

The IRU's response to the European Transparency Initiative (ETI)

TRANSPARENCY AND INTEREST REPRESENTATION (LOBBYING)

The IRU:

The IRU, through its national associations, represents the entire road transport industry world-wide. It speaks for the operators of coaches, taxis and trucks, from large transport fleets to driver-owners. In all international bodies that make decisions affecting road transport, the IRU acts as the industry's advocate. By working for the highest professional standards, the IRU improves the safety record and environmental performance of road transport and ensures the mobility of people and goods. Among its practical services to the industry, the IRU is international guarantor of the TIR carnet system under which trucks are sealed by customs upon departure and can cross several borders without further checks until they reach their destinations.

Given the volume and complexity of issues relating to road transport dealt with by the EU, the IRU established a Permanent Delegation to the EU in Brussels in 1973. Since then, it has been a significant player in the process of building a European legal framework for road transport.

The three main objectives of the the IRU's EU Delegation are:

- To serve the interests of the road transport sector in the EU
- To ensure EU legislation allows efficient road transport and fair competition
- To ensure EU policy initiatives reflect the interests and concerns of the road transport sector

General comments:

The IRU welcomes the Commission's recognition of the vital role that lobbying plays in a democratic and transparent European Union. The lobbying process clearly enhances the democratic process, since lobby organisations can provide expert facts and advice on their own specialised fields to all parts of the decision-making process. This improves the overall effectiveness of the governance process.

The 5 principles of good governance (openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence), as described in the White Paper on Governance, can all be enhanced by a well-regulated lobbying process. The IRU therefore supports a clear and open lobbying system with voluntary registration of lobbyists who are obliged to adhere to a code of conduct.

Responses to questions in this section of the ETI:

1./ Do you agree that efforts should be made to bring greater transparency to lobbying?

The lobbyists who have credibility in the eyes of those who need information and guidance on sometimes sensitive issues, are those who openly give advice based on factual information originating from respected research bodies. The IRU therefore wholeheartedly supports an open and transparent system of lobbying. It is clear that the lobbyists who are the most effective in communicating with decision-makers are those who are viewed with the highest regard and who therefore maintain their integrity throughout all contacts and discussions. Decision-makers can trust that the advice given is correct and that it is passed on in good faith.

2./ Do you agree that lobbyists who wish to be automatically alerted to consultations by the EU institutions should register and provide information, including on their objectives, financial situation and on the interests they represent? Do you agree that this information should be available to the general public? Who do you think should manage the register?

A web-based voluntary registration system for all lobbyists who wish to be consulted on EU initiatives is a very transparent way of giving access to this information. The IRU is always open about the interests it represents and the members it serves, so the IRU fully supports and endorses such a system.

We would suggest that all organisations included in this registration be requested to provide their website addresses. This gives further incentives to organisations to be part of the register as this can also be used to publicise their cause. The IRU would be pleased to provide details of its website address to enable any interested parties to look further into the work of our organisation.

Regarding making available the financial situation of the organisation, providing basic details of the company's status e.g. asbl (association sans but lucrative) should present no problem since this information is readily available.

The information on the register must be available to the general public, not just the lobbyists themselves and the EU institutions. After all, transparency is about taking into account this principle on all levels in order to make it effective. Giving easy access to such information by civil society is the enabler which enhances participation in decision-making, and thereby increases the quality and effectiveness of the decisions taken.

The register should be managed by the EU institutions since these institutions are at the heart of the lobbying process. Every citizen of the EU benefits from this open and transparent system of lobbying which adds value to the decision-making process, so as a consequence, the EU Institutions should pay for and run the register. It is however important that registration does not exclude any participants of civil society, such as individual citizens, from making representations to decision-makers. Registration must therefore be a quick and easy process if it is to work effectively.

3/ Do you agree to consolidating the existing codes of conduct with a set of common minimum requirements? Who do you think should write the code?

A coherent and clearly understood code of conduct already exists at the European Parliament. The many lobbyists already accredited adhere to this code and their names

are posted on a public part of the European Parliament's website. Credible lobbyists will want to be registered on the main system that will be created following this consultation. These lobbyists will usually already be registered at the European Parliament, so it may quite simply be necessary to expand the current European Parliament system, to add certain minimum requirements to the code of conduct if necessary, and request more details about the lobbyists themselves.

4/ Do you agree that a new, inclusive external watchdog is needed to monitor compliance and that sanctions should be applied for any breach of the code?

A watchdog is necessary in order to monitor compliance and to deal with complaints. A "Lobbying Ombudsman" could be created, the office of which would consist of a legal team with powers of sanction. This should be an independent body based within the EU Institutions, paid for as part of the public EU Institutions which represent all of our interests.