be an island that doesn't communicate with organisations in their own country or in other countries working on the same subject matter. There is plenty of value in both national-level and international civil society networks: such as, advice in cases where some specific expertise is needed, sharing of best practices, common action, maybe working on benchmarks for all governments.

There is a Google group created by Sunlight Foundation on lobbying transparency. For organisations that are striving for lobbying transparency at the parliamentary level, it might be of value to join the Opening Parliament network.

Organisations that would want to work for more lobbying transparency at the European Union level should consider joining ALTER-EU. There might also be national level networks – for example, in the United Kingdom there is the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency which involves its members – among which there is Greenpeace, Corporate Watch, National Union of Journalists – in common activities. Sometimes these organisations talk with one voice when communicating with the government and sometimes they use the tactic of multiple voices, depending on the context and advocacy needs. They have diverse skills and experiences that have proven useful for reaching common aims.



overcoming obstacles
in your way

VI Overcoming obstacles in your way

1. Different starting points/contexts

Even if you encounter in this handbook an initiative that you'd love to implement in your country, there is no guarantee that it will work. The reason: lobbying-related initiatives are very much context specific.

Most of the world's societies may only look with admiration and envy at tremendous US-based websites such as Open Congress or Influence Explorer, but they would not be able to replicate them in their own countries as these websites rely on open access to information on public contracts, earmarks, lobbyists, campaign contributions. Unfortunately such information is not yet freely available across the world – even the online presence of voting records is not yet absolutely self-evident. Successful advocacy on opening up such data is a precondition for even considering copying

the methodology behind such websites. This might take decades.

Civil society activists should look for inspiration in this handbook. They should approach it with an intention to take home only what makes the most sense for their specific circumstances, even if it seems like a relatively insignificant thing in comparison to what the other organisations operating in better circumstances are achieving. Start small and then move forward.

2. Sustaining (media's, decision-makers', network partners') interest for a prolonged period of time

One of the problems encountered by any organisation working on lobbying transparency is sustaining the interest of the general public, decision makers, and other organisations in their network. This

problem is especially acute when there are no lobbying related scandals or in periods following elections. At this point in time it often seems that nobody is willing to voluntarily share their time and effort.

This just needs to be accepted as inevitable – there will always be less interest in signing a petition or visiting a lobbying related website at a time when it seems that ‘nothing is happening’. The important thing is to spend this time-in-between (the scandals, election time, and some other windows of opportunity) wisely. For example, this time could be spent producing quality research (that might allow you to one day to come up with some new arguments) or engaging in a quieter form of advocacy work to be ready to make the most out of the window of opportunity when it arises.

3. Resources, resources, resources ...

There are not many civil society organisations that work on lobbying-related issues and for whom the lack of resources and uncertainty as to their future is no longer a problem. This, despite excellent work that they may be doing.

Almost all major civil society organisations that have been successful in their efforts and are doing quality work receive grant funding (from, for example, Open Society Foundations, Isvara Foundation, Knight Foundation) which is granted usually for a period of several years. Grant funding gives the organisation much needed flexibility in achieving its mission and certainty that it will be able to pay its employees. Unfortunately, the number of donors is limited, in some countries more than in others.

There have been attempts to find alternative means of income (membership fees, donations, advertisements, book sales), but – at best – these function as an addition to, not a replacement for grant funding. An example of the most innovative attempts that might not be appropriate for the majority of lobbying transparency organisations: the German ‘Parliament Watch’ has been quite successful in selling enhanced internet profile functionality to MPs.

Funding remains very much an issue despite there being purely enthusiasm-based civil society initiatives on lobbying (especially new websites/petitions). Those usually appear on a wave of some public lobbying scandal, and are almost never sustainable. They either manage to attract some grant funding to sustain at least a part-time employee or they disappear. Equally unsustainable

are random, one-off projects from different civil society organisations that are not thoroughly integrated in those organisations' overall mission and their daily work.

4. Strong counter-arguments to what you are doing

Sometimes top officials or other opinion-makers object to your efforts to increase lobbying transparency as a matter of principle: for example, by providing strong arguments against your recommendations due to considerations of protecting the integrity of the decision-making process or the privacy of people involved in negotiations. Sometimes even the court judgements come down on their side.

It would be a mistake to dismiss such arguments out of hand. A better strategy would be to explore these arguments in depth and adjust your position as far as

those arguments are legitimate or counter with even stronger arguments – just as, for example, Access Info Europe is doing.

5. Difficulties to evaluate the impact of your work

For an organisation working on lobbying issues it is rarely easy to prove the impact of its work, especially if it is operating in a hostile political environment when all of its recommendations are being rejected.

In such circumstances it is even more important for the organisation to be able to take a long-term perspective, and not expect quick results, but instead work on building a convincing case, strengthening a network of supporters, and raising awareness. Such preparatory activities potentially may turn out to have been the decisive factor in overcoming resistance and laying the groundwork for a successful future campaign.

Learn from the successes and failures of the best, and **DEMAND FAIR LOBBYING!**

As you have seen in this handbook –civil society CAN make a difference. Many organisations all around the world have made lobbying more transparent, honest and equal.

Make no mistake about it: usually it has taken hard work and dedication, sometimes lasting many years. For all of us – every-

one who is demanding fair lobbying – there will be challenges, painful lessons and disappointments on the way. But the story should not end there. If we persist and keep improving our methods – there will also be auspicious windows of opportunity, sudden recognition that previous efforts have not been in vain and, finally, real impact.

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- United Kingdom: Freedom of Information Requests
- United States: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens
- United States: Producing Quality Data on Lobbying

Interactive tools

- 🏷 Estonia: Policy idea crowdsourcing campaign and advocacy
- 🏷 European Union: AsktheEU.org, platform for Freedom of Information Requests
- 🏷 European Union: Database on Lobbyists' Positions on EU Policy
- 🏷 European Union: Facts about Lobbies
- 🏷 European Union: how have various interests influenced EU legislation?
- 🏷 France: Online platform to discuss legislative proposals
- 🏷 Germany: Platform for Freedom of Information Requests
- 🏷 Germany: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens
- 🏷 Germany: Lobbypedia
- 🏷 Greece: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens Vouliwatch
- 🏷 International Platform (software) for Freedom of Information Requests
- 🏷 Latin America: Encyclopaedia of Influential People in Business and Politics
- 🏷 Latvia: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens and a Scorecard on their Responsiveness
- 🏷 Latvia: Institutionalized E-petitions at the Parliamentary Level
- 🏷 Morocco: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens
- 🏷 Slovenia: Exposing Links between Lobbyists and State Institutions
- 🏷 Tunisia: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens
- 🏷 United Kingdom: Freedom of Information Requests
- 🏷 United States: Foreign Influence Explorer
- 🏷 United States: Influence Explorer
- 🏷 United States: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens
- 🏷 United States: Producing Quality Data on Lobbying

Lobbying transparency

- Chile: A New Law on Lobbying Transparency
- European Union: ALTER-EU, Civil Society Alliance for Lobbying Transparency
- European Union: AsktheEU.org, platform for Freedom of Information Requests
- European Union: Better Ethical Guidance for Members of the European Parliament
- European Union: Database on Lobbyists' Positions on EU Policy
- European Union: Exposing Big Business Dominated Advisory Groups
- European Union: Exposing Unfair Lobbying
- European Union: Facts about Lobbies
- European Union: Guidebook, Virtual Tour and a Map of Lobbyists in Brussels
- European Union: how have various interests influenced EU legislation?
- European Union: Lobbying Tours in Brussels
- European Union: Pre-election Campaign for a Better Lobby Regulation
- European Union: Revolving Door Watch
- France: Legislative Footprint in the Parliament
- France: Strengthening Lobbying Transparency Regulation
- Germany: Platform for Freedom of Information Requests
- Germany: City Tour through the Lobby Scene
- Germany: Exposing Excessive Business Influence on Universities
- Germany: Investigative Reporting and Advocacy on Fair Lobbying
- Germany: Lobbying in Schools
- Germany: Lobbypedia
- International Lobbying Disclosure Guidelines
- International Platform (software) for Freedom of Information Requests
- International Standards and a Community on Parliamentary Openness
- International Working Group on Lobbying Transparency
- Ireland: Lobbying Transparency as a Commitment under the Open Government Partnership
- Latin America: Encyclopaedia of Influential People in Business and Politics
- Latvia: Lobbying Footprint Disclosure at the Parliamentary Level
- Latvia: More Lobbying Transparency and Equality of Access at the Governmental Level
- Slovenia: Exposing Links between Lobbyists and State Institutions
- Spain: Mapping Lobbyist Influence
- United Kingdom: An Alliance of Civil Society Organisations to Promote Lobbying Transparency
- United Kingdom: An Encyclopaedia on Powerful Individuals and Companies
- United Kingdom: Freedom of Information Requests
- United Kingdom: Lobbying Transparency Campaign
- United Kingdom: Reporting on Lobbying Networks
- United States: Foreign Influence Explorer
- United States: Influence Explorer
- United States: Investigative Report on Lobbying by the Center for Public Integrity
- United States: Investigative Reporting on Lobbying by the Center for Responsive Politics
- United States: Producing Quality Data on Lobbying

Lobbying integrity

- 🏷 European Union: ALTER-EU, Civil Society Alliance for Lobbying Transparency
- 🏷 European Union: Better Ethical Guidance for Members of the European Parliament
- 🏷 European Union: Counterweight to the Big Business Influence on TTIP
- 🏷 European Union: Exposing Unfair Lobbying
- 🏷 European Union: how have various interests influenced EU legislation?
- 🏷 European Union: Resignation for Unethical Revolving-Door Activity
- 🏷 European Union: Revolving Door Watch
- 🏷 European Union: Worst Lobby Awards
- 🏷 France: Lobbying Integrity as Corporate Social Responsibility
- 🏷 Germany: City Tour through the Lobby Scene
- 🏷 Germany: Investigative Reporting and Advocacy on Fair Lobbying
- 🏷 Latin America: Encyclopaedia of Influential People in Business and Politics
- 🏷 United Kingdom: An Encyclopaedia on Powerful Individuals and Companies
- 🏷 United Kingdom: Reporting on Lobbying Networks
- 🏷 United States: Exposing Problematic Revolving-Door Activity
- 🏷 United States: Foreign Influence Explorer
- 🏷 United States: Influence Explorer
- 🏷 United States: Investigative Reporting on Lobbying by the Center for Responsive Politics

Open access to decision makers

- 🏷 Canada: Scorecard on the Online Presence of Canadian MPs
- 🏷 Czech Republic: Pledges from Election Candidates
- 🏷 European Union: AsktheEU.org, platform for Freedom of Information Requests
- 🏷 France: Online platform to discuss legislative proposals
- 🏷 Germany: Platform for Freedom of Information Requests
- 🏷 Germany: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens
- 🏷 Greece: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens Vouliwatch
- 🏷 Latvia: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens and a Scorecard on their Responsiveness
- 🏷 Latvia: Institutionalized E-petitions at the Parliamentary Level
- 🏷 Morocco: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens
- 🏷 Tunisia: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens
- 🏷 United Kingdom: Freedom of Information Requests

Openness in decision making process

- 🏷 European Union: Counterweight to the Big Business Influence on TTIP
- 🏷 European Union: how have various interests influenced EU legislation?
- 🏷 France: Tracing Legislative Amendments
- 🏷 International Standards and a Community on Parliamentary Openness
- 🏷 Latvia: Lobbying Footprint Disclosure at the Parliamentary Level
- 🏷 Latvia: More Lobbying Transparency and Equality of Access at the Governmental Level
- 🏷 South Africa: A More Transparent Legislative Process

Pledges

- 🏷 Czech Republic: Pledges from Election Candidates
- 🏷 European Union: ALTER-EU, Civil Society Alliance for Lobbying Transparency
- 🏷 European Union: Pre-election Campaign for a Better Lobby Regulation
- 🏷 Latvia: Lobbying Footprint Disclosure at the Parliamentary Level

Setting benchmarks

- 🏷️ Canada: Scorecard on the Online Presence of Canadian MPs
- 🏷️ European Union: Better Ethical Guidance for Members of the European Parliament
- 🏷️ France: Lobbying Integrity as Corporate Social Responsibility
- 🏷️ International Lobbying Disclosure Guidelines
- 🏷️ International Standards and a Community on Parliamentary Openness
- 🏷️ Ireland: Lobbying Transparency as a Commitment under the Open Government Partnership
- 🏷️ Latvia: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens and a Scorecard on their Responsiveness

Sharing software

- 🏷 France: Tracing Legislative Amendments
- 🏷 Germany: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens
- 🏷 International Platform (software) for Freedom of Information Requests
- 🏷 Latin America: Encyclopaedia of Influential People in Business and Politics
- 🏷 Spain: Mapping Lobbyist Influence
- 🏷 United States: Foreign Influence Explorer
- 🏷 United States: Influence Explorer
- 🏷 United States: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens

Strategic complaints and litigation

- 🏷 European Union: AsktheEU.org, platform for Freedom of Information Requests
- 🏷 European Union: Exposing Unfair Lobbying
- 🏷 European Union: Resignation for Unethical Revolving-Door Activity
- 🏷 Germany: Investigative Reporting and Advocacy on Fair Lobbying

Studies/reports/investigations

- 🏷 Canada: Scorecard on the Online Presence of Canadian MPs
- 🏷 European Union: ALTER-EU, Civil Society Alliance for Lobbying Transparency
- 🏷 European Union: Better Ethical Guidance for Members of the European Parliament
- 🏷 European Union: Exposing Big Business Dominated Advisory Groups
- 🏷 European Union: Exposing Unfair Lobbying
- 🏷 European Union: Guidebook, Virtual Tour and a Map of Lobbyists in Brussels
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- 🏷 France: Legislative Footprint in the Parliament
- 🏷 France: Strengthening Lobbying Transparency Regulation
- 🏷 Germany: Investigative Reporting and Advocacy on Fair Lobbying
- 🏷 Germany: Lobbying in Schools
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- 🏷 Latin America: Encyclopaedia of Influential People in Business and Politics
- 🏷 Latvia: Lobbying Footprint Disclosure at the Parliamentary Level
- 🏷 Spain: Mapping Lobbyist Influence
- 🏷 United Kingdom: An Encyclopaedia on Powerful Individuals and Companies
- 🏷 United Kingdom: Reporting on Lobbying Networks
- 🏷 United States: Exposing Dominance of Lobbying Groups
- 🏷 United States: Exposing Problematic Revolving-Door Activity
- 🏷 United States: Investigative Report on Lobbying by the Center for Public Integrity
- 🏷 United States: Investigative Reporting on Lobbying by the Center for Responsive Politics
- 🏷 United States: Producing Quality Data on Lobbying

Watchdogs

- 🏷 European Union: AsktheEU.org, platform for Freedom of Information Requests
- 🏷 European Union: Better Ethical Guidance for Members of the European Parliament
- 🏷 European Union: Counterweight to the Big Business Influence on TTIP
- 🏷 European Union: Database on Lobbyists' Positions on EU Policy
- 🏷 European Union: Exposing Big Business Dominated Advisory Groups
- 🏷 European Union: Exposing Unfair Lobbying
- 🏷 European Union: how have various interests influenced EU legislation?
- 🏷 European Union: Pre-election Campaign for a Better Lobby Regulation
- 🏷 European Union: Resignation for Unethical Revolving-Door Activity
- 🏷 European Union: Revolving Door Watch
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- 🏷 Germany: Lobbying in Schools
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- 🏷 Slovenia: Exposing Links between Lobbyists and State Institutions
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- 🏷 Spain: Mapping Lobbyist Influence
- 🏷 United Kingdom: An Alliance of Civil Society Organisations to Promote Lobbying Transparency
- 🏷 United Kingdom: An Encyclopaedia on Powerful Individuals and Companies
- 🏷 United Kingdom: Reporting on Lobbying Networks
- 🏷 United States: Exposing Dominance of Lobbying Groups
- 🏷 United States: Exposing Problematic Revolving-Door Activity
- 🏷 United States: Foreign Influence Explorer
- 🏷 United States: Influence Explorer

Canada: Scorecard on the Online Presence of Canadian MPs

Canada: Scorecard on the Online Presence of Canadian MPs

COUNTRY/REGION

Canada

SUMMARY

Scorecard on the quality of websites for Canadian Members of Parliament: nudging them towards more interaction with average citizens.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Samara Canada

CONTEXT

In Canada, as in a majority of other countries, more and more politicians are developing their online presence. Yet, only rarely does a politician engage in online communication with voters, instead of simply publishing PR material.

BEST PRACTICE

- Samara Canada developed a solid methodology to assess MPs' websites relying on 14 criteria.
- Samara Canada illustrated its findings with quality infographics.
- Samara Canada first assessed the MP websites in 2013, and then did a follow-up study in 2014.
- To nudge MPs towards a better online presence, Samara Canada developed an educational tip-list for their websites.
<http://www.samaracanada.com/fun-stuff/mp-website-analysis/tips-for-elected-leaders-websites>

CHALLENGES

- In 2013 and 2014 there was a substantial gap between the research phase and publication of the results.
- After much deliberation, Samara Canada deliberately chose not to publish the names of those MPs who scored the lowest.

IMPACT

The follow-up study conducted by Samara Canada in 2014 indicated that nearly all indicators had improved. There were 30 more parliamentarians who had included a discussion space in their websites. Some Members of Parliament attributed progress to the direct impact of MPs being aware that their online presence will be assessed in the future.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Samara Canada will conduct a follow-up study.

RESOURCES

Samara Canada spent its own resources on developing the scorecard. It receives its funding primarily via donations <http://www.samaracanada.com/about-us/funders-and-partners>

CONTACT DETAILS

Samara Canada info@samaracanada.com

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Evaluating the quality of websites for citizen engagement with decision-makers.
- Methods to nudge members of parliament into better communication with citizens.

Chile: A New Law on Lobbying Transparency

Chile: A New Law on Lobbying Transparency

COUNTRY/REGION

Chile

SUMMARY

More than 40 civil society organisations pushed for a new lobbying disclosure law – it was adopted by the parliament in 2014.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: 2014

CSOS INVOLVED

Fundación Ciudadano Inteligente and a team of more than 40 Chilean civil society organisations

CONTEXT

Chile, like the rest of the countries in Latin America, had an active lobby scene – but it was not regulated at a statutory level.

BEST PRACTICE

- A professional civil society-led advocacy campaign that resulted in a new law on lobby disclosure – civil society campaigners came up with a draft law proposal for the parliament.
- The campaign included both internet-based advocacy and direct advocacy in the parliament.
- Civil society organisations recognized that a system of mandatory lobby registration will not be possible to achieve – that is why they were willing to settle for a voluntary system. This also enabled the establishment of a constructive working relationship with parliament.

CHALLENGES

Even though many civil society organisations would have much preferred a mandatory system of lobbyist registration, it was not feasible. Therefore, the organisations settled for the introduction of a voluntary register as a first step towards stricter rules in the future.

