



G-10 POSITION ON LOBBYING IN THE EU

22 February 2006

A large number of professional lobbyists aim to influence the EU decision-making process. The environmental organisations brought together in the Green 10 agree:

- Lobbying, in the sense of approaching public decision-makers on behalf of a constituency in order to present opinions and proposals to inform decisions, is an important aspect of the work of environmental organisations.
- Lobbying by public interest organisations, including environmental organisations, aims to ensure that public authorities are better informed when making decisions that affect public goods.
- Lobbying by business interests is also a part of the democratic process. It is useful for decision-makers to know what economic actors think about policies that affect them directly.
- However, lobbying by business interests can work against democratic decision-making when it is not transparent and when business is given undue weight and privileged access to decision-makers.

Recommendations:

1. Every person and entity in the EU (as well as affected person/entity from outside) should have the right to approach Members of the European Parliament, the European Commission, and Members of the Council to present information relevant to EU policy-making.
2. Legitimate and transparent lobbying can be beneficial to democratic decision making. To ensure transparency and legitimacy of lobbying, it should be regulated appropriately.
3. Transparency about the background of a lobbyist is essential. The EU Institutions should set up a common system of registration for lobbyists and the organisations that pay them. The organisations of the Green 10 would be ready to participate in such a register.
4. The European Commission should have a Code of Conduct that governs its relations with lobbyists. This should ensure that Commission proposals are not biased due to unacceptable forms of lobbying.
5. The Code of Conduct should at least address:
 - issues related to the outside employment of current and former Commission staff, including 'cooling off' periods for such employment, and
 - the requirement that each policy proposal shall include, in its Explanatory Memorandum, a clear description of the organisations that the Commission has been in contact with during the preparation of the proposal, and the nature and substance of the contacts. Where the number of contacts would make it difficult to describe this in full detail in the Memorandum, a link with a more detailed report should be included.
6. The Commission has a special obligation to ensure that, in its consultations with stakeholders, private interests do not outweigh public interests. It is important that the Commission objectively assesses all representations in a way that recognises the inherent imbalances of commercial versus public interest groups in terms of size and financial strength.

The organisations of the Green 10 are committed to transparency. We urge the European Commission to pursue our recommendations in order to increase accountability and public trust in EU decision-making.