



What is lobbying, and how is it regulated?

Lobbying is a transparent and legitimate method of influencing legislation or administrative rules and regulations. Interest representatives seek influence over regulatory or funding environment, in exchange for information and expertise. Democratic institutions need this expert information from interest groups, and in turn, interest groups gain voice through this dialogue.

Lobbying profession is an integral part of any democratic society. Only in a free and democratic society, where there is a free competition of interests, lobbying profession can thrive and develop. Finally, the essence of lobbying is an important aspect of a fundamental human right - freedom of speech.

In a regulatory map that is still evolving, some countries and entities have regulated lobbying activity by different Rules of procedure, Codes of conduct or access registers (European parliament, European Commission, France, UK, etc.), while others have regulated this area by wider ranging laws (US, Canada, Israel, Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, Germany, some regions in Italy, etc.), or have pending legislation (Croatia, Montenegro, etc). Main differentiating characteristics of these regulations pertain to: individual registration rules, recognition of executive branch lobbyists, rules on spending disclosure, cooling-off or revolving door provisions, etc. In the countries with recent history of weak institutions or undemocratic political environments, existence of informal and non-transparent avenues for exerting influence on governments makes the introduction of legal framework for lobbying that more topical. In that sense, well regulated lobbying arena, with formal rules and procedures enforced by law, is a key to transparency and fight against corruption.

Lobbying in Serbia

Inspired by the European Transparency Initiative, as well as by the European Commission lobbying register and the accompanying code of conduct, while also taking into account the National Strategy for Combating Corruption in Serbia from 2005, which envisages adoption of the Law on Lobbying, a group of distinguished professionals founded Serbian Lobbyists Association (SLA) in January, 2009. From the beginning, SLA has received key help and support from a wide array of relevant professional organizations and Government bodies, led by the Ministry of commerce. While employing a rigorous member selection and approval processes, SLA has built a large and still expanding membership base, recruited from the business, academia, legal, and media fields. SLA is nonpartisan, and has been fully self-financed from the beginning. Crowning accomplishment at the end of the initial formative period for SLA will be the introduction of the Law on lobbying in the parliamentary procedure, to be followed shortly thereafter by formation of the Serbian Chamber of Lobbyists.





SLA Mission Statement:

SLA is a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization dedicated to promotion of the profession of lobbying and education of all stakeholders involved in lobbying activities in Serbia. These goals will be pursued while promoting and maintaining the highest standards of conduct and transparency in the profession of lobbying, enabled by the relevant legislation.

Promotion of the profession of lobbying

SLA aims to educate and inform two key constituencies: the wider public-about the goals, standards and activities of the lobbying profession, and the lobbying practitioners-about the necessary skills and standards, both adopted and emerging, in their chosen field.

Strategic objectives:

- Promotion and implementation of the highest ethical standards and transparency in the lobbying profession.
- Aiding the legislative and administrative processes pertaining to the emerging lobbying regulatory structure by providing topical expertise and by giving a qualified voice to the interested stakeholders.
- Aiding and accelerating the process of Serbia's EU ascension.

Selected activities:

- Organizing clubs, seminars, conferences and round tables relevant to the practice of lobbying.
- Educating and informing both the general public and identified stakeholders on progress and landmark events related to the practice of lobbying in Serbia.
- Establishing and maintaining close relationship with similar associations and organizations abroad, as well as with the Serbian diaspora.
- Taking the lead role in:
 - a) drafting and public discussion processes pertaining to the legislative framework regulating lobbying activities,
 - b) establishment and registration of the Serbian Chamber of Lobbyists,
 - c) defining and implementing educational and certification guidelines and requirements for the Serbian Chamber of lobbyists,
 - d) establishment of the national lobbyists register, lobbyists code of conduct, etc.



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