IMPACT

The new law on lobby disclosure received almost unanimous support from both houses of the parliament. Chile became the first country in Latin America to introduce lobbying regulation.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The civil society organisations involved will continue to push for stricter regulation on lobbying transparency.

RESOURCES

The organisations involved relied on their own resources to fund the advocacy campaign/

CONTACT DETAILS

Fundación Ciudadano Inteligente info@ciudadanointeligente.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Organizing successful advocacy campaigns for more lobbying transparency

Czech Republic: Pledges from Election Candidates

Czech Republic: Pledges from Election Candidates

COUNTRY/REGION

Czech Republic

SUMMARY

Prior to national elections in 2013 a coalition of Czech anti-corruption civil society organizations came up with a Reconstruction of the State initiative with 19 proposals on good governance. More than two thirds of the members of the Czech Parliament signed the pledge. After the elections, civil society organisations formed informal working groups in order to elaborate concrete legislative suggestions for the Czech Parliament. Some working groups have already finished their work with their suggestions having been included in the laws, some others (including a group on a more transparent political process – for example, on access to information about parliamentary documents) are still in the process of political debates.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

A loose network of around 20 anti-corruption organizations.

3 lead organisation(s): Frank Bold, Transparency International Czech Republic, Oziveni

CONTEXT

A coalition of Czech anti-corruption NGOs already in 2013 formed an informal coalition to prepare legal regulations for lobbying. A legislative proposal had been drafted but this work was interrupted by the fall of the government. There was a perceived problem with the quality of governance which led to the Reconstruction of the State initiative: some elements of work began in 2013 are retained in this initiative.

BEST PRACTICE

- Collecting pledges from election candidates proved to be a very good idea for the visibility of the initiative and for later work in parliament with concrete proposals.
- A clear message to the Parliament and election candidates was communicated – that NGOs want concrete laws to be adopted.
- Flexibility regarding concrete proposals: for example, not pushing for a whole new lobbying law, but rather coming up with easier to implement suggestions on access to documents.

CHALLENGES

- There was a challenge to keep the initiative visible following elections as the political circumstances had changed.
- A challenge for NGOs to shift from more aggressive pre-election discourse to normal parliamentary procedure that requires a more flexible, compromise-oriented discourse.

IMPACT

- A network of NGOs that press for legislative amendments that will lead to, among other things, better citizen participation in decision making.
- Approximately 160 Members of Parliament have signed a pledge where they commit to, among other things, support legislative amendments that will lead to better citizen participation in decision making.

WHAT'S NEXT?

When the NGO group on parliamentary transparency has finished its work, they will engage in advocacy for those recommendations in parliament (for the amendments of parliamentary Rules of Procedure).

RESOURCES

For the campaign prior to elections: resources were provided by the Open Society Foun-

dation, Fond Otakar Motejla and other donors (approx. 75.000 €).

For working groups and advocacy: expenditures were covered by the organisations' own resources, coordination was provided by Fran Bold from the aforementioned resources

CONTACT DETAILS

Transparency International Czech Republic,
dufkova@transparency.cz

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Finding the best timing for lobbying related initiatives
- Organizing advocacy campaigns during normal parliamentary procedure

Estonia: Policy idea crowdsourcing campaign and advocacy

Estonia: Policy idea crowdsourcing campaign and advocacy

COUNTRY/REGION

Estonia

SUMMARY

The People's Assembly Rahvakogu (www.rahvakogu.ee) was an online platform for crowdsourcing and proposals to amend Estonia's electoral laws, political party law, and other issues related to the future of democracy in Estonia. This platform produced suggestions, some of which were implemented by the Estonian Parliament. The civil society organisations later used the consultation process under Open Government Partnership in order to institutionalize similar idea crowdsourcing actions.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2012

End: 2013

(political process continued until 2014)

CSOS INVOLVED

Estonian Cooperation Assembly,
Praxis Centre for Policy Studies,
Network of Estonian Non-profit
Organizations,
E- Governance Academy,
Open Estonia Foundation.

CONTEXT

In 2012 due to some political finance scandals in Estonia, there was a widespread perception of the need to improve the political system. Several Estonian civil society organisations devised a Rahvakogu (People's Assembly) process which was conducted both online and offline.

BEST PRACTICE

- A very strong idea generation process was based in both theory and common sense. It combined crowdsourcing, expert evaluations and deliberations by randomly selected Estonian citizens. Approximately 1500 proposals were collected during the crowdsourcing stage. After bundling, analysis, evaluation by experts and seminars these 1500 were boiled down to the 20 most important proposals which were submitted to the Deliberation Day audience (320 randomly chosen people). Of these, 15 proposals were presented to the Parliament by the President of the Republic Toomas Hendrik Ilves. Some laws were changed in the manner that Rahvakogu asked.
- Strong political backing for the process (both by the President and by the Parliament).
- A loose, but well-coordinated network of civil society organisations, IT experts and communication specialists.

CHALLENGES

There were some opponents in politics/society who did not consider the Rahvakogu process legitimate.

IMPACT

A very ambitious initiative as a result of which the Estonian people produced a number of recommendations to their Parliament regarding such complex issues as Estonia's electoral laws, political party law.

Some of the proposals of Rahvakogu were adopted by the parliament (for example, the right of citizens to come up with proposals to the Estonian Parliament).

A ground-breaking precedent proving that changes are actually possible, that the whole political climate has changed and that politicians are beginning to take into account formerly outlying interest and pressure groups.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Estonian civil society organisations are still monitoring the decisions of parliament regarding the Rahvakogu.ee initiative. Following the Rahvakogu process Estonian civil society organisations engaged in an advocacy campaign within the framework of the Open Government Partnership to institutionalize such idea crowdsourcing campaigns. As a result of their advocacy campaign Estonia committed to create 'a non-governmental web-based discussion environment to give citizens the opportunity to initiate, compile and then submit, digitally signed, collective memoranda to state and local authorities.'

RESOURCES

Most of the work was done on a voluntary basis; however, it was labour-intensive.

CONTACT DETAILS

Olari Koppel, olari.koppel@kogu.ee

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Integrating online/offline elements in a campaign.
- Organizing highly successful idea crowdsourcing campaigns.

European Union: ALTER-EU, Civil Society Alliance for Lobbying Transparency

European Union: ALTER-EU, Civil Society Alliance for Lobbying Transparency

COUNTRY/REGION

European Union

SUMMARY

The Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation (ALTER-EU) is a coalition of over 200 public interest groups and trade unions concerned with the increasing influence exerted by corporate lobbyists on the political agenda in Europe. ALTER-EU has organized successful campaigns on achieving lobbying transparency, on more balanced advisory group membership and on stronger ethics regulation at the EU level. See a video about the ALTER-EU <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaBku31E9nk>

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2008

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

ALTER-EU and its 200 member organisations. Steering committee members include Access Info Europe, Friends of the Earth Europe, SpinWatch, Corporate Europe Observatory, LobbyControl, Greenpeace European Unit, European Federation of Journalists.

CONTEXT

European Union policies are highly influenced by Brussels-based lobbyists. The Brussels lobby scene is dominated by corporate interests and it is challenging for public interest groups to make their voices heard among EU decision-makers.

BEST PRACTICE

- ALTER-EU combines Brussels-based campaigns and monitoring with national-level knowledge. As a network it has a very clear understanding of its long-term aims (achieving high-quality, mandatory lobbying transparency; introducing effective safeguards against corporate capture of European Commission's advisory groups, strengthening codes of conduct for MEPs, Commissioners and staff, etc).
- In cooperation with its member organisations, ALTER-EU has organized several high-profile campaigns on lobbying transparency. For example, as a result of 2014 Politics for People campaign, 180 elected Members of the European Parliament signed a pledge to “stand up for citizens and democracy against the excessive lobbying influence of banks and big business”.
- ALTER-EU produces its own research on EU-lobbying related issues. For example, in

2015 it produced a guide to ethics for the newly-elected European Parliament <http://alter-eu.org/documents/2015/03/navigating-the-lobby-labyrinth>

- ALTER-EU also engages in advocacy work at the EU level by organizing meetings/discussions with representatives of the EU institutions and by participating in public consultations.

CHALLENGES

- ALTER-EU's mission concerns politically sensitive issues in which reform takes time and patience and in which it is necessary to conduct very thorough advocacy work;
- ALTER-EU is a loose coalition which means that coordinating the activities of national - level organisations is not always easy;
- Citizens (and national media outlets) are alienated and far away from Brussels so sometimes it is difficult to ensure that they engage in EU-focussed campaigns.

IMPACT

There have been several highly successful ALTER-EU campaigns that have their own entries in this handbook.

In addition to that, ALTER-EU itself is a role-model of an effective network of 200 public interest groups.

WHAT'S NEXT?

ALTER-EU will continue to produce studies, organize advocacy campaigns and work with its coalition members to ensure that its goals to make Brussels more transparent, balanced and ethical are met.

RESOURCES

The coalition has a part-time coordinator and a steering committee that consists of 7 members. Its expenses (studies, articles, advocacy) are covered by ALTER-EU's own resources that are mainly based on grants from foundations and in-kind donations from its members: <http://www.alter-eu.org/about/financing>

CONTACT DETAILS

ALTER-EU, info@alter-eu.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Building civil society networks to promote lobbying transparency.
- Organizing high-profile advocacy campaigns to achieve lobbying transparency.

European Union: AsktheEU.org, platform for Freedom of Information Requests

European Union: AsktheEU.org, platform for Freedom of Information Requests

COUNTRY/REGION

European Union

SUMMARY

Online platform (www.AsktheEU.org) for citizens to send freedom of information requests directly to the EU institutions. It is also possible to read the requests sent by other users of the online platform and the responses received from the EU institutions, thus encouraging the public to be more involved in the work of the EU, and allowing transparency organisations to identify problems in the application of the access to documents rules. Since September 2014, the platform also allows civil society organisations to launch their own transparency campaigns and it features a widget which allows citizens to show their support for transparency by clicking on “I also want to know”.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Access Info Europe

CONTEXT

According to the EU access to documents regulation, the EU institutions are obliged to respond within 15 working days to freedom of information requests. In practice, this does not always happen, and there are a variety of exceptions that are applied in order to reject freedom of information requests from members of the public.

BEST PRACTICE

- This website is based upon a successful British website WhatDoTheyKnow.com which allows citizens to quickly and easily send freedom of information requests.
- This website is highly integrated with Info Access Europe's daily work: producing studies on freedom of information and advocacy for more openness at the European Union level. AsktheEU.org helps Access Info Europe to monitor levels of transparency in practice.
- Info Access Europe helps the user of the website with appealing unjustified refusals to disclose information.

CHALLENGES

There are several barriers to freedom of information requests – for example, broad exemptions, privacy considerations, requirements to provide a postal address.

More financial support and volunteers are needed to ensure the smooth functioning of the website.

IMPACT

Before AsktheEU.org was launched, the only way to learn about how the EU responds to freedom of information requests was via reports produced by the institutions themselves. Now, everyone has access to good statistics on the timing and quality of the responses, as well as on the application of exemptions to refuse freedom of information requests, thus allowing for the identification of systemic or structural barriers to accessing information.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Thanks to the website, Access Info Europe has identified several areas where exemptions to freedom of information are

applied too broadly. It has also learned that (in context of publishing information of meetings with lobbyists) sometimes not only the names of lobbyists, but also the names of EU officials involved are not published, citing privacy considerations.

Access Info Europe has also complained to the European Ombudsman against the European Commission's new policy (adopted 1 April 2014) of refusing to register access to documents requests unless citizens provide a personal postal address, which is an obstacle to the exercise of the right of access to information.

Access Info has also helped users of the website to stand up for their rights in cases where there is no legitimate grounds for refusing an access to documents request.

RESOURCES

There has to be a daily monitoring of freedom of information requests appearing in the website, as well as help provided to the users of the website in cases where their requests have been refused. This website has been primarily funded by the Open Society Foundation.

CONTACT DETAILS

Access Info Europe, info@access-info.org or team@asktheeu.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Creating an online platform for freedom of information requests and using the website for research and advocacy purposes.
- Engaging in strategic litigation for public benefit purposes (such as disclosing information on lobbying contacts).

European Union: Better Ethical Guidance for Members of the European Parliament

European Union: Better Ethical Guidance for Members of the European Parliament

COUNTRY/REGION

European Union

SUMMARY

Advocacy campaign and its own guidance by ALTER-EU on better ethics regulations for the Members of the European Parliament

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2014

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

ALTER-EU and its coalition partners

CONTEXT

Even though there is a Code of Conduct for Members of the European Parliament, it provides insufficient guidance when it comes to how to handle lobbying contacts.

BEST PRACTICE

- In 2015 ALTER-EU produced its own guide: ‘Navigating the lobby labyrinth: a guide to transparency and ethics for Members of the European Parliament’ for Members of the European Parliament to use in cases in which the existing Code of Conduct is ambiguous. The guidance recommends, for example, that MEPs do not provide paid lobby advice, avoid meetings with unregistered lobbyists, avoid contacts with the tobacco industry, be cautious about potential conflicts of interests when moving to private sector jobs, produce legislative footprints of parliamentary reports, and exercise caution when they use externally-drafted texts. This advice is linked to the requirements of the existing Code of Conduct, and is therefore highly relevant for MEPs.

- The ALTER-EU guide not only includes advice, but also collects best practice – cases in which Members of the European Parliament have proactively and voluntarily disclosed all their lobby meetings.
- The guidance provided by ALTER-EU is linked to its advocacy efforts and recommendations on improving the Code of Conduct (In 2015 it published 10 policy recommendations regarding this Code) and with previous work by ALTER-EU and its coalition partners in exposing the shortcomings of the existing Code of Conduct.

CHALLENGES

Lobbying transparency is a politically sensitive issue where changes take time.

IMPACT

Members of the European Parliament have access to quality guidance on the sections of the MEP Code of Conduct that are ambiguous.

Demand Fair Lobbying!

WHAT'S NEXT?

The ALTER-EU coalition has a part-time coordinator and a steering committee that consists of 7 members. Its expenses (studies, articles, advocacy) are covered by ALTER-EU's own resources that are mainly based on grants and donations: <http://www.alter-eu.org/about/financing>.

RESOURCES

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CONTACT DETAILS

ALTER-EU, info@alter-eu.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Lobbying integrity guidance/advocacy for the members of parliament.

European Union: Counterweight to the Big Business Influence on TTIP

European Union: Counterweight to the Big Business Influence on TTIP

COUNTRY/REGION

European Union

SUMMARY

A large network of civil society organisations have organized several campaigns in order to increase the openness of US-EU negotiations on a new trade agreement (TTIP) and to provide a counterweight to big business influence on the proposed agreement.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Corporate Europe Observatory, Friends of the Earth Europe and many other civil society organisations

CONTEXT

The European Union and the United States are negotiating a trade agreement 'Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership'. The leaked negotiation documents produced concern that this agreement is being disproportionately shaped by big business lobbyists.

BEST PRACTICE

- It is an advocacy campaign of a huge scale and ambition. Several public statements have been signed by hundreds of civil society organizations active across the European Union.
- Corporate Europe Observatory produces quality evidence in order to expose excessive big business influence on trade negotiations – for example, in 2013 its study showed that 95% of all consultation meetings were with big business lobbyists. This study inspired much media coverage and parliamentary questions to the European Commission.
- Corporate Europe Observatory and other civil society organizations have reacted promptly to new developments regarding TTIP that could privilege corporate interests – they have produced statements, submitted complaints to the European Ombudsman, come up with their own analysis (for example, on the proposed ‘regulatory

cooperation’) in written, infographic and video format. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAeiQn3oJZI>

CHALLENGES

TTIP will be an extensive agreement covering many subject areas. Civil society organisations each have their own fears regarding its proposed contents – therefore, harmonizing their views for a common position is challenging.

Big business lobbyists have resources to multiply their voices and organize expensive high-profile conferences that are attended by decision-makers.

IMPACT

Partly due to awareness-raising measures organized by civil society organisations, the problematic aspects of the TTIP agreement have been at the forefront of EU debate.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The organisations involved will continue to expose excessive big business influence on TTIP and will continue to fight for more equal access to TTIP-related documents and opportunities to shape the treaty.

RESOURCES

The expenses (studies, articles, advocacy) are covered by Corporate Europe Observatory’s own resources, consisting mainly of grants and donations: <http://corporateeurope.org/about-ceo>

CONTACT DETAILS

Corporate Europe Observatory, ceo@corporateeurope.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Organizing large-scale advocacy campaigns.
- Coordinating the activities of hundreds of civil society organizations.
- Producing quality data on the excessive influence of the big business lobby.

European Union: Database on Lobbyists' Positions on EU Policy

European Union: Database on Lobbyists' Positions on EU Policy

COUNTRY/REGION

France; European Union

SUMMARY

A new online database of lobbyists' positions on EU and French policy was publicly launched on May 2014. The publication of positions by lobbyists had been a long-time recommendation by TI France.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2014

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Transparency International (France chapter) and media Contexte

CONTEXT

Even though there are many lobbyists trying to influence policies, their arguments rarely reach a wider audience. The broader public (including journalists) are rarely aware what issues are being lobbied by specific organizations and what are the arguments influencing the decision making process.

BEST PRACTICE

- The database was part of TI France's long-term advocacy efforts. The organization had recommended the creation of such a database for a long time. The current long-term objective for this database: to achieve that lobbyists publish their positions directly in the database.
- It is a successful partnership between a media company and a civil society organization. The Positions database continues to be updated by an employee of Contexte – there are now more than 5000 positions from around 1600 interest groups.
- In order to promote the database among the French public, it was launched at a public event, during which an opinion poll was released revealing that 79% of citizens believe that lobbyists' written contributions should be publicly available.

CHALLENGES

The most important challenge is to continue to feed the database with new positions – it requires a full-time employee.

Another challenge is to make it known and used by lobbyists.

IMPACT

There already more than 5000 positions collected in the database. The media reported on the database and many lobbyists are aware of it.

WHAT'S NEXT?

A new version of the website with advanced functionality will be launched – the new functionalities will facilitate research.

There are plans for a research report analysing the data in the database (number of positions, types of organization publishing their positions, use of the database).

RESOURCES

Development costs of the online database.
One full-time person to update the database.

CONTACT DETAILS

Myriam Savy (Transparency International France), myriam.savy@transparency-france.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Creating databases on lobbyist positions

European Union: Exposing Big Business Dominated Advisory Groups

European Union: Exposing Big Business Dominated Advisory Groups

COUNTRY/REGION

European Union

SUMMARY

Civil society organisations researched and exposed the domination of corporate lobbyists in the European Commission's expert (advisory) groups.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2008

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

ALTER-EU, Corporate Europe Observatory

CONTEXT

When developing new regulations, the European Commission consults with experts, who provide input into the drafting process. These “expert groups”, however, are usually dominated by experts that represent the corporate sector.

BEST PRACTICE

- Advocacy campaign to make the European Commission's expert groups more representative was preceded by a research phase (starting in 2008) during which evidence-based studies were produced.
- The civil society organizations involved – ALTER-EU and notably Corporate Europe Observatory continued to produce quality research on potential conflict of interests of expert group members. For example, in 2013 Corporate Europe Observatory produced research that proved that 70% (out of 60) of 'outside' members of a European Commission expert group that works on fracking-related issues have direct or indirect links to the fracking industry. In 2014, further research showed that two thirds of the scientists who drafted an opinion on potentially harmful chemical substances have at least one potential conflict of interest due to their links with industry.

- The civil society organizations worked to convince the EU institutions (the European Commission, European Parliament, European Ombudsman) that the composition of European Commission expert groups need to change.
- The campaigns on this issue achieved good media coverage across the EU. For example, one of the campaigns focused on an expert group on tax avoidance – there the organizations published an open letter, organized a creative stunt and worked with the EU Parliament and Ombudsman to maximize the coverage and, thus, increase the pressure on European Commission to reform its expert groups.

CHALLENGES

The implementation of reforms has been slow in practice. Vested interests (as compared to the public interest organisations) have more time and resources to spend on ensuring their representatives have an opportunity to participate in the European Commission's expert groups and to frame the debate in their favour.

IMPACT

Partly as a result of pressure exerted by civil society organisations, the European Parliament introduced a budget-freeze for the European Commission expert groups and sent several parliamentary questions to the European Commission. The European Ombudsman also investigated the issue in 2014, which involved a public consultation on the issue.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Despite the budget-freeze, the analysis by civil society organizations indicates that big business still dominates the advisory groups. ALTER-EU, including its members Corporate Europe Observatory and Friends of the Earth Europe will continue to monitor the membership of EU expert/advisory groups and engage in advocacy work to ensure that their membership is more representative, involving a more balanced range of stakeholders.

RESOURCES

The expenses (research, articles, advocacy) are covered by ALTER-EU's own resources that are mainly based on grants from funders and in-kind donations from its members:
<http://www.alter-eu.org/about/financing>

CONTACT DETAILS

ALTER-EU, info@alter-eu.org; Corporate Europe Observatory, ceo@corporateeurope.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Collecting quality evidence on excessive dominance of some advisory groups.
- Long-term advocacy campaigns for changes in lobbying regulation and practice.

European Union: Exposing Unfair Lobbying

European Union: Exposing Unfair Lobbying

COUNTRY/REGION

European Union

SUMMARY

Since 1999 Corporate Europe Observatory has worked on exposing unfair lobbying at the European Union level. It has repeatedly exposed the excessive influence of corporate sector lobbyists regarding EU policy and the legislative agenda. Corporate Europe Observatory's studies have also focussed on aggressive or unethical methods of some lobbyists, for example, paying think-tanks to produce biased research, organizing apparently independent sources to push their message or hiding their work for repressive regimes. In cooperation with other civil society organisation Corporate Europe Observatory has filed complaints against those lobbyists who have provided false or misleading information to the EU's Transparency Register.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 1999

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Corporate Europe Observatory (sometimes in cooperation with other civil society organisations)

CONTEXT

There are many thousands of lobbyists working to shape European Union policy. In several highly important areas corporate lobbyists are clearly dominant. They don't always use fair lobbying methods. Sometimes lobbyists do not register as lobbyists at all or they provide misleading information on their clients. Corporate Europe Observatory's own research in 2014 indicated that 450 out of 700 lobby groups in the areas of finance and bank regulation are not registered in the EU's Transparency Register.

BEST PRACTICE

- Corporate Europe Observatory conducts investigations to collect evidence for its policy recommendations and public pronouncements: sometimes its studies are based on analysis of hundreds of documents that have been obtained via freedom of information requests.
- Analysis and articles produced by Corporate Europe Observatory are timely – they are linked to the EU agenda and election cycle. For example, prior to the 2014 European Parliament elections, Corporate Europe Observatory produced an evaluation of the previous European Commission ('Record of the Captive Commission'). Such timely articles attract high media interest and coverage. For example, in 2013 the most successful article was one on pesticides. It exposed aggressive corporate lobbying against a ban on pesticides that harm bees.
- Corporate Europe Observatory, in

cooperation with other civil society organisations, engages in advocacy campaigns to make lobbying at the EU level more fair – for example, the organisation helped organize a workshop on preventing undue influence of corporate lobbies in the European Parliament.

- The work of COE on this subject matter is highly integrated with other initiatives both of this organisation and its partner organizations (such as ALTER-EU, LobbyControl, Friends of the Earth Europe and others): for example, on the business dominance in the European Commission's expert groups, on better lobbying transparency at the EU level, on revolving-door monitoring. All these initiatives are mutually reinforcing – they add value to each other.

CHALLENGES

Exposing cases of unfair lobbying usually requires patient and thorough investigative work that involves numerous freedom of information requests, data analysis, and sometimes – strategic complaints or litigation. Those efforts do not always end successfully: for example, in 2011 Corporate Europe Observatory sued the European Commission for having given privileged access to documents on India-EU trade talks to several business groups. In 2013 the court ruled that the European Commission had not violated EU rules.

IMPACT

- There has been high media interest regarding new cases of unfair lobbying at the EU level – representatives of Corporate Europe Observatory are frequently asked to comment on new stories.
- Corporate Europe Observatory, ALTER-EU, Friends of the Earth Europe submitted a complaint about Goldman Sachs not disclosing its real lobbying spending. As a result of this complaint, Goldman Sachs submitted correct information on its lobbying activities. In 2015 the new European Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans in an ALTER-EU event stated that those companies who provide false information to the lobbying register, would no longer be welcome.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Corporate Europe Observatory will continue its work on exposing unfair lobbying that it started in 1999. It currently supports the 2015 campaign by ALTER-EU “Full Lobby Transparency Now!” to bring about systemic changes regarding lobbying transparency.

RESOURCES

The expenses (studies, articles, advocacy) are covered by Corporate Europe Observatory’s own resources, consisting mainly of grants and donations: <http://corporateeurope.org/about-ceo>

CONTACT DETAILS

Corporate Europe Observatory, ceo@corporateeurope.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Collecting quality evidence on unfair lobbying.
- Long-term advocacy campaigns for changes in lobbying regulation.

European Union: Facts about Lobbies

European Union: Facts about Lobbies

COUNTRY/REGION

European Union

SUMMARY

An online tool LobbyFacts.eu provides information on the lobbyists in the EU. It is based on the Transparency Register of the European Union, but has an extended functionality.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2014

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Corporate Europe Observatory, LobbyControl, Friends of the Earth Europe

CONTEXT

Even though, in theory, lobbyists who engage in lobbying at the European Union level must register, the European Transparency register does not have sufficient functionality regarding various ways of working with the data: sorting, comparing, ranking.

BEST PRACTICE

- LobbyFacts.eu in itself represents best practice on what a lobbying register run by any governmental institution should look like: it is very easy to use and has extensive functionality for more in-depth research.
- The organisations that have created LobbyFacts.eu work on lobbying transparency related issues – that's why they have added additional value to this register and use the website for their own research. For example, highly meaningful statistics (Top10 biggest spenders on lobbying, statistics by country, etc.) on the EU's lobbying scene are published in LobbyFacts.eu – those statistics also appear in studies/advocacy reports by those organisations. That means that this website is very much integrated with the daily work of its creators.

CHALLENGES

The data for LobbyFacts.eu is reliant upon the data of the EU Transparency Register. In the beginning of 2015 the EU Transparency Register changed their data format, which made it challenging for LobbyFacts.eu to update their website.

IMPACT

The LobbyFacts.eu website not only has a better functionality than the official website run by EU institutions, but crunching the data for the new website has allowed highly interesting trends to appear, that were not visible otherwise (such as US companies being the biggest spenders on EU lobbying).

WHAT'S NEXT?

The organisations involved are planning to keep LobbyFacts.eu running, and to continue to analyse trends from the data feeding into this database in order to use such data for research and advocacy purposes.

RESOURCES

The expenses (monitoring page, articles, advocacy) are covered by Corporate Europe Observatory's own resources, consisting mainly of grants and donations: <http://corporateeurope.org/about-ceo>

CONTACT DETAILS

Corporate Europe Observatory, ceo@corporateeurope.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Creating data repositories on lobbyists.
- Using big data on lobbyist activity for advocacy campaigns and studies.

European Union: Guidebook, Virtual Tour and a Map of Lobbyists in Brussels

European Union: Guidebook, Virtual Tour and a Map of Lobbyists in Brussels

COUNTRY/REGION

European Union

SUMMARY

Corporate Europe Observatory has produced its own guidebook on the Brussels lobbying scene – Lobby Planet Brussels. The first edition was produced in 2004 and has since been updated with new information. In cooperation with Counter Balance, an app for smartphones was also developed to provide a quick overview of the Brussels lobby scene: <http://counter-balance.org/lobbysite/>

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2004

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Corporate Europe Observatory, Counter Balance

CONTEXT

Despite many thousands of lobbyists operating in Brussels on EU-related issues, even the concerned citizens – including journalists and activists – are not always acquainted even with the main actors engaged in lobbying. The lobby scene has extended significantly since the first guidebook was produced in 2004. Corporate Europe Observatory has produced a video to explain the context <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePJeuyBRf2E>

BEST PRACTICE

The guidebook is a unique product that exposes the hidden world of lobbying at the European Union. In a tongue-in-cheek way it features the key lobbyists, locations where lobbying takes place and tactics used for lobbying. The guidebook is updated once every few years.

The guidebook is available free of charge online as a PDF file: <http://corporateeurope.org/sites/default/files/publications/ceolobbylow.pdf>

The guidebook is integrated with lobby tours organized by Corporate Europe Observatory and other initiatives – such as the creation in 2013 of a visualized map of the Brussels lobbying scene in cooperation with the New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/10/18/world/europe/brussels-lobbyists.html?_r=0

CHALLENGES

The Brussels lobby scene is highly dynamic, so the guidebook requires constant updates to stay relevant.

IMPACT

The Lobby Planet is currently available free of charge online. It has been translated into several languages: Spanish, French, Dutch and German.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The guidebook requires updates – the next updates are scheduled for 2015.

RESOURCES

Resources that are necessary for such a guidebook depend on its length, scope and depth.

CONTACT DETAILS

Corporate Europe Observatory, ceo@corporateeurope.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Creating guidebooks and apps about lobbying scene.
- Partnering with media to create data visualizations.

European Union: how have various interests influenced EU legislation?

European Union: how have various interests influenced EU legislation?

COUNTRY/REGION

European Union, Germany

SUMMARY

An online platform Lobbyplag.eu exposes legislative amendments that have been produced by various lobby groups – it compares their proposals with the text adopted by the European Parliament.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

OpenDataCity

CONTEXT

New regulations adopted by the European Union are heavily influenced by the lobbying industry. Usually citizens are not aware of the extent to which certain laws have been shaped by lobbyists – public institutions do not offer a user-friendly way to ascertain which new provisions have been lobbied into existence.

BEST PRACTICE

- In 2013 LobbyPlag was launched with an initiative on the planned General Data Protection Directive. It managed to prove that many of the draft provisions had almost exactly the same text as draft provisions submitted by lobbyists. The information was updated four times.
- The team behind LobbyPlag consists of journalists, developers, visualizers and a lawyer specializing in EU law.
- LobbyPlag discloses limits to its methodology – for example, the problems in converting leaked data into reliable rankings.
- LobbyPlag managed to obtain funding for its second update via crowdsourcing in 2013.

CHALLENGES

LobbyPlag operates on the basis of leaked documents. That's why it was almost silent throughout 2014.

LobbyPlag does not have sustainable funding model.

IMPACT

LobbyPlag managed to prove that the draft Data Protection Directive was heavily lobbied – several provisions had word-for-word correspondence with the draft text following the parliamentary committee stage. The website received wide coverage in German and international press.

WHAT'S NEXT?

In 2015 LobbyPlag obtained 11 000 pages of classified EU documents on data protection reform. That allowed for an insight into debates and voting in the most secret of all major EU Institutions – the Council. LobbyPlag created a user-friendly way to make sense of the documents – its efforts were covered by the international press.

LobbyPlag is considering using crowdsourcing for future activities.

RESOURCES

This initiative required hundreds of hours of programming and server space. It successfully crowdsourced 8000€ via crowdfunding at Krautreporter.de.

CONTACT DETAILS

OpenDataCity info@opendatacity.de

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Organizing crowdfunding campaigns to attract funds for watchdog-type activities.
- Working with leaked documents on lobbying.
- Creating visualized information to illustrate the legislative history of new laws.

European Union: Lobbying Tours in Brussels

European Union: Lobbying Tours in Brussels

COUNTRY/REGION

European Union

SUMMARY

Corporate Europe Observatory each year organizes lobby tours in Brussels – there are regular themed tours on climate, bioengineering, finance and trade, as well as tours that have a focus on specific legislative issues. Sometimes these tours are co-organized with other civil society organisations – such as LobbyControl.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2004

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Corporate Europe Observatory, LobbyControl, other civil society organisations

CONTEXT

Despite many thousands of lobbyists operating in Brussels on EU-related issues, even concerned citizens – including journalists and activists – are not always acquainted even with the main actors engaged in lobbying. The lobbying scene in Brussels is diverse – different corporate interests dominate different thematic areas, such as finance or climate. It is also ever changing, for example, the trade negotiations on the EU – US free trade agreement attracted a new set of lobbyists. Corporate Europe Observatory has produced a video to explain the context <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePJeuyBRf2E>

BEST PRACTICE

In 2013 alone the tours were attended by more than 800 participants – altogether there were around 40 groups of students, journalists and activists.

The tours are highly thematic and follow the legislative agenda of the European Union. For example, in 2014 there were tours organized on the EU-US trade talks <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0SsbiZL9BM> , on the agri-business lobby and on power politics in the EU.

CHALLENGES

There is a huge demand for the tours that cannot be accommodated by a civil society organisation actively engaged in its daily work.

IMPACT

In 2013 alone the tours were attended by more than 800 participants – altogether there were around 40 groups of students, journalists and activists in these tours. The tour requests increased significantly.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Due to the inability to accommodate the demand for this tour, Corporate Europe Observatory has released a virtual tour available online.

RESOURCES

Some staff time needs to be allocated to organize such tours. Corporate Europe Observatory usually does not charge fees for the tours, but accepts donations.

CONTACT DETAILS

Corporate Europe Observatory, ceo@corporateeurope.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Organizing guided tours on lobby-related themed tours

European Union: Pre-election Campaign for a Better Lobby Regulation

European Union: Pre-election Campaign for a Better Lobby Regulation

COUNTRY/REGION

European Union

SUMMARY

An extensive campaign ('Politics for People' campaign) was organized by ALTER-EU prior to the 2014 European Parliament elections. The aim of the campaign was to collect pledges from election candidates, who promised 'to stand up for citizens and democracy against the excessive lobbying influence of banks and big business'. After the 2014 elections, ALTER-EU followed up with an advocacy campaign to implement a mandatory lobbyist register at the EU level (Full Transparency Now! Campaign) which included working strategically with the Politics for People MEPs that signed the pledge.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

ALTER-EU and its coalition members

CONTEXT

Even though there have been several lobbying-related scandals in the European Union, strict lobby regulation was not really among the political priorities of the political leadership in the European Parliament and European Commission.

BEST PRACTICE

- The ‘Politics for People’ campaign built upon previous work by ALTER-EU and its coalition members including research, events, complaints to EU institutions and advocacy activities which should to expose problems in the Brussels lobbying scene (such as lack of transparency about active lobbyists, misleading information in the EU Transparency Register, cases of possible conflicts of interest caused by revolving-door activity, etc).
- The ‘Politics for People’ campaign also involved national-level organizations across 19 EU member states that used this opportunity to make the issue a prominent part of the electoral debate in their own countries. For example, Access Info Europe in Spain managed to secure commitments from all Spain’s major political parties running for the European Parliament elections , who promised to defend a mandatory lobby

register for the European Union. Those election pledges were recorded on video prior to a debate organized by this civil society organization in Madrid.

- ALTER-EU followed up the ‘Politics for People’ campaign with suggestions for how to improve the European Parliament’s Code of Conduct and research on the weaknesses of the Transparency Register. The study concluded that a large number of lobbyists had still not signed up to the EU’s Transparency Register, and that the data in the Register was sometimes vague, misleading or inaccurate.

CHALLENGES

Two ambitious campaigns organized by ALTER-EU – ‘Politics for People’ in 2014 and ‘Full Transparency Now!’ campaign – are logistically challenging as they involve many organisations, most of whom are working at the national level.

There are legal challenges (privacy-related) when it comes to publishing information about EU officials’ meetings with lobbyists – European Union Court has confirmed that lobbyists must provide consent in order for their names to be made public.

IMPACT

Pledges to “stand up for citizens and democracy against the excessive lobbying influence of banks and big business” were collected from 1400 candidates for 2014 European Parliament elections from all over the EU. 180 of them were finally elected to the European Parliament.

This campaign managed to raise public awareness about how the existing EU Transparency Register is flawed and it created momentum for change. Following the 2014 campaign, the political leadership of the European Commission came up with new rules regarding lobbyists and made the issue of lobbying transparency a high political priority: The European Commission is now publishing lists of lobby meetings held with Commissioners, Commission Cabinet

members and directors- general. Jean-Claude Juncker also forbid Commissioners from meeting with lobbyists who have failed to sign up to the EU’s Transparency Register.

WHAT’S NEXT?

ALTER-EU and its coalition partners will continue to advocate for stricter lobby regulation at the EU level. Although they welcome the new rules introduced by the European Commission, they still feel that those rules are insufficient. For example, the vast majority of European Commission staff still has no limitations on meetings with lobby groups that have not registered in the Transparency Register. There is also a lack of oversight for those lobbyists who publish vague, misleading or inaccurate information in the Register. ALTER-EU has a set of policy

recommendations to remedy this problem and it engages in advocacy to get those recommendations adopted into EU policy. In 2015 ALTER-EU started a campaign “Full Lobby Transparency Now!” that calls for a high-quality, legally binding lobby register to be introduced by the end of 2016.

ALTER-EU and its coalition partners will monitor whether information on the lobby meetings with representatives of the European Commission is being published online and whether Commissioners really are only meeting with registered lobbyists. If necessary, ALTER EU will also engage in strategic litigation to ensure more transparency of meetings between lobbyists and public officials.

RESOURCES

The ALTER-EU coalition has a part-time coordinator and a steering committee that consists of 7 members. Its expenses (studies, articles, advocacy) are covered by ALTER-EU's own resources that are mainly based on grants and in-kind donations: <http://www.alter-eu.org/about/financing>

CONTACT DETAILS

ALTER-EU, info@alter-eu.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Collecting pledges from election candidates on lobbying transparency.
- Organizing high-profile advocacy campaigns to achieve lobbying transparency.

European Union: Resignation for Unethical Revolving-Door Activity

European Union: Resignation for Unethical Revolving-Door Activity

COUNTRY/REGION

Germany

SUMMARY

In 2013 several civil society organisations managed to achieve the resignation of a former tobacco lobbyist from the ad hoc ethical committee in the European Commission.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: 2013

CSOS INVOLVED

LobbyControl, Corporate Europe Observatory and Corporate Accountability International.

CONTEXT

There have been a number of cases of revolving-door activity between the European Commission and the Brussels lobby scene leading to conflicts of interest. In February 2013 three civil society organisations protested against the re-appointment of Michel Petite as chairman of the ad hoc Ethical Committee in the European Commission. He had advised a tobacco company as a lawyer in a law firm and had been involved in a lobbying-related scandal. This person had previously worked in the European Commission.

The first complaint, addressed to the president of the European Commission, was not successful. But the second protest, submitted to the European Ombudsman, was successful: the European Ombudsman affirmed that there is potential for conflict of interest, and the person needs to be replaced. This decision was a catalyst for the resignation of Michel Petite from Ethics Committee.

BEST PRACTICE

A sustained effort by three civil society organisations proved that it is possible to achieve tangible lobbying-integrity oriented results on the EU level.

CHALLENGES

The political leadership in the European Commission was not responsive to this initiative.

IMPACT

This civic initiative resulted in the removal of a former lobbyist from a public position where there was a high potential for conflict of interest. The decision by the European Ombudsman clarified the meaning of conflict of interest in cases of revolving-door activity – so it had a strategic importance.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The three civil society organisations involved in this initiative have continued to monitor problematic cases of revolving-door activity. For example, here is the website where LobbyControl publishes its findings:
http://www.lobbypedia.de/wiki/Portal_Seitenwechsel

RESOURCES

Some staff time to prepare quality arguments.

CONTACT DETAILS

LobbyControl contact@lobbycontrol.de

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Reacting to cases of problematic revolving-door activity – strategic protests/litigation that result in clarification of existing rules.

European Union: Revolving Door Watch

European Union: Revolving Door Watch

COUNTRY/REGION

European Union

SUMMARY

Corporate Europe Observatory has set up a website where it exposes revolving door cases – cases when top EU officials move to industry jobs and industry representatives become EU officials: <http://corporateeurope.org/revolvingdoorwatch> COE also writes articles on topical revolving-door activity and, in cooperation with other civil society organisations, have successfully pushed for stricter regulation at EU level.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2007

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Corporate Europe Observatory in cooperation with several other civil society organisations

CONTEXT

For a number of years European Union institutions did not see a problem when their former staff members took up lobbying jobs or vice versa. Such situations created a number of conflicts of interest.

BEST PRACTICE

- Excellent combination of watchdog-style monitoring (revolving door website and investigative articles) with an advocacy campaign on necessary systemic changes in regulation.
- Articles published by COE on revolving door cases are always topical – for example, prior to the appointment of the Juncker Commission, Corporate Europe Observatory published a series of investigative articles on the new commissioners, highlighting the fact that Jonathan Hill had previously engaged in 4 cases of revolving door activity.
- Cooperation between civil society organisations working on similar subject matter is best practice – these organisations cooperate in order to provide quality feedback to EU institutions:
<http://corporateeurope.org/revolving-doors/2015/03/ngos-echo-ombudsmans-call-more-transparency-revolving-doors>

CHALLENGES

Revolving-door cases are not universally perceived as being an important problem, that's why changes in regulation are slow.

IMPACT

- Due to the work conducted by Corporate Europe Observatory in cooperation with other civil society organisations, there is now more awareness of the EU's failure to sufficiently regulate the revolving-door phenomenon.
- In 2013, partly due to the pressure from Corporate Europe Observatory, the European Commission agreed to a cooling-off period of a year before former European Commission staff members are allowed to take up lobbying jobs.

- In 2013 the European Ombudsman launched an investigation on revolving door issues. It admitted that the inquiry was prompted by civil society organisations. In 2014 the European Ombudsman came up with recommendations on systemic solutions to the revolving door problem.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Corporate Europe Observatory continues to update its monitoring webpage of revolving door cases, write articles on the most shocking cases and, together with other civil society organisations, engage in advocacy to push for better regulation and more transparency on revolving door issues.

RESOURCES

The expenses (monitoring page, articles, advocacy) are covered by Corporate Europe Observatory's own resources consisting mainly of grants and donations: <http://corporateeurope.org/about-ceo>

CONTACT DETAILS

Corporate Europe Observatory, ceo@corporateeurope.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Monitoring and exposing revolving-door cases
- Advocacy campaigns to change regulation of revolving door activity

European Union: Worst Lobby Awards

European Union: Worst Lobby Awards

COUNTRY/REGION

European Union

SUMMARY

From 2005-2010 5 Worst EU Lobbying Award ceremonies were organized by several civil society organisations. The aim of the initiative: to shame those corporate lobbyists who use dirty techniques to shape European Union legislation. Winners of the awards included Exxon Mobil, Goldman Sachs, Porsche, Daimler and BMW.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2005

End: 2010

CSOS INVOLVED

Corporate Europe Observatory, LobbyControl, Spinwatch and Friends of the Earth Europe

CONTEXT

The risk for a corporate lobbyist who chooses unfair and unprofessional lobbying techniques is usually low. It is especially low in cases where the subject matter of the lobbying efforts is highly technical and media interest is non-existent. That's part of the reason why on the EU level some corporate giants have not been picky in their choice of lobbying methods. For example, some corporate lobbyists organize deceptive 'grassroots' campaigns or share misleading information.

BEST PRACTICE

The awards ceremony was conducted for 5 years and it was a high-profile event. It resulted from a collaboration of several civil society organisations.

The awards <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0Tq4bTK1CQ> always had highly visual and creative components – such as the Lobby-Cleaner as the cartoonish anti-heroine symbolizing the fight against dirty tactics in lobbying.

CHALLENGES

Organizing such an event is a considerable logistical challenge.

IMPACT

Throughout the years the award ceremony was a high-profile event that attracted a lot of media attention to the issue of lobby integrity. In 2009 approximately 10 000 individuals cast an online vote to choose the winner.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The awards ceremony has been discontinued. Nevertheless, the civil society organizations continue to name and shame in their daily activities (blog posts, press releases) those lobbyists who engage in unfair lobbying practices.

RESOURCES

Expenses to organize a high-profile event with media and online campaign

CONTACT DETAILS

Corporate Europe Observatory, ceo@corporateeurope.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Organizing high-profile, lobbying integrity related public events

France: Legislative Footprint in the Parliament

France: Legislative Footprint in the Parliament

COUNTRY/REGION

France

SUMMARY

Online project that resulted in the publication of data/statistics on organisations consulted in preparation of parliamentary reports in the French National Assembly.

TIMEFRAME

Start: June 2010

End: Mars 2011

CSOS INVOLVED

Transparency International France, Regards
Citoyens (France)

CONTEXT

Until recently, Members of Parliament in France were not obliged to disclose who they consulted in the preparation of their reports. It was also uncertain how often such consultations happened how many lobbyists were involved and who they represented.

BEST PRACTICE

- This project was a successful partnership between two civil society organizations active in the field of lobbying transparency.
- The initiative relied on research-based evidence acquired through IT tools and crowdsourcing. The crowdsourcing approach revealed people's interest in the project: in less than 15 days 3200 internet users helped expand the database.
- The two organizations built an online tool, which allowed them to find out that 62% of parliamentary reports did not disclose the name of the organisations involved. This data enabled the organizations to convince the MPs that such practices need to change.
- The research study fed the advocacy campaign in the Parliament which resulted in changed rules on transparency.

CHALLENGES

The project was very time-consuming: a special software program needed to be created in order to correctly identify the documents needed for the research. It took 6 people around 6 months.

This means that the information cannot be automatically updated.

IMPACT

As a result of this initiative, in 2013 the French Parliament started to disclose the legislative footprint for its initiatives. It is now an obligation of MPs to list all consultations that were organized in preparation of parliamentary reports. In addition, new lobbying disclosure rules were introduced (on lobbying objectives, clients, budget).

WHAT'S NEXT?

The online project was followed by advocacy in the Parliament. Transparency International France still advocates for stricter and better lobbying transparency regulation.

RESOURCES

Because the online project used sharing software, it cost only time: 6 people involved over 9 months + 3200 internet users

CONTACT DETAILS

Myriam Savy (Transparency International France), myriam.savy@transparency-france.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Introducing legislative footprint.
- Organizing advocacy campaigns for lobbying transparency.

France: Lobbying Integrity as Corporate Social Responsibility

France: Lobbying Integrity as Corporate Social Responsibility

COUNTRY/REGION

France

SUMMARY

Providing business companies with incentives for self-regulation and adoption of a code of conduct in the context of lobbying.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2009

End: still ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Transparency International France, Vigeo (enterprise/ corporate social responsibility rating agency)

CONTEXT

In France lobbying practices were not considered by companies and rating agencies as a corporate social responsibility (CSR) issue. Therefore, lobbying goals pursued by companies could be different from commitments taken by the same companies on social or environmental issues. Transparency International France convinced the social responsibility rating agency Vigeo that lobbying should be an integral part of the assessment they make on CSR policies of economic actors.

Assessing lobbying practices was also a way to reward those companies that had already begun to improve their own lobbying practices (promotion and validating the “best in class”).

BEST PRACTICE

- This project was a successful partnership between a civil society organization (Transparency International France) and a private enterprise Vigeo. In 2010 they came up with new company assessment criteria. The updated criteria provided incentives for companies to adopt a lobbying code of conduct and to report on their lobbying activities. Transparency International France trained Vigeo's analysts and auditors to apply this criterion.
- Sustainable method: introducing a lobbying code of conduct as a benchmark for companies that wish to get high scores on corporate social responsibility. The method is sustainable in the sense that Vigeo, when conducting their evaluations, will always pay attention to the lobbying codes of conduct of each company. For example, in a report in 2013 Vigeo had data on lobbying practices of 750 companies. Further reports will permit

one to estimate the progress made by French companies regarding lobbying codes of conduct.

CHALLENGES

The difficulty was to convince Vigeo of the relevance of this new criterion. Auditors and analysts needed then to be trained on lobbying integrity related issues – the training was conducted by Transparency International France.

IMPACT

Since the announcement of the inclusion of this criterion in corporate social responsibility ratings, a greater number of companies have begun paying attention to their lobbying practices. Some progressive companies have developed their own codes of conduct for lobbying or have made public commitments on lobbying integrity.

A first study on corporate lobbying practices was published in June 2013.

WHAT'S NEXT?

A second study on corporate lobbying practices is planned for the future. Transparency International France continues to promote the self-regulation on lobbying integrity related matters among French business companies.

RESOURCES

An existing and recognised CSR rating agency that can do the assessment (team of analysts and auditors that can make on-site reviews/audits)

CONTACT DETAILS

Myriam Savy (Transparency International France), myriam.savy@transparency-france.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Proposing codes of conduct on lobbying for private companies.
- Improving corporate lobbying practices and policies.

France: Online platform to discuss legislative proposals

France: Online platform to discuss legislative proposals

COUNTRY/REGION

France

SUMMARY

A website <https://www.parlement-et-citoyens.fr/> where members of the French parliament work in public together with citizens on developing new legislation.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2009 (launch of the website in 2013)

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Démocratie Ouverte; SmartGov

CONTEXT

Civic activists and decision-makers in France are currently experimenting with methods of better citizen engagement in decision-making via innovative online tools.

BEST PRACTICE

- Parlement&Citoyens has excellent design and functionality – it allows members of parliament to propose new ideas and then to discuss them with a broader public.
- The development of the website was in itself a case of best practice: it was developed in cooperation with 6 members of parliament from 6 different parties.
- The website was in an experimental stage from 2013 to 2015. It received an updated design and functionality in 2015 – the launch of the updated website was organized together with a high-profile discussion on open democracy.

CHALLENGES

Finding a model for financial sustainability of this website has turned out to be challenging. It requires monitoring and guidance to its users in order to be fully functional.

It was challenging to find a meaningful way of organizing thousands of comments received in the framework of each consultation.

IMPACT

In its experimental stage from 2013 to the beginning of 2015 Parlement&Citoyens had collected 11 768 comments from 4180 citizens as contributions to 6 consultations organized in this online platform.

Two of the legislative proposals discussed on this website have been turned into new laws.

WHAT'S NEXT?

New consultations will be organized in this website opening it up for participation of all French Members of Parliament.

RESOURCES

Démocratie Ouverte is funded predominantly via donations and grants:
<http://democratieouverte.org/a-propos/finances>

CONTACT DETAILS

Démocratie Ouverte cyril.lage@democratieouverte.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Creating an online platform to discuss legislative proposals

France: Strengthening Lobbying Transparency Regulation

France: Strengthening Lobbying Transparency Regulation

COUNTRY/REGION

France

SUMMARY

Advocacy campaign for a lobbying regulation in France. It started with recommendations on lobbying transparency, then an annual evaluation of the rules that were adopted by the French parliament (National Assembly and Senate), that eventually led to reform and strengthening of the transparency register in 2013.

TIMEFRAME

Start: February 2009

End: still ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Transparency International France

CONTEXT

Even though lobbying transparency had been problematic in France for a long time, the French Parliament and other public institutions did not have any lobbying regulation.

BEST PRACTICE

Transparency International France led a classic advocacy campaign that consisted of several steps and took many years. At first TI France published recommendations, and then contacted and tried to convince Members of Parliament about their adoption. Then TI France conducted an independent evaluation of the first rules introduced in the National Assembly and Senate- this evaluation showed the inefficiency of both registers. Following the evaluation, TI France organized a symposium to continue to put pressure on decision-makers. Eventually, in 2013 the French National Assembly introduced stricter rules.

CHALLENGES

TI France faced a reluctance by many public actors to introduce rules on lobbying transparency.

Rules are still not strict enough: because of a lack of incentive to register, many lobbyists choose not to register.

IMPACT

The initiative helped to introduce a voluntary lobbying register in the French National Assembly and encouraged reform that led to more lobbying (objectives, clients, lobbying budget) disclosure.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Transparency International France plans to continue pushing for a mandatory lobbying regulation - addressing lobbyists as well as public decision-makers.

RESOURCES

Advocacy campaign (ongoing since 2009) involves 1 part-time employee.

CONTACT DETAILS

Myriam Savy (Transparency International France), myriam.savy@transparency-france.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Organizing advocacy campaigns in parliament on new lobbying-related regulation.

France: Tracing Legislative Amendments

France: Tracing Legislative Amendments

COUNTRY/REGION

France

SUMMARY

An online platform <http://www.lafabriquedelaloi.fr/> that provides an innovative method of organizing information on legislative amendments.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Regards Citoyens, Centre d'Études Européennes and médialab.

CONTEXT

Sometimes new laws that pass through parliament receive thousands of proposals for amendment. When the law has been promulgated, it is usually challenging to trace back the source of particular amendments.

BEST PRACTICE

- The online platform ‘Law Factory’ was a successful partnership between a civil society organisation, university researchers and IT experts.
- As of 2015, the website enables the exploration of the legislative history of 290 laws. The visualisations of the history of the development of the law is highly innovative and intuitive.
- Both the software and the data produced for “Law Factory” is open source and available online <http://www.lafabriquedelaloi.fr/a-propos.html>

CHALLENGES

The data on legislative amendments is complex: therefore, this website is of less interest to the general public and of more interest to those users who have good working knowledge on the legislative process and who are looking for a quick overview of the main amendments/points of contention in the context of a specific law.

IMPACT

The legislative history of 290 laws is available online – organized in a highly visual way.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The organisations involved will continue to update the website.

RESOURCES

The development of the platform was funded by a public institution: Partenariat Institutions – Citoyens pour la Recherche et l'Innovation

CONTACT DETAILS

contact@lafabriquedelaloi.fr

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Creating a website on legislative history for newly-promulgated legal acts.

Germany: Platform for Freedom of Information Requests

Germany: Platform for Freedom of Information Requests

COUNTRY/REGION

Germany

SUMMARY

A website <http://fragdenstaat.de/> (ask the state) where anyone can send a question to state institutions and read the answers received by other users.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2011

End: Ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Open Knowledge Foundation Germany, with the cooperation of 14 other civil society organisations, including Transparency International Germany, More Democracy, German Society for Freedom of Information, Reporters Without Borders, German Journalists' Association.

CONTEXT

Germany is among those countries where public institutions are required by law to respond to freedom of information requests, yet not many people use this opportunity – there is not a culture of asking the public institutions questions.

BEST PRACTICE

The website <http://fragdenstaat.de/> is not a stand-alone product, but rather its developers have tried to form a network of civil society organisations and media who would use it for their daily work. For example, the website that publishes political scoops, netzpolitik.org, also publishes its findings (the information that it has received from public institutions) in the database and asks its users to send additional freedom of information requests regarding some specific issues regarding some interesting subject matter.

The website has 14 different civil society organisations listed as its supporters, and these partners use the website for their daily activities. The content appearing on <http://fragdenstaat.de/> is being monitored, and, if something news-worthy appears, this information is sent to journalists or partner civil society organisations.

CHALLENGES

- The biggest challenge in Germany is the lack of awareness among the general population of the very opportunity to send a public institution a freedom of information request.
- In around 1/3 of all cases the request does not receive a response. There has been one lawsuit against the website by the Ministry of Interior (Ministry of Interior lost it).

IMPACT

Around one third of all freedom of information requests to German federal institutions are submitted via this website.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Expanding the network of users/partners. Transparency International Germany would like to eventually have all the major German civil society organisations use this website as part of their daily work.

- There is a plan to publish a research report naming the most responsive and least responsive public institutions. Such data would help increase the awareness of freedom of information requests among the general population and put more pressure on public institutions to respond to freedom of information requests in a timely manner.

RESOURCES

An employee (at least part time) to administer the website.

There have been 10 volunteers who helped:
1) monitor requests; 2) provide help to users;
3) fundraise.

A developer worked one year on the software.

CONTACT DETAILS

Arne Semsrott (Transparency International Germany): asemsrott@transparency.de

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Creating a popular freedom of information request database.
- Creating partnerships with other civil society organizations and media in order to add value to an initiative.
- Engaging volunteers in order to administer huge databases.

Germany: City Tour through the Lobby Scene

Germany: City Tour through the Lobby Scene

COUNTRY/REGION

Germany

SUMMARY

The German civil society organisation LobbyControl has produced a guidebook on Berlin's lobby scene (LobbyPlanet Berlin) and organizes excursions to acquaint locals and guests with buildings where lobbying happens. The tour takes around 2 hours. Both the tour and the book provide an introduction to numerous lobbying organizations, lobbying campaigns, networks and tricks.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2008

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Civil society organisation LobbyControl

CONTEXT

There are around 5000 professional lobbyists working in Berlin. Yet the public does not know much about this profession and its influence on public decisions.

BEST PRACTICE

- It is an innovative, 'offline' method of raising awareness about the influence of lobbyists on public decisions.
- The initiative has received great reviews both from participants in the guided tours and from the German media.

CHALLENGES

- Keeping the tour content up-to-date.
- Keeping up with increased demand for tours – recruiting new tour guides.

IMPACT

Lobby Planet Berlin will soon publish its fourth edition. In 2014 there were 165 tour groups with an average size of 20 people. During 2012-2014 alone, around 8840 people have been on the tours offered by LobbyControl.

WHAT'S NEXT?

A new edition of LobbyPlanet Berlin is planned for 2015. LobbyControl plans to continue providing excursions in Berlin.

RESOURCES

Some staff time is necessary to both write the book on the lobbying scene and organize excursions. The participation fee for guided tours is 10 euros per participant.

CONTACT DETAILS

LobbyControl kontakt@lobbycontrol.de

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Organizing lobby-scene related excursions.
- Writing a guidebook on the lobby-scene.

Germany: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens

Germany: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens

COUNTRY/REGION

Germany

SUMMARY

Parliament Watch (<http://www.abgeordnetenwatch.de/>) is an internet platform where citizens interact with their elected representatives in the German federal parliament (Bundestag), European Parliament, 6 State-level parliaments and 60 municipal councils.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2007

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Parliamentwatch e.V.

CONTEXT

In Germany political parties are strong and effective organizations – that's why people know the names of the parties, but more rarely the names of the individual members of parliament who have been elected from political party lists. Abgeordnetenwatch.de focuses on each elected representative. It is one of the most thorough and effective parliamentary monitoring websites in the world. The list of other parliamentary monitoring websites is available on OpeningParliament.org website. <http://www.openingparliament.org/organizations>

BEST PRACTICE

- The website offers in-depth information on each Member of Parliament, and allows the users to interact with him/her. The participation rate at the Federal level Parliament is 95%.
- Over the years Parliament Watch has developed media partnerships with top media in Germany – public broadcasters, daily newspapers, internet portals.
- The Parliament Watch team has helped create partner websites in a number of countries – Luxemburg, Austria, Ireland, Tunisia, France. Parliament Watch provides training and a Roll out Plan for a successful launch of the platform in other countries.
- Parliament Watch has an innovative funding model – it is mostly based on many small donations (there are around 1550 regular donors) and income from parliamentarians who have an option to purchase a premium profile which offers more functionality compared to the regular one.

CHALLENGES

- Parliamentary data is published in inconvenient formats – therefore, Parliament Watch team has to engage in a lot of manual work to be able to have up-to-date information on the website.
- Parliament Watch is still searching for a sustainable funding model – especially regarding sub-national level parliaments.
- When introducing Parliament Watch to other countries, it requires a strong local team with knowledge on the local context – for example, the funding model that has worked in Germany hasn't been that successful in other countries. It is also sometimes a challenge to convince the members of parliament to participate.

IMPACT

Parliament Watch is a highly successful platform – 95% of national level members of parliament are available for answering questions on this website. Already more than 160 000 questions have been asked on this platform. Since its launch, the platform has also been introduced at the sub-national level and for members of the European Parliament elected from Germany. Partner portals have been created in Luxemburg, Austria, Ireland, Tunisia, France.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Parliament Watch is fundraising in order to cover more State-level and municipal councils. It is also planning to help create similar platforms in other countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Afghanistan).

RESOURCES

According to the 2013 annual report of Parliament Watch, its staff costs in 2013 were 327 449 euro. Technical costs (including development) were 157 536.

The team in Germany had 9 full and part-time employees. In addition, there were a number of volunteers and free-lancers.

CONTACT DETAILS

Parliamentwatch projects@parliamentwatch.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Creating a website where citizens interact with their elected representatives – including training, software, roll-out plan.
- Organizing successful media partnerships.
- Crowdfunding and introducing premium profiles as a method to finance public-interest activities.

Germany: Exposing Excessive Business Influence on Universities

Germany: Exposing Excessive Business Influence on Universities

COUNTRY/REGION

Germany

SUMMARY

Transparency International Germany, the daily newspaper taz.de and a student association created an online database on the connections between businesses and scientists (universities) <http://hochschulwatch.de/>. At the moment it has more than 9000 records on endowed professorships, research collaborations, scholarship programs and sponsorships. Transparency International Germany used this database as evidence that links between science and business in Germany are sometimes problematic – as a result of such activities, this issue is now on Germany's public agenda.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Transparency International Germany

CONTEXT

Transparency International Germany had for a long time researched corruption in science, and got frustrated because the necessary information was not available. Each of the 16 federal states of Germany had their own regulation on access to information regarding universities. Meanwhile, the external financing to universities had increased from 1.5 billion euro in 1990 to 6.2 billion euro in 2012 – around 20% of these funds originated in the business sector.

In some cases such funding can be problematic. For example, if donors interfere with research results either directly or by threatening to withdraw funding. The general public in Germany was not aware of the extent to which business has influence in universities.

BEST PRACTICE

- There was an excellent partnership with a daily newspaper that helped collect the initial data from universities via journalistic requests.
- The database was clearly linked to TI Germany's previous efforts on the subject matter of science/corruption and its future intentions to bring about changes in regulation regarding transparency of funding for scientific purposes. The database improved upon a previous set of wikipages devoted to specific universities – uniting their data in a coherent and searchable whole.
- The database helped attract the attention of Germany's journalists to the issue of links between business companies and universities. There has been great coverage on the problem. Having created the database, TI Germany established itself as a primary expert on the subject matter.

CHALLENGES

- Resources – the database relied on voluntary work.
- Challenging environment: sometimes hostile attitude from business companies and universities regarding this initiative.
- Apart from placing the issue on the public agenda, there has not yet been much progress on policy changes to make the information on contacts between business and universities more transparent.

IMPACT

The database launched the debate in Germany on whether private business has undue influence on the daily work of universities. For example, the German public was not aware that sometimes business representatives even have a veto power regarding the appointment of professors.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Transparency International Germany is not planning to expand the existing database. The database has fulfilled its main purpose: namely, has placed the issue of links between business interests and universities on the public agenda. The next phase will be to increase the advocacy campaigns in order to achieve changes in regulations that would lead to more transparency in this field – for example, mandatory disclosure of sponsorship contracts or prohibition of direct financial dependence of scientists on third-party funding.

Transparency International Germany is also considering sharing their experience on creating such a website with other countries.

RESOURCES

There has to be at least one employee to make such a database feasible. In addition to that, one should have sufficient funding for a developer.

CONTACT DETAILS

Transparency International Germany. Arne Semsrott asemsrott@transparency.de

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Creating a large database that unites information from public sources, freedom of information requests and crowdsourcing (including leaks of sensitive information).
- Media partnerships regarding freedom of information requests and promoting the content in a website.

Germany: Investigative Reporting and Advocacy on Fair Lobbying

Germany: Investigative Reporting and Advocacy on Fair Lobbying

COUNTRY/REGION

Germany

SUMMARY

German parliamentary monitoring/communication platform Parliament Watch (<http://www.abgeordnetenwatch.de/>) produces its own investigative articles on the lobbying scene in Germany. It also publishes other relevant content on lobbying and organizes lobbying transparency related advocacy campaigns.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2007

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Parliamentwatch e.V.

CONTEXT

Even though Germany has a large lobbying scene, not much is known about particular attempts to shape German policy.

BEST PRACTICE

- Over the years Parliament Watch has published a number of articles on the lobbying scene in Germany. For example, there have been articles on the parliamentary committees whose work has been especially influenced by lobbying. There have also been articles on the lack of transparency about which lobbyists have access (card passes) to the parliamentary building.
- Parliament Watch has engaged in advocacy activities in order to change the regulation/ practice. For example, in 2014 Parliament Watch filed a law suit against the German parliament for its refusal to reveal who has been granted access to the parliamentary building. In 2015 Parliament Watch was asked to testify in public hearings regarding the necessity for more transparency of proceedings of parliamentary committees.
- Parliament Watch articles on lobbying are highly integrated with the rest of the Parliament Watch content – for example,

users are asked to support petitions on a similar subject matter (on banning corporate donations to parties) or ask questions to the Members of Parliament. These articles also have excellent social media integration.

CHALLENGES

The political environment in Germany is not welcoming to lobbying-reform related initiatives.

IMPACT

Parliament Watch has contributed to placing the issue of lobbying transparency on the public agenda– especially in regarding the issue of access to parliamentary buildings for lobbyists.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Parliament Watch will continue to produce investigative reporting and engage in advocacy on fair lobbying.

RESOURCES

The investigative articles and litigation costs are funded by the organisation's own resources that are predominantly fundraised via donations and grants. <https://www.abgeordnetenwatch.de/ueber-uns/mehr/finanzierung>

CONTACT DETAILS

Parliamentwatch projects@parliamentwatch.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Producing quality-reporting on the lobby scene.
- Engaging in strategic complaints and litigation and civic advocacy campaigns on lobbying-related issues.

Germany: Lobbying in Schools

Germany: Lobbying in Schools

COUNTRY/REGION

Germany

SUMMARY

The German civil society organisation LobbyControl has produced a quality study (discussion paper) on lobbying in the education sector, especially in schools: https://www.lobbycontrol.de/wp-content/uploads/Lobbyismus_an_Schulen.pdf

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Civil society organisation LobbyControl

CONTEXT

One lesser known aspect of lobbying: it does not end at the parliamentary or municipal level. Sometimes private enterprises influence the content of teaching materials and informational materials about events. For this reason LobbyControl has produced research that exposes the ways companies push their products into schools via advertising or teaching materials.

BEST PRACTICE

This is a strong civic initiative that started with a discussion paper and right now is still in the advocacy phase – where LobbyControl attempts to raise awareness of the problem and recommends changes to existing practice. Part of the advocacy campaign consisted of sending an open letter to the Minister of Education of Germany, which collected nearly 10 000 signatures.

CHALLENGES

At the political level, there has been hardly any progress – no changes in regulation. So far most politicians still have very little awareness of the problem.

It has also been challenging to sustain media interest and to reach teachers directly, not through media reports.

IMPACT

The issue of lobbying in schools is now part of Germany's public discussion. Media attention was very high at the launch of the study – a lot of people were outraged to learn that there is indeed “lobbying in schools”. Therefore, the media have reported a lot about this new issue.

9,500 people supported the open letter to the Minister of Education of Germany.

WHAT'S NEXT?

LobbyControl is considering producing a follow-up study or engaging in an advocacy campaign to change the regulation.

RESOURCES

One person is permanently in charge of the issue, and can respond to media inquiries.

CONTACT DETAILS

LobbyControl contact@lobbycontrol.de

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Lobbying in education sector: what are the main issues and how to solve them.

Germany: Lobbypedia

Germany: Lobbypedia

COUNTRY/REGION

European Union

SUMMARY

A wiki-based online database encyclopaedia on the lobbying scene in Germany created by the civil society organisation LobbyControl. Lobbypedia.de helps its users find out which persons exert political influence in Germany and how those persons are interrelated.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2010

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Civil society organisation LobbyControl

CONTEXT

In Germany, like in other countries, much of the lobbying activities happen behind closed doors – citizens are not always aware of which interests resulted in which changes of policy. Thus, the options for democratic control and honest debate are limited. That's why Lobbypedia collects and publishes information on lobby groups and their lobbying strategies.

BEST PRACTICE

- This is an extensive online encyclopaedia with in-depth and high quality Wikipedia style-articles on various issues having to do with lobbying in Germany.
- As Lobbypedia is a wiki-page, volunteers may apply to contribute to write specific articles.

CHALLENGES

It is challenging to find volunteers to write articles for Lobbypedia

IMPACT

Other civil society organisations, and sometimes the media, refer to the Lobbypedia content. The online encyclopaedia has continuous growth in the number of visitors.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Lobbypedia is being expanded continuously: more posts, more thematic portals (e.g. on lobby regulation).

RESOURCES

Resources for Lobbypedia have been provided by the civil society organisation LobbyControl. LobbyControl is funded by its members, donors, endowments and it also receives income from the sale of its publications and lectures. In order to launch a wiki and to keep it alive, a part-time employee would be necessary.

CONTACT DETAILS

lobbypedia@lobbycontrol.de

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Creating an online encyclopaedia with quality articles on the lobbying scene.

Greece: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens Vouliwatch

Greece: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens Vouliwatch

COUNTRY/REGION

Greece

SUMMARY OF THE INITIATIVE

Vouliwatch (www.vouliwatch.gr/) is a Greek initiative that promotes parliamentary accountability, transparency and open data. It is an internet platform where Greek citizens interact with their elected representatives (in national level parliament and in the European parliament) and crowdsource ideas.

DATES FOR THE INITIATIVE

Start: 2013

End: Ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Vouliwatch

SHORT DESCRIPTION ABOUT THE CONTEXT

Greece is among those European Union member states which have recently experienced an economic crisis of particular severity. It has contributed to disillusionment with the effectiveness of the political system that had already been beset by scandals and corruption.

STRONG ASPECTS OF THE INITIATIVE

- The questions asked to Members of Parliament are pre-checked to ensure that they meet the code of conduct of the website.
- Vouliwatch.gr provides a functionality for crowdsourcing ideas – those ideas are summarized by the Vouliwatch team and sent to Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament. If feedback is received, it is published on the website.
- In order to promote the website, Vouliwatch organizes various events – including open discussions, workshops and policy labs.
- The communication functionality is only part of the website: vouliwatch.gr functions also as a parliamentary monitoring website which allows citizens to keep track of parliamentary work.

- Members of Parliament are encouraged to be more active by publishing a chart of the most responsive Members of Parliament.
- Vouliwatch has a frequently updated blog on recent activities related to the parliament, and good Twitter and Facebook integration.

CHALLENGES

- It has been a challenge to ensure that MPs respond to the questions asked via vouliwatch.gr.
- Securing sustainable funding for the website has also been a challenge – vouliwatch has experimented with crowdfunding for this purpose.

IMPACT - SHORT SUMMARY ABOUT THE IMPACT THEY MADE

During its first year of existence, the Vouliwatch website received more than 100.000 unique visitors. Altogether 672

questions were asked to the Members of Parliament and Members of the European Parliament – 74 questions received answers by the Members of Parliament.

The website has received a lot of media attention.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE INITIATIVE?

Vouliwatch will continue to encourage more MPs to answer the questions that are asked via their website.

RESOURCES TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

Vouliwatch receives its funding from grants, private donations and crowd funding campaigns. During its first year it attracted 77 572 euros in revenue. Nevertheless, there was a necessity for pro-bono work and a network of volunteers.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- Creating a website where citizens interact with their elected representatives.
- Encouraging MP buy-in in a context of unwelcoming political environment.

IN WHICH SUBJECT AREAS ADVICE CAN BE PROVIDED FOR OTHER CSOS

press@vouliwatch.gr

International Lobbying Disclosure Guidelines

International Lobbying Disclosure Guidelines

COUNTRY/REGION

Global

SUMMARY

Civil society activists have produced their own international lobbying disclosure benchmarks <http://sunlightfoundation.com/lobbyingguidelines/> on lobbying registration, disclosure, oversight and sanctions.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: 2014

CSOS INVOLVED

Sunlight Foundation, Access Info Europe

CONTEXT

The lack of lobbying transparency is an issue that is recognized as problematic across the world. Nevertheless, there is no clear and thorough international public law that would set obligatory standards for lobbying disclosure. That's why civil society activists need to produce the benchmarks themselves.

BEST PRACTICE

There was an open online process of elaborating draft international lobbying disclosure guidelines – everyone could see the draft and send their comments at an early stage, when the document was still being developed.

A number of civil society activists were involved in the elaboration of lobbying disclosure standards. Those experts combined their national-level experience to come up with guidelines that would be relevant across the world.

CHALLENGES

As lobbying is an under-regulated area, it was challenging to agree on common definitions and other provisions.

IMPACT

The guidelines are already available in three languages: English, French and Spanish. Even when the guidelines were at a draft stage, the draft definitions provided authoritative guidance for civil society organisations and governments that were at the time involved in elaborating new lobbying regulations.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The guidelines will be translated into other languages as well, and they will be promoted across the world as international benchmarks on lobbying regulation.

RESOURCES

Staff time for organisations and activists involved.

CONTACT DETAILS

Sunlight Foundation Contact form <http://sunlightfoundation.com/contact/>

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Collaborative process of sharing experiences on lobbying transparency and elaborating new benchmarks.

International Platform (software) for Freedom of Information Requests

International Platform (software) for Freedom of Information Requests

COUNTRY/REGION

International

SUMMARY

Alaveteli <http://alaveteli.org/> is an open-source platform for making public freedom of information requests. All requests and answers are published online, thus encouraging the opening up of government and better citizen engagement.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2011

End: Ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

UK Citizens Online Democracy and its partner organizations across the world.

CONTEXT

Some countries have a solid freedom of information system – where state institutions are obliged to respond to a freedom of information request in a certain timeframe. Other countries do not have such a system, but, nevertheless, openness is recognized to be an important virtue. And yet it is not easy for an average citizen to file a freedom of information request or to find information that has been already requested by someone else – therefore, it makes sense to make a list of all public authorities in a particular country and enable citizens to file their freedom of information requests via one centralized web platform.

BEST PRACTICE

- Alaveteli team provides guidance on setting up a website with Alaveteli software and on logistics involved in launching the website http://alaveteli.org/docs/getting_started/
- Alaveteli has its own mailing list and a Google group to share experiences and help with problems. It also organizes conferences for Alaveteli local teams (in 2012 and 2015).
- Alaveteli is open source and customizable.
- Alaveteli has wonderful smartphone and tablet integration.

CHALLENGES

- When introducing Alaveteli software in a new country, a strong local team is crucial: it is needed for collecting the email addresses of public institutions, translating the software and promoting the website. A lot of work may be reliant on volunteer effort.

- The website relies on constant maintenance to be successful – not all the country teams manage to secure funding for this purpose.

IMPACT

- At the beginning of 2015, the software was adopted in 19 countries.
- At the beginning of 2015 more than 200 000 freedom of information requests were sent via Alaveteli.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Alaveteli will keep being developed and introduced in new countries.

RESOURCES

UK Citizens Online Democracy has received several grants for development of Alaveteli software and for introducing it in various countries. <https://www.mysociety.org/about/funding/>

A Brazilian Queremos Saber website took a team of 10 people around three days to launch. A more customized website AskTheEU took a team of 3 months part time to complete.

CONTACT DETAILS

international@mysociety.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- opening up government and encouraging better citizen engagement via open access to public information requests.
- adapting public-engagement internet tools to a local context.

International Standards and a Community on Parliamentary Openness

International Standards and a Community on Parliamentary Openness

COUNTRY/REGION

International

SUMMARY

A civic initiative that has resulted in creating common parliamentary openness standards across the world (including on lobbyist disclosure and on facilitated two-way communication with citizens). In order to monitor the implementation of such standards, a network of parliamentary monitoring organisations has been created. The network (community) is centred on the openingparliament.org website.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2011

End: Ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Various civil society organisations across the world, led by National Democratic Institute, Sunlight Foundation, and the Latin American Legislative Transparency Network (LALT Network)

CONTEXT

There is no international public law that sets standards for parliamentary openness. But in numerous countries civil society organisations have worked to increase their parliament's openness and responsiveness. Until the emergence of the openingparliament.org initiative, their contacts were sporadic – they did not have a set of common standards and regular online channels to share their experience.

BEST PRACTICE

- An international network (community) of parliamentary monitoring organisations has been built around a collaboratively developed Declaration on Parliamentary Openness (launched in 2012). The Declaration includes 44 provisions, a thorough compilation of best practices and background information.
- Openingparliament.org has been built into a community of parliamentary openness activists. For example, they co-publish a blog that provides regular updates on the happenings/events regarding parliamentary openness across the world. Openingparliament.org also hosts a Google list of the world's parliamentary monitoring organisations, a mailing list (Google group) and it has excellent Twitter and Facebook integration.

- The Openingparliament.org community is closely integrated with the Open Government Partnership Legislative Openness Working Group – many activists are part of both communities and co-organize events on parliamentary openness (for example, global legislative openness week in September 2014).

CHALLENGES

The main challenge has been generating parliamentary buy-in and recognition for the Declaration.

IMPACT

- By the beginning of 2015, 140 organisations from 81 countries had signed the Declaration on parliamentary Openness. The declaration has been translated into 24 languages.

- The Declaration has been endorsed by several international organisations: OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Commonwealth Parliamentary Assembly and by The Organization of American States (during the Inter-American meeting of Presidents of Legislative Powers).

WHAT'S NEXT?

Openingparliament.org will continue to be the centre of the world's community of parliamentary monitoring organisations. It aims to have the declaration endorsed by an even larger number of governmental institutions and civil society institutions.

RESOURCES

Initial funding for OpeningParliament was provided by Open Society Foundations, Omidyar Network, and the National Endowment for Democracy. The National Endowment for Democracy continues to provide key support.

CONTACT DETAILS

Greg M. Brown, National Democratic Institute
for International Affairs, gbrown@ndi.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Creating benchmarks for parliamentary openness and monitoring their implementation.
- Coordinating the activities of civil society organizations across the world.

International Working Group on Lobbying Transparency

International Working Group on Lobbying Transparency

COUNTRY/REGION

Global

SUMMARY

An online international working group of lobbying transparency activists to share their experience and collaborate <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/lobbying-transparency>

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Open Knowledge Foundation, Sunlight Foundation

CONTEXT

Even though various civil society organisations across the world had worked on lobbying transparency related matters, they were not linked in a network that would allow them to share their best practices, ask questions or coordinate their activities.

BEST PRACTICE

- The Google group is online, everyone can browse its contents and apply to join it.
- There are a number of discussion/updates in this Google group on the issues that are of interest to lobbying transparency activists.

CHALLENGES

It is challenging to keep up the interest and activity in this working group: the organizations involved are very much focused on their daily work, so sometimes there are no new posts for weeks.

IMPACT

In April 2015 the working group had already discussed 79 topics and has 133 members.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Google group will stay online.

RESOURCES

It takes some staff time to set up, monitor and engage in discussions in the working group, but this can be a voluntary activity.

CONTACT DETAILS

Sunlight Foundation Contact form <http://sunlightfoundation.com/contact/>

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Organizing online discussions among activists involved in advocacy on lobbying transparency

Ireland: Lobbying Transparency as a Commitment under the Open Government Partnership

Ireland: Lobbying Transparency as a Commitment under the Open Government Partnership

COUNTRY/REGION

Ireland

SUMMARY

Transparency International Ireland ran a three month consultation in 2013 to seek input into Ireland's first Open Government Partnership National Action Plan. The action plan commits the Irish government to develop a Transparency Code in relation to working groups/ task forces appointed by a minister or by a department. It also contains a commitment to introduce a 'legislative footprint,' and to abolish certain fees for making Freedom of Information requests.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: 2014

CSOS INVOLVED

Transparency International Ireland

CONTEXT

In 2014 Ireland became a full member of Open Government Partnership which aims to increase civic participation in decision-making, fight corruption and to use new technologies to strengthen governance. <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/> As a new member state, Ireland had to develop its first action plan for 2014-2016. Starting in 2013, the Irish government consulted widely with civil society on developing this plan. One of the topics that was discussed during these consultations: better regulation of lobbying. The consultations took place as the government was already preparing new legislation to regulate lobbying, which it had committed to in its 2011 Programme for Government.

BEST PRACTICE

- Transparency International Ireland coordinated the consultation process among civil society organizations to seek input into Ireland's first Open Government Partnership Action Plan. Many organisations and individuals were involved in preparing recommendations for this document. The groups and individuals worked collaboratively in three workshops and online to draft their recommendations to government.
- Following the consultations, a report containing 60 civil society recommendations was forwarded to the government. A working group of officials and civil society members subsequently worked together to co-draft the National Action Plan, which was published in June 2014.
- .

CHALLENGES

Civil society produced 60 proposed measures for inclusion in Ireland's first OGP National Action Plan. These were not put forward in any order of priority. While the proposals were varied and ambitious, the fact that there were so many of them created a very crowded initial agenda from which to begin detailed discussions with government officials.

IMPACT

- The National Action Plan commitment to a Transparency Code for expert/working groups reinforced a commitment already contained in draft legislation. This commitment will now be contained in a document submitted to an international body and subject to regular review.

- The National Action Plan commitment to introduce a legislative footprint was put forward as a proposal by Transparency International Ireland during the OGP civil society consultations. It was accepted by government for inclusion in the National Action Plan. The legislative footprint will be introduced by mid-2015 in relation to current legislative initiatives.
- The government also agreed to remove the up-front application fees for Freedom of Information requests of a non-personal nature.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Regulation of Lobbying Act will come into effect on 1st September 2015. See www.lobbying.ie

The Transparency Code has not yet been published. However, the OGP framework allows civil society an opportunity to follow up on this.

RESOURCES

The public consultations on the OGP National Action Plan were funded by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

A part time TI Ireland employee was involved in the working group of civil society and officials that co-drafted the National Action Plan over a three month period.

CONTACT DETAILS

Transparency International Ireland
www.transparency.ie

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Organizing a successful advocacy campaign in context of Open Government Partnership;
- Coordinating a network of civil society organizations in context of Open Government Partnership;

Latin America: Encyclopaedia of Influential People in Business and Politics

Latin America: Encyclopaedia of Influential People in Business and Politics

COUNTRY/REGION

Chile, Venezuela, Colombia

SUMMARY

A group of journalists and non-profit journalism organizations in Chile, Venezuela and Colombia have produced online platforms to publish information on influential people (including lobbyists) in their respective countries and their connections. Poderopedia.org is a platform that maps who is who in business and politics to show the connections between the most powerful people and organizations to promote transparency, cut information asymmetry and show conflicts of interest.

TIMEFRAME

Start: December 2012

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Poderomedia Foundation, Consejo de Redacción (Colombia), Instituto de Prensa y Sociedad, IPYS (Venezuela)

CONTEXT

There are a number of people and organisations shaping the public agenda in Latin America, but the general public is sometimes not aware of who those influential people are and what connections they have to one another.

BEST PRACTICE

- Behind each national-level Poderopedia there is a team of investigative journalists and programmers.
- The general public has an opportunity to submit their tips for Poderopedia team to investigate.
- Poderopedia started as a project in Chile, but has since expanded to Venezuela and Colombia.
- Poderopedia content is reusable under Creative Common License.
- Poderopedia is sharing its software with other civil society organisations – there is an open-source version of Poderopedia called ‘Plug & Play’. It allows everyone ‘to create and manage entity profile pages that include: short bio or summary, sheet of connections, long newsworthy profiles, maps of connections of an entity, documents related to the entity, sources of all the information and news river with external news about the entity’.

- Poderopedia has excellent Twitter and Facebook integration with relatively large following.
- Poderopedia has an active blog where it publishes articles related to its core content.

CHALLENGES

The initial development of Poderopedia was funded by a generous grant of John S. and Jans L. Knight Foundation. Since then the Poderopedia has been constantly searching for a sustainable funding model.

IMPACT

Poderopedia was included as a Finalist for the Data Journalism Award in 2013.

In the beginning of 2015 Poderopedia already included information on 3500 people, 2000 companies and 1048 non-commercial entities. It also had 3590 registered users. Six Chilean newsrooms were republishing its information, and many stories in large

newsrooms use Poderopedia information. There have been at least 15 big impact cases where Poderopedia broke stories that later became a part of the national debate in Chile, Venezuela and Colombia.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Local Poderopedia chapters are working on including more content in their respective websites. Poderopedia is also looking for ways to expand to other countries.

RESOURCES

The initial development of Poderopedia was funded by a generous grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Later on Poderopedia received a grant from StartupChile, fellowship support by the Knight Program of the International Center for Journalists; and provides consultancy and services for media and civic organizations. The Venezuela chapter is supported by Transparencia Venezuela and Coalición ProAcceso. The Colombia chapter is supported by Open Society Institute Foundations and the Facultad de Comunicación y Lenguaje de la Pontificia Universidad Javeriana.

CONTACT DETAILS

Poderopedia, info@poderopedia.com

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Creating online platforms to trace connections between influential people.
- Developing and training on investigative journalism methodologies and data journalism methodologies
- Producing investigative articles and data visualizations about the lobby scene.

Latvia: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens and a Scorecard on their Responsiveness

Latvia: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens and a Scorecard on their Responsiveness

COUNTRY/REGION

Latvia

SUMMARY

Internet platform gudrasgalvas.lv where anyone could ask questions to a Member of Parliament, a Minister or a Member of the European Parliament if he/she was elected in Latvia.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2010

End: 2014

CSOS INVOLVED

Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS

CONTEXT

In 2010 the Latvian Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS created a website gudrasgalvas.lv where voters could ask questions of politicians taking part in general elections. After the elections, this website was transformed into a communication tool between voters and Members of Parliament, Members of the European Parliament and Ministers.

BEST PRACTICE

- The website included various innovative gamification elements: for example, activity badges for MPs who responded to the most questions. There were also competitions organized for the visitors of the site.
- A widget was developed for the news media so that they could embed the possibility to ask questions to Members of Parliament in their news stories where those MPs were mentioned.
- The MP's activity in gudrasgalvas.lv was used as one of four criteria in order to come up (before 2014 elections) with a public ranking (scorecard) of the most responsive MPs. Among other criteria used: MP's responsiveness in social networks, whether or not they participated in online discussions, whether their blogs allowed user comments. The intention behind the scorecard: to nudge MPs to be more open to viewpoints coming from the general public – not just from professional lobbyists.

CHALLENGES

The website was resource-intensive (requiring at least 1 full time employee to run smoothly) and did not prove to be sustainable for the long term.

At the launch of the website it was decided that the questions will not be pre-screened for quality. That proved to be a wrong decision – there were many questions that were of low quality, thus lowering the prestige of the platform in the eyes of the decision-makers.

IMPACT

87 out of 100 Latvian Members of Parliament logged in to the website during 2011-2014. 60 Members of Parliament answered at least 1 question, and 40 were frequent communicators.

Several thousands of questions were asked during this timeframe and the majority received an answer.

WHAT'S NEXT?

PROVIDUS will archive the website. There is a possibility that the website will be transferred to the Parliament which has resources to make it sustainable.

PROVIDUS and DELNA – both organisations that created a parliamentary responsiveness scorecard prior to 2014 elections, plan to follow-up with a new scorecard prior to the next parliamentary election in order to check whether the responsiveness and the online presence of Latvian MPs has improved.

RESOURCES

Several thousand euros were spent to create the website and to update its functionality.

There were additional expenses to remunerate the part-time employee looking after the website and communicating with MPs and Ministers.

CONTACT DETAILS

Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS, info@providus.lv

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Using gamification elements to increase attendance for a website.
- Opportunities and challenges in creating a communication tool with MPs.
- Methods for nudging public officials to be present online and evaluating the quality of their online presence.

Latvia: Institutionalized E-petitions at the Parliamentary Level

Latvia: Institutionalized E-petitions at the Parliamentary Level

COUNTRY/REGION

Latvia

SUMMARY

A highly popular e-petitioning website which allows citizens of Latvia to propose their ideas to the Latvian Parliament. In addition: a lobbying campaign in 2011 in order to make it mandatory for the Parliament to consider such petitions.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2011

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Civil society organisation 'Sabiedrības Līdzdalības Fonds' (Public Participation Foundation)

CONTEXT

In 2011 there was a widely perceived sleaze in Latvian politics: the Latvian parliament voted against lifting immunity of one of their own. That led to a referendum on the dissolution of Parliament and new elections – 94% of citizens who attended the referendum voted in favour of new elections. There was a variety of civic initiatives before the extraordinary elections to make sure that the new parliament is more honest than the previous one. One of those initiatives was manabalss.lv – a website where anyone could propose or sign a petition, by confirming his/her identity via the internet banking system. Since 2011 there have been 774 initiatives submitted in this portal. Some of them, having reached 10 000 signatures, have been considered by the Latvian Parliament.

BEST PRACTICE

A very strong and timely PR campaign made the website a household name. It has been highly successful in terms of ongoing public interest for over 3 years.

There was a successful lobbying campaign in Parliament to change the parliamentary Rules of Procedure in order to commit Parliament to considering petitions, which collect more than 10000 signatures.

CHALLENGES

The quality control of initiatives is still underdeveloped.

At times the relations between the politicians and the civic activists behind concrete initiatives and manabalss.lv as a portal have been challenging.

IMPACT

Due to this initiative legislation in Latvia now obliges the parliament to consider those e-petitions that have the signatures of at least 10 000 Latvian citizens. In all, in the time period 2011-2014, 10 initiatives from manabalss.lv were submitted for parliamentary consideration – some of them have influenced the legislative process.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The developers of the platform have already created a functionality that allows one to submit petitions not only to the Latvian Parliament, but also other institutions – such as municipalities.

The team behind manabalss.lv has also widely shared their expertise with other countries.

In 2015 a spin-off website of manabalss.lv was created for the presidential elections – users helped choose the best candidate for the office of president and then voted for the top candidates.

RESOURCES

In order to launch and sustain such a website one needs to budget staff time (at least one employee) and programming expenses. Resources to create/sustain manabalss.lv were provided by Soros Foundation Latvia, EEA grants, Ministry of Culture and other sponsors.

CONTACT DETAILS

Sabiedrības Līdzdalības Fonds sveiki@manabalss.lv or madara@manabalss.lv

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Organising strong PR campaigns for civic initiatives.
- Lobbying for changes in regulation that would provide for better opportunities for civic participation: what to do and what NOT to do

Latvia: Lobbying Footprint Disclosure at the Parliamentary Level

Latvia: Lobbying Footprint Disclosure at the Parliamentary Level

COUNTRY/REGION

Latvia

SUMMARY

A civic initiative by Transparency International Latvia (Delna) that resulted in all written communication regarding each specific legislative proposal being published online – including letters and recommendations from lobbyists. The parliamentary committees also agreed to register all participants in the committee meetings (not just MPs) and publish their names online.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2010

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Transparency International Latvian chapter (Delna)

CONTEXT

In 2010 Transparency International Latvia (Delna) created a parliamentary monitoring website to collect all information about the work of Latvian parliament that either was not available on the parliamentary website (for example, information on political scandals) or that was not easy to find there (remuneration, votes on specific issues, etc.). To collect such information, Delna conducted its own research and it also regularly contacted the representatives of the Parliament administration. In 2012 Delna came up with a study on parliamentary openness in Latvia where it proposed a number of suggestions on increasing transparency with regard to lobbying. One recommendation was to publish more of the Parliament's written documents online.

BEST PRACTICE

This initiative required a sustained, patient effort to produce enough evidence in order to achieve even some progress. Delna exerted pressure on Parliament to increase its openness by first creating a parliamentary monitoring website and requesting from Parliaments all data that was of particular interest to voters. Secondly, Delna – via meetings with both the political leadership of Parliament and top administrative officials, as well as having produced a specific study on parliamentary openness – advocated for more documents being published on the parliamentary website. As a result of this pressure and skilled media work, the parliament agreed to some of the recommendations and placed online all written communication received in connection to all legislative initiatives, including from lobbyists.

.CHALLENGES

The main challenge: Delna had to operate under conditions of a general culture of scepticism regarding the very possibility to achieve transparency of lobbying.

IMPACT

Since 2013 all written communications received by the parliamentary committees (letters, proposals for the second or third reason, opinions) are published online on the parliament's website. In addition, all participants in parliamentary committee meetings (not just MPs) are registered and their names are published online.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Delna has continued to exert pressure on the Parliament of Latvia to increase lobbying transparency by, among other things, recommending that the names

of individuals who have received entry passes to parliamentary building should be disclosed or that there is more openness at the level of parliamentary working groups.

Prior to 2014 parliamentary elections Delna and the Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS managed to collect pledges from all the parties that were elected to Parliament to disclose the legislative footprint – all the organisations and individuals who have contributed to a new legislative proposal. The two civil society organisations will monitor the implementation of this pledge.

RESOURCES

At least one employee is necessary for a sustained advocacy effort that combines both research, media events, freedom of information requests and advocacy in the parliament.

CONTACT DETAILS

Transparency International Latvian Chapter
(Delna), ti@delna.lv

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Organizing a sustained and integrated
advocacy campaign for lobbying transparency

Latvia: More Lobbying Transparency and Equality of Access at the Governmental Level

Latvia: More Lobbying Transparency and Equality of Access at the Governmental Level

COUNTRY/REGION

Latvia

SUMMARY

Latvian civil society organisations have managed to put in place legislation: 1) that makes it obligatory for ministries to describe what (if any) consultations were organised during the drafting stage of new laws and policy documents (legislative footprint); 2) if there were no consultations – to stipulate the reasons for not consulting civil society organisations; 3) to have the most important drafts available online for public consultation two weeks prior to them being submitted for coordination with other ministries.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2005

End: Ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Several hundreds of Latvian civil society organisations, among them Latvian Civic Alliance (Latvijas Pilsoniskā Aliance), Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS.

CONTEXT

Since at least the beginning of 21st century, there has been a perception in Latvian society and politics that CSOs are insufficiently involved in public decision making. Since 2005 various Latvian CSOs have been pressing for more meaningful civic participation opportunities. The results of those campaigns look impressive, but they were achieved during various times and under various circumstances. A memorandum of understanding between the Latvian government and civil society organisations has been signed by 388 civil society organisations, as of the beginning of 2015.

BEST PRACTICE

A sustained, but not coordinated advocacy effort by Latvian CSOs for more than 10 years to improve opportunities for civic participation in decision-making, thus also contributing to equality of access and diversity of lobbying.

CHALLENGES

Lack of analysis on the existing practice of producing a legislative footprint: it is unclear whether the ministries mention all consultations that were conducted with both business lobbyists and public interest civil society organisations.

Civil society organisations are rarely involved in developing draft regulations prior to the final draft stage. If business lobbyists have been involved in helping to write the initial draft regulation, CSOs may be prevented from making meaningful feedback.

IMPACT

Latvian legislation currently stipulates that each draft legislation/policy document that is produced by the government has to be accompanied by an annotation where the government names the organisations consulted in preparing the draft (legislative footprint). The draft laws have to be made available online at an early stage: 2 weeks prior to entering the coordination process with other ministers.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Latvian civil society organisations are still fighting for more meaningful civic participation and a more level playing field with business lobbyists. For this reason there is a demand to consult civil society organisations at the earliest possible stage of developing new policy.

RESOURCES

There were no specific campaigns organised in order to achieve the aims of this initiative at its various stages. Civil society organisations used every opportunity to demand changes (when the regulation was being reviewed by the government), and managed to convince the government to get it done.

CONTACT DETAILS

Latvian Civic Alliance alianse@nvo.lv; Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS info@providus.lv

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Finding alternative ways to increase transparency and equality of access of lobbying without a specific law on lobbying.

Morocco: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens

Morocco: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens

COUNTRY/REGION

Morocco

SUMMARY

An online platform that facilitates citizen communication with MPs – all publicly accessible. www.nouabook.ma

TIMEFRAME

Start: Beta - June 2014; Official version - October 2014
End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

SimSim-Participation Citoyenne

CONTEXT

Less than 10% of all Moroccans feel represented by their Parliament, and most citizens have little opportunity to express their concerns to their elected officials.

BEST PRACTICE

- Nouabook.ma is being developed by a team that has strong background knowledge on the world's best parliamentary monitoring initiatives.
- Nouabook.ma is built upon the Writelt component developed by the international Populus community.
- Nouabook.ma is engaging in various experiments to convince more MPs to communicate with voters via Nouabook – for example, the team behind the Nouabook.ma has started a series of video interviews with MPs. The website hosts a lively blog and has good social media integration; questions asked to the site can be automatically shared with users' Facebook pages.

CHALLENGES

- In Morocco there are structural problems that prevent citizen online engagement: such as illiteracy, and problematic Internet access and a general reluctance by citizens to participate in politics.
- It has been a challenge to engage MPs – many do not see value in communicating with citizens as most are appointed to electoral lists by party leaders. Many MPs themselves do not use Internet.

IMPACT

The response rate from MPs is currently around 50%. The response rate hovered around 40% until the Nouabook team started conducting Google Hangouts with MPs. During these events, citizens post questions to the participating MP through

the site. The questions are then answered by the MP in a live, online Google Hangout, which is broadcast on Nouabook's blog, YouTube, and through media. The Nouabook team then edits the videos and uploads the corresponding answers to the site.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- The team behind Nouabook.ma will continue to work on improving functionality of the website, in particular aimed at increasing incentives for MPs to participate in the project.
- The Nouabook team plans to recruit 10 youth ambassadors from around the country to teach citizens about the project, help them record their questions by video and recruit new MP participants.

RESOURCES

The website has been developed with support of the European Endowment for Democracy and the Indigo Trust. The Middle East Partnership Initiative has also agreed to support the project.

CONTACT DETAILS

info@simsim.ma

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Encouraging parliamentary responsiveness in a politically challenging environment

TAGS/CATEGORIES FOR THIS INITIATIVE

Lobbying plurality; Interactive tools; Innovative methods; Open access to decision makers

Slovenia: Exposing Links between Lobbyists and State Institutions

Slovenia: Exposing Links between Lobbyists and State Institutions

COUNTRY/REGION

Slovenia

SUMMARY

A visualisation tool of lobbying contacts/ influences in Slovenia: website kdovpliva.si (English: http://www.kdovpliva.si/index_en.html)

TIMEFRAME

Start: 1.7.2014

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Transparency International Slovenia

CONTEXT

Compared to other countries, Slovenia's lobbying disclosure laws are in place, but suffer from gaps and loopholes. Professional lobbyists and the officials being lobbied are required to disclose their contacts. Nevertheless, such data has little meaning if it can't be presented to the broader public in a manner that allows important patterns to instantaneously emerge.

BEST PRACTICE

Kdovpliva.si is a robust product – by the end of 2014 it contained data from around 700 lobbying reports submitted between 2011–2014. The links between lobbyists, lobby targets, lobby clients and state institutions are exposed in a visualized way. The website also provides information on lobbying purpose, lobbying timelines, as well as the frequency of connections. In addition, the platform gives insight into the companies in which registered lobbyists are involved as founders, representatives or supervisors, and their business transactions with the public sector. This allows a visitor to observe the ways how specific companies operate in public life and benefit from public money.

The platform resulted from a successful collaboration between a civil society watchdog-type organization (TI Slovenia), a research group (Jozef Stefan Institute – JSI) and IT specialists (Virostatiq). JSI Artificial Intelligence Laboratory is one of the largest European research groups working in the areas of machine learning, data mining, language technologies, semantic technologies and recently sensor networks. Virostatiq is an IT specialist, designer and innovator, a pioneer of visualization of the National Assembly.

CHALLENGES

The main challenges have to do with access to data for visualisation purposes (most of the initial data is only accessible in PDF format), as well as the quality and thoroughness of such data.

Currently the portal only visualizes those lobbying contacts which are reported, representing only a fraction of the overall lobbying activities in Slovenia.

IMPACT

Data on more than 700 lobbying contacts is accessible to everyone in a visualized and searchable manner – this tool already enables policy researchers, journalists and regular citizens to learn about the influence of lobbyists in Slovenia and the flow of money between the public and private sectors. The platform is mainly used by journalists, bloggers and NGO representatives.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The platform will be further improved by adding the legislative footprint of lobbyists' influence on concrete regulations. The platform will provide greater insight into the decision-making process, therefore representing a good example of an independent online tool for monitoring and evaluation of elected officials. Through an innovative approach and data presentation, the online platform will give insight into the transparency of legislative procedure for each law in the process of adoption and present an activity index of deputies and connections between decision makers and the private sector.

RESOURCES

The platform was partially supported by the European Commission, but mainly prepared pro-bono. Volunteers gathered data bases of lobbying contacts while the Virostatiq and Jozef Stefan Institute provided technical expertise. The staff of TI Slovenia contributed advocacy work.

CONTACT DETAILS

Vid Doria (Transparency International Slovenia), vid.doria@transparency.si

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Visualizing lobbying contacts in an online-based tool.
- Building successful partnerships with researchers and IT companies.

TAGS/CATEGORIES FOR THIS INITIATIVE

Lobbying transparency; Watchdogs; Interactive tools; Innovative methods; Data repositories

South Africa: A More Transparent Legislative Process

South Africa: A More Transparent Legislative Process

COUNTRY/REGION

South Africa

SUMMARY

Providing civil society organisations access to in-depth information on the legislative process at the parliamentary committee level as well as on committee oversight over the executive.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 1995

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Parliamentary Monitoring Group

CONTEXT

Parliamentary committees play an important role in shaping new legislation and in exercising oversight over the executive. Unfortunately, the committees rarely provide sufficient timely information to the public on these proceedings. Unlike corporate lobbyists, civil society activists usually do not have the resources to be present at all the committee meetings.

BEST PRACTICE

Since the mid 1990s the civil society organisation 'Parliamentary Monitoring Group' has tracked the work of the South African parliamentary committees and made this information available to the broader public. Its monitors are present during committee meetings and provide detailed, unofficial minutes (reports) within 3 working days following a meeting. The organisation also provides information on public hearings, on early notifications of requests for submissions and the documents that were discussed during the committee meetings.

Non-governmental organizations, public education institutions and their students and community-based activists can sign up for information free of charge, while a fee is asked from other clients.

CHALLENGES

Parliamentary officials tend to see the Parliamentary Monitoring Group as a competitor rather than a facilitator.

Parliamentary Monitoring Group has a large turnover of part-time monitors as the organisation cannot provide constant work due to the four constituency periods per year.

IMPACT

Detailed information on parliamentary committee meetings has been available to civic activists free of charge.

Altogether more than 700 people have been trained on the parliamentary process and to monitor parliamentary committee meetings.

WHAT'S NEXT?

People's Assembly website (www.pa.org.za) was launched in 2014 as a project to connect citizens with their elected representatives at national and provincial level. Parliamentary Monitoring Group wishes to extend this to local government representatives in 2015/16.

RESOURCES

This initiative has been funded by grants (for example, from Open Society Foundation), donations and income generated by offering cross-subsidized services to business and governmental clients. In the beginning of 2015 there were 10 employees working for Parliamentary Monitoring Group.

CONTACT DETAILS

info@pmg.org.za

www.pmg.org.za

+27 21 465 8885

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Providing detailed insight into the workings of parliamentary committees.

Providing up-to-date reporting by all government entities as each of the 50 parliamentary committees oversees a specific government portfolio

Spain: Mapping Lobbyist Influence

Spain: Mapping Lobbyist Influence

COUNTRY/REGION

Spain

SUMMARY

An online database that exposes links between Spanish lobbyists and public officials: <http://www.quienmanda.es/>

TIMEFRAME

Start: Started in June 2013.

End: ongoing.

CSOS INVOLVED

Fundación Ciudadana Civio – Civio Citizen Foundation

CONTEXT

The lack of transparency has been a perennial problem in Spanish politics – even the meetings in parliament are sometimes held in secret, and there is not much information available on lobbyists. That’s why the civil society organisation Civio Citizen Foundation has engaged in a variety of projects to demand more transparency.

BEST PRACTICE

- The website <http://www.quienmanda.es/> has become a reliable source on the connections between the people and businesses who influence political decision making in Spain. The website is based on data journalism: automated searches of information published online and sometimes manual collection of data. At least one story on interesting links between the decision makers of Spain is published each month. Currently, QM includes a database with over 5,000 documented relationships between 3,000+ politically sensitive actors, 130+ tagged photographs and a series of background articles untangling relationships between Spanish public officials and private corporations, which have been republished in numerous digital and paper-based media.

- The project combines both online and offline elements – focusing on an advocacy campaign for more transparency with regard to the agendas of Spain’s top politicians.

- Several Spanish media outlets – El Pais, El Mundo and Canarias 7 – and photographer Quique Garcia have allowed the website to use their images.

CHALLENGES

- The political environment is not welcoming toward such initiatives: the top politicians of Spain sometimes even publically shame calls for transparency as being ‘exhibitionist’.

- Gathering verified data from public sources to report revolving doors and nepotism cases is sometimes impossible. Civic participation is crucial, hence the project allows citizens to contribute with their suggestions, leads and pictures, but those crowdsourced elements sometimes lack quality.

IMPACT

Since launching the website and starting the campaign on the transparency of congressmen’s agendas, four parties in the Congress have published their agendas: <http://www.civio.es/2015/02/cuatro-partidos-publican-ya-las-agendas-completas-de-trabajo-y-reuniones-de-todos-sus-diputados/>

The project has been replicated by the Polish civic organization Media 3.0 Foundation (<http://media30.pl/>) to map the Congress in Poland: <http://ktozadzi.pl>

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Civio Citizen Foundation is looking for new partners abroad to test and help replicate this method.
- New content on the elections and new technical functionalities will be introduced.
- Work is in progress to develop <http://onodo.org/en> – software needed to run, fork and replicate Quienmanda. es in any context: mapping relations on science, social movements, education, design-thinking. This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research and technological development.

RESOURCES

The project is currently run part-time by one developer and two journalists.

Funds: the project relies on in-house resources. In addition to that \$10 000 awarded by 1,2,3,Testing Fund, an innovation contest by Global Integrity <http://innovation.globalintegrity.org/who-rules/> . Also €12.860 were collected via a crowdfunding campaign <https://goteo.org/project/quien-manda> The project was supported by 307 people via Drip..

CONTACT DETAILS

Citizen Civio Foundation, contacto@civio.es

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Creating and promoting a database on the connections between lobbyists and decision-makers.

Organizing advocacy campaigns for more transparency regarding lobbying transparency.

Tunisia: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens

Tunisia: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens

COUNTRY/REGION

Tunisia

SUMMARY

A Tunisian civil society organisation Al Bawsala hosts a successful parliamentary monitoring and communication platform Marsad.tn

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Al Bawsala

CONTEXT

The work of the Tunisian parliament takes place very much in secret: the votes, transcripts and agendas are not published. There is also a lack of a tradition of parliamentary responsiveness.

BEST PRACTICE

- Al Bawsala has offered every Tunisian the possibility to ask Members of Parliament questions on its parliamentary monitoring website www.marsad.tn.
- The Marsad.tn managed to assemble a strong team to make the website successful and it did not need to rely on volunteer effort: the founders of Marsad.tn are well known among Tunisian decision-makers and the development team was comprised of paid professionals.
- The Marsad.tn was modelled upon a very successful website in Germany – having Germany's Parliament Watch as a partner allowed the Tunisian team both to develop a well-functioning website and to gain legitimacy in the eyes of Tunisian decision-makers.

- The Marsad.tn is closely integrated with Al Bawsala's other projects and advocacy activities – especially, its advocacy for more transparency in the Tunisian government and parliament.

CHALLENGES

Access to internet is still a challenge in Tunisia.

IMPACT

Almost all the Tunisian MPs use Marsad.tn to answer questions.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Al Bawsala will organize more public campaigns to encourage more Tunisians to use the website.

- Al Bawsala will continue its advocacy for more openness in parliamentary work – so that the parliament publishes all the information that is needed by its citizens on its own.

RESOURCES

The costs of developing and running the website are funded predominantly via grant funding.

CONTACT DETAILS

amira.yahyaoui@albawsala.com

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Encouraging parliamentary responsiveness in a politically challenging environment.

Creating highly successful platforms for citizen communication with Members of Parliament.

United Kingdom: An Alliance of Civil Society Organisations to Promote Lobbying Transparency

United Kingdom: An Alliance of Civil Society Organisations to Promote Lobbying Transparency

COUNTRY/REGION

United Kingdom

SUMMARY

An alliance of organisations to promote lobbying transparency in United Kingdom.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2007

End: Ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

The central organisation is the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency. The alliance is coordinated by SpinWatch. Additionally there are around 12 other organisations involved in the alliance.

CONTEXT

There are several organisations in the UK that are advocating for lobbying transparency. In 2007 they formed the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency to have a common spokesperson. Every time there is a lobbying-related scandal in the UK the media refer to this spokesperson. The Alliance coordinates the activities of its members regarding advocacy campaigns to improve lobbying transparency.

BEST PRACTICE

- There are substantial benefits regarding the structure of the organisation. On the one hand, it provides one point of contact for media/Alliance members. On the other, it can involve its member organisations in common activities (thus speaking not with one voice, but as many organisations simultaneously).
- The member organisations contribute their own, very specific experience regarding contacts with business lobbyists (for example, Greenpeace has a direct experience in dealing with the aviation and nuclear lobbies) that is useful for Members of Parliament when they are working on lobbying regulation. Additionally, the member organisations have diverse skills that are useful when coordinating common campaigns.

CHALLENGES

It is hard to sustain the interest of a network of civil society organisations during times when there are limited political opportunities, or lobbying-related scandals in the press.

IMPACT

The idea of the Lobbyist Register is accepted as a necessity; this wasn't the case before the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency was formed. Alliance has helped to make the case and familiarize the idea.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Alliance will wait for the best moment in order to continue to press for more lobbying transparency. It is clear that existing regulation is so deeply flawed that it will sooner or later be rewritten, and it is important to push for and prepare for this moment.

RESOURCES

The Alliance for Lobbying Transparency is coordinated by SpinWatch with a grant from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, through its Power and Responsibility programme. The Alliance also receives support and resources from a few coalition members.

CONTACT DETAILS

SpinWatch, Tamasin Cave, +44 (0)7973 424 015

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Best ways to coordinate the division of responsibilities between members of a civil society network;
- Organizing advocacy campaigns for lobbying transparency especially in the context of a hostile or uninterested political environment;
- Becoming a trusted source of information for media.

United Kingdom: An Encyclopaedia on Powerful Individuals and Companies

United Kingdom: An Encyclopaedia on Powerful Individuals and Companies

COUNTRY/REGION

United Kingdom

SUMMARY

Powerbase.info is a wiki-based data repository for monitoring powerful companies and networks that shape British public debate and the political agenda. It has a separate category on lobbying.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2009

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Public Interest Investigations

CONTEXT

United Kingdom has the world's second biggest PR and lobby industry. It is impossible even for an expert to know all the major players in the British lobbying scene – therefore, quality data repositories are essential

BEST PRACTICE

- PowerBase is a free of charge online encyclopaedia on who-is-who in British politics and business and on power networks.
- PowerBase's articles are covered by Creative Commons Attribution.
- PowerBase is being written collaboratively online – it is divided into separate collections of articles on particular topics. Each portal is overseen by at least one editor. For example, there is a webpage with very extensive information on lobbying reform http://powerbase.info/index.php/Lobbying_regulation_-_chronology_2010-2019
- PowerBase contains a variety of in-depth articles on the British lobby scene.

CHALLENGES

PowerBase is a large data repository that requires a lot of effort in order to produce quality articles.

IMPACT

As of the beginning of 2015 there are 16,498 articles in the PowerBase that serve as a resource for activists, journalists and regular citizens. PowerBase investigations have been widely covered by British media.

WHAT'S NEXT?

PowerBase will continue to be updated with new content.

RESOURCES

Organisations and activists that are willing to invest their time and effort into updating PowerBase either need to attract some funding or be willing to be volunteers.

CONTACT DETAILS

Melissa.Jones@powerbase.info

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Logistics for creating gigantic data-repositories with investigative content.
- Crowdsourcing quality content on public-interest related issues (including lobbying).

United Kingdom: Freedom of Information Requests

United Kingdom: Freedom of Information Requests

COUNTRY/REGION

United Kingdom

SUMMARY

WhatDoTheyKnow <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com> helps citizens to access information about public institutions in the United Kingdom

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2008

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

UK Citizens Online Democracy

CONTEXT

United Kingdom has a solid Freedom of Information law – the state institutions are required to respond to freedom of information requests.

BEST PRACTICE

- WhatDoTheyKnow has become central to freedom of information requests in the UK (see the impact section).
- WhatDoTheyKnow uses crowdsourcing to categorize various requests into those requests that have received an answer and those requests that have not. There's a game that has been developed for this purpose <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/categorise/play>
- WhatDoTheyKnow has a lively twitter feed and a blog.
- WhatDoTheyKnow provides an extensive guidance on using the website <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/help>
- The Alaveteli software that was developed for WhatDoTheyKnow is now used in 19 countries across the world.

CHALLENGES

WhatDoTheyKnow relies heavily on volunteer effort

IMPACT

- Around 15-20% of all freedom of information requests to UK Central Government are sent through WhatDoTheyKnow.
- At the beginning of 2015, the website attracted 400 000 monthly visitors.
- By the beginning of 2015, already 250 000 freedom of information requests were sent via this website.
- The requests were sent to more than 16 000 public authorities;
- The website has received several awards and the information released through this website has contributed to various news stories.

WHAT'S NEXT?

WhatDoTheyKnow will keep being developed.

RESOURCES

UK Citizens Online Democracy has received several grants for development of Alaveteli software (that underlies WhatDoTheyKnow) and for introducing it in various countries
<https://www.mysociety.org/about/funding/>

CONTACT DETAILS

team@whatdotheyknow.com

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Opening up government and encouraging better citizen engagement via open access to public information requests.
- Working with volunteers.

United Kingdom: Lobbying Transparency Campaign

United Kingdom: Lobbying Transparency Campaign

COUNTRY/REGION

United Kingdom

SUMMARY

An extensive online/offline campaign to achieve a better lobbyist registration system in the UK.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2013

End: 2014

CSOS INVOLVED

Unlock Democracy, SpinWatch

CONTEXT

There have been several scandals in the UK involving politicians and lobbyists. As a response to one such scandal the government published a consultation document on lobbying transparency. Unlock Democracy was one of the organisations that in 2013-2014 fought for greater lobbying transparency – especially, in regards to introducing a good system of lobbyist registration. Together with SpinWatch they organized meetings with civil service representatives, opposition politicians and were invited to meetings by the government on the upcoming bill. In addition to that, they mobilized their supporters to write to their MP's. There was a lot of social media work, infographics.

BEST PRACTICE

- A very active and well-organized campaign involving online and offline elements.
- For governmental consultation the initiative convinced their supporters to submit their views to the government (around 1300 submitted their e-mail via Unlock Democracy webpage).
- The petition for improved lobbying transparency was signed by 74 000 supporters.
- They managed to convince the opposition to support a stricter regulation (drafted by Unlock Democracy and SpinWatch).

CHALLENGES

The bill that was proposed and eventually adopted by the government was challenging for advocacy campaigns as it contained several types of proposals. Civil society organisations were very interested in stopping some of those proposals from coming into force, and didn't pay much attention to the part that dealt with lobbyist registration. That's why the government could adopt a very weak regulation on lobbyists.

IMPACT

There was no impact of the initiative on the wording of the document, but, nevertheless, it was important to organize the campaign. If not for the campaign, there wouldn't have been a discussion on having a better lobbying regulation, no public record of predicted problems, people would be less aware about the issue.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Unlock Democracy is not actively campaigning on lobbying transparency at the moment. Instead, together with SpinWatch, they are working to introduce a website that would be similar to USA's Open Secrets that would expose the links between politicians and lobbyists.

RESOURCES

Expenses to cover the costs of the staff involved in the advocacy campaign.

CONTACT DETAILS

Unlock Democracy, Alexandra.Runswick@unlockdemocracy.org.uk

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Organizing advocacy campaigns to increase the transparency of lobbying: working with Members of Parliament, media, e-petitioning campaigns, public letters.

United Kingdom: Reporting on Lobbying Networks

United Kingdom: Reporting on Lobbying Networks

COUNTRY/REGION

United Kingdom

SUMMARY

SpinWatch.org provides public interest reporting on PR, lobbying and power networks.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2005

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Public Interest Investigations

CONTEXT

United Kingdom has the world's second biggest PR and lobby industry. Public interest reporting is essential to make sense of who is trying to influence British policy.

BEST PRACTICE

- SpinWatch continues producing topical articles on lobbying transparency and integrity. For example, prior to the 2015 general elections SpinWatch published an article on British political parties' positions on lobbying transparency. In 2014 it produced an analysis of a case of revolving door activity when a top civil servant became an executive of an alcohol company.
- SpinWatch articles on lobbying usually have quality infographics (for example, on Westminster's fracking lobby).
- SpinWatch has a substantial number of followers on social networks.
- SpinWatch has been an essential part of civil society campaign on lobbying transparency in the UK.

CHALLENGES

Finding a sustainable financing model has been a challenge. SpinWatch is run by volunteers and part-time freelancers.

The political environment in the UK has been unwelcoming to an idea of a mandatory lobby register.

IMPACT

In collaboration with other civil society organisations SpinWatch has been successful in raising awareness on the necessity of mandatory lobbying regulation in the UK.

WHAT'S NEXT?

SpinWatch will continue to produce quality reporting including on lobbying-related issues.

RESOURCES

Spinwatch and Powerbase.info are funded by grant funding, donations, royalties and proceeds from book sales <http://www.spinwatch.org/index.php/about/funding>

CONTACT DETAILS

SpinWatch, Tamasin Cave, +44 (0)7973 424 015

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Producing quality articles and infographics on lobbying transparency and lobbying integrity.
- Organizing advocacy campaigns for better lobbying disclosure.

United States: Exposing Dominance of Lobbying Groups

United States: Exposing Dominance of Lobbying Groups

COUNTRY/REGION

United States

SUMMARY

A series of articles produced by Sunlight Foundation's journalists on the dominance of certain lobbying groups in the political debate in the US.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2006

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Sunlight Foundation

CONTEXT

The United States has the world's largest lobbying scene. But in some policy areas it is highly uneven: some lobby groups have substantially larger resources to make their views known to the decision-makers and to the broader public.

BEST PRACTICE

Sunlight Foundation writes its own investigative articles. Among recent articles on dominance of some lobby groups:

- An article that exposes the dominance of cable and telecom lobbyists on the net neutrality debate. The anti-neutrality lobby had outspent the pro-neutrality lobby by a 5 to 1 margin.
- An article on the food industry's influence on US policy (including on the issue of food safety).
- An article on early lobbying started by the pharmaceutical industry on the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Investigative articles by the Sunlight Foundation usually include detailed methodology sections and infographics.

CHALLENGES

US data on the lobbying industry is not always reliable.

IMPACT

Over the years Sunlight Foundation has written investigative articles on the dominance of some lobby groups. Its public data repositories (such as Influence Explorer) have facilitated the investigation of similar cases by other civil society activists and media.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Sunlight Foundation's journalists will continue to analyse the dominance of certain lobbying groups.

RESOURCES

Sunlight Foundation's investigative articles and infographics are funded by Sunlight Foundation's own resources that are mostly based on grants and donations <https://sunlightfoundation.com/about/funding/>

CONTACT DETAILS

Sunlight Foundation Contact form <http://sunlightfoundation.com/contact/>

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Producing evidence-based investigative articles and infographics on the dominance of some lobbying groups.

United States: Exposing Problematic Revolving-Door Activity

United States: Exposing Problematic Revolving-Door Activity

COUNTRY/REGION

United States

SUMMARY

The Sunlight Foundation has produced a number of investigative articles that expose cases of revolving-door activity in US.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2006

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Sunlight Foundation

CONTEXT

Sometimes former public officials take up jobs in lobbying industries and vice versa. Such revolving-door cases create a potential for conflicts of interest – and the general public is not always aware of these.

BEST PRACTICE

The Sunlight Foundation writes its own investigative articles, for example, on the earnings in the lobby industry of former staff employees of US Congressmen. Such articles usually include detailed methodology sections and downloadable data-sets.

CHALLENGES

The Sunlight Foundation writes its own investigative articles, for example, on the earnings in the lobby industry of former staff employees of US Congressmen. Such articles usually include detailed methodology sections and downloadable data-sets.

IMPACT

Over the years Sunlight Foundation has written investigative articles on revolving-door cases. Its public data repositories (such as Influence Explorer) have facilitated the investigation of similar cases by other civil society activists and media.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Sunlight Foundation's journalists will continue to analyse revolving-door cases.

RESOURCES

Sunlight Foundation's investigative articles and infographics are funded by Sunlight Foundation's own resources that are mostly based on grants and donations <https://sunlightfoundation.com/about/funding/>

CONTACT DETAILS

Sunlight Foundation Contact form <http://sunlightfoundation.com/contact/>

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Producing evidence-based investigative articles on revolving door cases.

United States: Foreign Influence Explorer

United States: Foreign Influence Explorer

COUNTRY/REGION

United States

SUMMARY

An online tool <http://foreign.influenceexplorer.com/> that allows one to explore how foreign entities (companies, governments) influence the US government via lobbying

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2007

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Sunlight Foundation

CONTEXT

The United States has stringent statutory reporting requirements for foreign public and private sector organisations that try to influence US policy. The disclosure reports are published in an inconvenient format (such as PDF files) that needs additional work to be user-friendly.

BEST PRACTICE

- Foreign Influence Explorer is a database that is housed within Sunlight Foundation's Influence Explorer – so their functionalities are similar and integrated.
- Foreign Influence Explorer built upon lessons learned from an experience with a similar tool that was launched in 2007 – it was deliberately developed to be more user-friendly and included additional functionality for analysing data.
- The Sunlight Foundation has written tutorials and organized webinars to explain the functionality of this new tool.
- The Sunlight Foundation has used the Foreign Influence Explorer to produce quality investigative articles – for example, an article on the biggest foreign spenders on lobbying and on the influence of Saudi money on US politics.
- Tools created by Sunlight Foundation are open source and available at no cost.

CHALLENGES

When Foreign Influence Explorer was launched in 2014, it didn't include all the historic data: this data was added incrementally.

Foreign Influence Explorer's data are derived from public information sources and there is no guarantee that the data is absolutely accurate. The lobbying disclosure forms are of notoriously poor quality. The Sunlight Foundation has deliberately privileged the value of real-time data updates over a more thorough cleansing of the incoming data.

IMPACT

Both Sunlight Foundation and US journalists use Foreign Influence Explorer to produce their investigative articles

WHAT'S NEXT?

Foreign Influence Explorer will continue to get upgrades and new functionalities.

RESOURCES

Foreign Influence Explorer has been created and is being upgraded via Sunlight Foundation's own resources that are mostly based on grants and donations <https://sunlightfoundation.com/about/funding/>

CONTACT DETAILS

Sunlight Foundation Contact form <http://sunlightfoundation.com/contact/>

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Tracing the influence of foreign spending (including on lobbying) on politics.
- Building high-quality data repositories and developing their functionality.

United States: Influence Explorer

United States: Influence Explorer

COUNTRY/REGION

United States

SUMMARY

An online tool <http://influenceexplorer.com/> that allows one to track the influence of money spent on politics via campaign contributions or lobbying.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2006

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Sunlight Foundation

CONTEXT

United States has relatively strict rules on disclosure of campaign contributions and lobbying expenses. But some of the most important information that is being disclosed is being published in inconvenient formats (such as PDF files) that need additional work to be user-friendly.

BEST PRACTICE

- This is a project of Sunlight Labs, the technology arm of Sunlight Foundation, which has also been involved in creating other online tools – that’s why the know-how acquired from creating this project could also be used to add value to other parts of Sunlight Foundation’s work. The staff involved in creating these online tools are data scientists and IT experts.
- Tools created by Sunlight Foundation are open source and available at no cost.
- Influence Explorer now has a highly valuable section on ‘fixed fortunes’ – Sunlight Foundation’s datasets and analysis proves that larger spending on election contributions and on lobbying is associated with higher business returns.
- Sunlight Foundation uses Influence Explorer data to produce analysis on US politics – for example, it has ascertained

that between 2007 and 2012 20 of the most active companies spent 5.8 billion dollars to influence US policy and then got 4,4 trillion dollars in return in the form of contracts, subsidies, grants and loans.

- Sunlight Foundation’s investigative articles are almost always accompanied by quality infographics, they include a methodology section and the dataset that is being analysed.

CHALLENGES

Influence Explorer’s data are derived from public information sources and there is no guarantee that the data is absolutely accurate. The lobbying disclosure forms are of notoriously poor quality. Sunlight Foundation has deliberately privileged the value of real-time data updates over a more thorough cleansing of the incoming data.

IMPACT

There are a number of lobbying-related stories that both Sunlight Foundation and US journalists have produced by using the Influence Explorer.

WHAT’S NEXT?

Influence Explorer will continue to get upgrades and new functionalities.

RESOURCES

Influence Explorer has been created and is being upgraded via Sunlight Foundation’s own resources that are mostly based on grants and donations <https://sunlightfoundation.com/about/funding/>

CONTACT DETAILS

Sunlight Foundation Contact form <http://sunlightfoundation.com/contact/>

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Tracing the influence of corporate money (Campaign contributions, lobbying) on politics.
- Building high-quality data repositories and developing their functionality.

United States: Investigative Report on Lobbying by the Center for Public Integrity

United States: Investigative Report on Lobbying by the Center for Public Integrity

COUNTRY/REGION

United States

SUMMARY

Investigative articles on the US lobbying scene by a non-profit investigative news organization

TIMEFRAME

Start: 1989

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Center for Public Integrity

CONTEXT

The United States has the world's largest lobbying scene. In some policy areas it is highly uneven: some lobby groups have substantially larger resources to make their views known to the decision-makers and to the broader public. Sometimes they combine lobbying activities with monetary contributions for election campaigns.

BEST PRACTICE

- The Center for Public Integrity produces quality investigative articles on corruption, abuses of power and betrayal of public trust by powerful institutions and organizations. The Center has been awarded more than 50 major journalism awards. It also hosts an award-winning website.
- Over the years the Center for Public Integrity has published a number of articles on lobbying: for example, exposing top contributors for election campaigns or attempts to influence health reform. In 2005 it started to publish its first reports on LobbyWatch.

CHALLENGES

Center for Public Integrity has deliberately chosen to publish investigative articles, but not to engage in any advocacy work.

IMPACT

The quality of the investigative articles published by the Center for Public Integrity has been recognized by a number of professional associations.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Center for Public Integrity will continue to produce investigative articles, including on lobbying transparency and integrity related issues.

RESOURCES

Center for Public Integrity's investigative articles and infographics are funded by its own resources that are mostly based on grants and donations and are published online: <http://www.publicintegrity.org/about/our-work/supportersteps://sunlightfoundation.com/about/funding/>

CONTACT DETAILS

The Center for Public Integrity: wgray@publicintegrity.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Producing high-quality investigative articles and report on lobbyist activity

United States: Investigative Reporting on Lobbying by the Center for Responsive Politics

United States: Investigative Reporting on Lobbying by the Center for Responsive Politics

COUNTRY/REGION

United States

SUMMARY

The Center for Responsive Politics publishes investigative studies and analyses trends related to the US lobby scene.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 1996

End: Ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Center for Responsive Politics

CONTEXT

The United States has the world's largest lobby scene. According to statutory requirements, lobbying expenses need to be disclosed. Yet it cannot be expected that a regular citizen would make sense of this data on his or her own. That's why quality investigative reporting and research studies are important.

BEST PRACTICE

- Over the years a number of high quality articles on lobbying have been published on OpenSecrets.org webpage. For example, an article published in 2015 explored the reasons for a year-long decline in lobbying spending in the US. Each investigative article is very clear on its methodology and, if data has been used, the dataset is published. Infographics are widely used in order to make the main points of the analysis clear.
- OpenSecrets team has produced a variety of educational materials on money and politics, including on lobbying. For example, OpenSecrets.org website has an educational resource on 10 things that are usually not known about money in politics <https://www.opensecrets.org/resources/10things/> and a timeline on Lobbying history in the US https://www.opensecrets.org/resources/learn/lobbying_timeline.php

CHALLENGES

US disclosure reports are still being published in inconvenient formats, that's why making the raw data clean, consistent and accurate takes a lot of work.

IMPACT

OpenSecrets investigations have achieved major coverage in international and US media – such as CNN, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today. OpenSecrets experts are asked to comment on news stories related to money and politics.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Center for Responsive Politics is constantly adding new functionality and quality content to its website OpenSecrets.org

RESOURCES

OpenSecrets.org is being financed primarily via donations and grants. They are published online <https://www.opensecrets.org/about/funders.php>

CONTACT DETAILS

Center for Responsive Politics press@crp.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Producing quality studies on lobbying transparency and integrity

United States: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens

United States: Communication Platform for Elected Officials and Citizens

COUNTRY/REGION

United States

SUMMARY

A parliamentary monitoring website on the US Congress that empowers more US citizens to interact with their parliament
<https://www.opencongress.org>

TIMEFRAME

Start: 2007

End: ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Sunlight Foundation, Participatory Politics Foundation (originally launched the website)

CONTEXT

Even though there is a lot of information on the US Congress that is theoretically available to the general public, the website of the US Congress does not include a user-friendly functionality to analyse such data. That's why in 2007 the civil society organisation Participatory Politics Foundation launched OpenCongress <https://www.opencongress.org>

BEST PRACTICE

- OpenCongress not only allows one to follow the legislative process in the US Senate and House of Representatives, but it also allows engaged citizens to send a message to their representatives and interact among themselves around a certain location or an issue.
- OpenCongress is a free and open source website.
- OpenCongress updates its information daily.
- The Sunlight Foundation constantly adds new features to OpenCongress;.
- The Sunlight Foundation both educates the users of OpenCongress via webinars and asks for their feedback on priority functionalities.

CHALLENGES

OpenCongress relies on the quality of data that are obtained from other institutions.

IMPACT

OpenCongress is being used by millions and over the years it has become the leading source for legislative information in the US.

There are hundreds of discussion groups created by the users of OpenCongress.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Sunlight Foundation has committed itself to building upon the existing functionality.

RESOURCES

OpenCongress is being sustained and upgraded via the Sunlight Foundation's own resources that are mostly based on grants and donations <https://sunlightfoundation.com/about/funding/>

CONTACT DETAILS

Open Congress opencongress@sunlightfoundation.com

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

Building sufficient functionality for a leading parliamentary monitoring website;

Logistics for a leading parliamentary monitoring website.

United States: Producing Quality Data on Lobbying

📁 Lobbying transparency 📁 Interactive tools 📁 Innovative methods
📁 Data repositories 📁 Studies/reports/investigations

United States: Producing Quality Data on Lobbying

COUNTRY/REGION

United States

SUMMARY

The Center for Responsive Politics processes, standardizes, codes and publishes data on federal lobbying, interest groups and cases of revolving door activity on the webpage OpenSecrets.org.

TIMEFRAME

Start: 1996

End: Ongoing

CSOS INVOLVED

Center for Responsive Politics

CONTEXT

Even though statutory regulation in the United States requires lobbying disclosure, the disclosure reports are published in inconvenient formats – the raw data is hard to analyse and compare.

BEST PRACTICE

- The Center for Responsive Politics validates, standardizes and codes the raw data from disclosure reports – it has more than 20 databases, including on lobbying and cases of revolving door.
- The Center for Responsive Politics in its website publishes blog posts, studies and event descriptions that allow the data to be contextualized.

CHALLENGES

US disclosure reports are still being published in inconvenient formats, that's why making the raw data clean, consistent and accurate takes a lot of work.

IMPACT

- OpenSecrets.org has several million yearly visitors.
- OpenSecrets.org has collected multiple testimonials from top journalists and media outlets who use OpenSecret's databases for their own investigative articles on lobbying.
- OpenSecret.org databases are used by academic researchers to produce in-depth research on lobbying and revolving door. Such 'external' research is also being placed online <https://www.opensecrets.org/resources/learn/academic.php?type=lb>
- OpenSecrets.org has won multiple prestigious awards.

WHAT'S NEXT?

OpenSecrets.org functionality is being constantly improved in order to allow for ever deeper analysis on the influence of money on politics.

RESOURCES

OpenSecrets.org is being financed primarily via donations and grants. They are published online <https://www.opensecrets.org/about/funders.php>

CONTACT DETAILS

Center for Responsive Politics press@crp.org

ADVICE FOR OTHER CSOS

- Producing quality data on lobbying.
- Providing the online functionality for analysing data on lobbying.



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