

---

# BRUSSELS AND THE DANUBE REGION—THE NOTION OF LOBBYING

---

BRIGITTE KRECH

## **Preface: role-play**

During the DRC Summer School at the workshop on social divergence in the Danube Region, a role-play was organised among the participants of this workshop. The role-play aimed to show possible mechanisms of lobbying, such as the creation of networks and informal alliances of different key players. After a general introduction done by “Ms Europe Lobby Legrand”, the participants were actively involved and took over different roles in order to discuss and negotiate “how the DRC Summer School should be integrated into the EU Marie Curie Research Programme”. The role-play was “held” as a public hearing in the European Parliament with representatives of the European Commission, Members of the European Parliament, a non-governmental organisation in the research field, diplomats from Missions of the Western Balkan countries, media representatives as well as lobbyists in the audience. The criteria for the integration into the Marie Curie framework were discussed (the content of arguments involved young researchers, mobility, and international co-operation). During the hearing, a voice from the audience suddenly entered the playing field: a member of the “Iberian Scientists’ Association” urged the key-players to allocate more funding to the southern Mediterranean countries within the framework of EU Marie Curie Research Programmes and not to the Danube region; giving arguments such as the international importance of research institutes in Southern Europe for the EU and important links to Southern America, while offering the argument that sufficient funding had already been spent on the Danube region as well as additionally mentioning the Lisbon Agenda and the Bologna process. In conclusion, it was decided by the panel that more attention needed to be given to monitoring functions in the decision-making process, e.g. through observers.

**Brussels—the notion of lobbying—quest on the Danube region?**

The following essay will raise some aspects of lobbying. A link will be made to globalisation. European integration, transparency of EU institutions, and good governance are also related subjects. To this end, reference will be made to the Danube region.

We are living in a globalised world. Every citizen is affected by globalisation. There are many approaches towards globalisation, especially from an economic point of view, while the organisation of economic production has become more diverse, border and trade barriers are decreasing—or increasing. Barriers increase if one region is not part of an integrated entity<sup>1</sup>. Social, technical and communication networks are being created and established, while specific forms of political interaction have occurred. Before 1989 and during the transition period in CEE civil society played an important role in countries which are now member-states of the European Union. Some NGOs and pressure groups aim to act as watchdogs in order to decrease the negative effects of globalisation. Other political actors, lobbyists and interest groups are trying to influence political decision-making procedures.

If we leave our global view and we focus on a smaller level, let us enter the micro-cosmos of “star-ship Brussels”. What can be seen? An estimated 100,000 people are working within the EU environment in Brussels. Civil servants in the EU institutions and seconded civil servants from the member-states are working as national experts in the European Commission: Members of the European Parliament, assistants, lobbyists, NGO campaigners, regional representatives and diplomats. There are an estimated 100 events per day in Brussels: breakfast policy briefings of think tanks, working groups in the Council, committee meetings in the European Parliament, luncheons, conferences, public hearings, mini plenary sessions, receptions, informal network meetings... Brussels is considered the capital of European bureaucracy, where important political decision-making is made. Billions of Euro are distributed in EU programmes and EU funds. Furthermore, the implementation of regulations, directives, green papers, white papers, or communications has a socio-economic impact in the EU member-states as well as to non-members. There is also a search for

---

<sup>1</sup> For further aspects, see the essay on globalisation, information in the bibliography.

dialogue between EU institutions and civil society. The Directorate General Environment of the European Commission is organising the annual Green Week, where a dialogue takes place between the Commission, NGOs, and interested citizens.

### **What does lobbying mean?**

To give an example of the definition of lobbying: The internet encyclopaedia Wikipedia<sup>2</sup> defines lobbying as “the practice of private advocacy with the goal of influencing a governing body, in order to ensure that an individual’s or organisation’s point of view is represented in the government. A lobbyist is a person who is paid to influence legislation. Lobbying is in many countries a regulated activity, with limits placed on how it is conducted, in an attempt to prevent political corruption. ... Most major corporations and political interest groups do hire lobbyists to promote their interests. Think tanks aim to lobby, by means of regular releases of detailed reports and supporting research.” Furthermore (see Wikipedia) “A separate form of lobbying, called outside lobbying or grassroots lobbying, seeks to affect the legislature or other bodies indirectly, through changing public opinion”.

The European Parliament refers to accredited lobbyists as bodies, which can be private, public or non-governmental. These bodies can provide the European Parliament with expertise on economic, social, environmental, and scientific topics<sup>3</sup>. An associated code of conduct has been adopted. The lobbyists (name and organisation) are recorded in a public register, which is kept by the Quaestors and can be found on the official internet site of the European Parliament (bibliography in the annex).

Summing up, lobbying is dealing with information (gaining information on specific issues or disseminating information on specific topics or political decisions), interest-raising (raising awareness on e.g. the economic influence of a political decision), interaction (especially with decision-makers), and influence. The influence on a political decision relevant for the company or industry and represented by the lobby-group might be difficult to measure. Lobbying can

---

<sup>2</sup> See bibliography for further details.

<sup>3</sup> See bibliography for further details.

offer a path towards corruption; the line might be narrow and sometimes difficult to clarify.

As mentioned before, there are also other actors implicated in the political field in Brussels. Regional interest groups are involved in different activities. Regional interest groups (e.g. representing regional governmental bodies) are serving certain aims. Regional offices are informing their citizens or businesses of the respective region on important issues, they are informing local governmental bodies on legislative matters, and the offices are promoting their regions through events in Brussels.

### **A Case Scenario**

If the Danube region needs to be promoted in Brussels, what kind of activities may enrol? In the beginning, it needs to be assessed whether the Danube region (in our case, specifically the Danube Rectors' Conference) is already and adequately represented in Brussels. What kinds of organisations are representing the Danube region? In which field, e.g. economic or academic issues, is the Danube region represented? What kind of associations exist that deal with similar entities (and hence, lobbying activities)? What can be achieved in the mid-term and long-term? Who can help to build up contacts? And of course, how is the office going to be financed? These questions might arise, if representatives of the Danube region decide to establish tighter links in Brussels.

### **Conclusion**

“Blue sky with golden stars”—some thoughts on the current discussion on the future of the European Union

Over the past decades, the European Union, the blue sky with the golden stars, has brought peace, freedom, democracy, human rights, a common currency and diversity within unity to Europe.

Where will the European Union lead us to? What kind of vision exists? The political and economic situation in the European Union is analysed by experts, politicians and scholars. Is the EU in a crisis? The present situation comprises a variety of problems such as the failed Constitution, negotiating the EU budget, the high EU-25 unemployment rate., future borders of the Union (Turkey?),

the phasing out of subsidies of programmes in some member states as well as reforming the Common Agricultural Policy.

The European Union is the result of European integration. Is the European Union a child of globalisation? Are increasing lobbying activities a phenomenon of globalisation, while it seems to become more important and more common in our complex society that legislation is trying to be influenced by certain interest groups? While it seems to be very important to be a member of a relevant social or informal network in order to receive the information needed?

The European Union is a complex entity. However, we should not forget that the European Union is not just a theoretical body: the Union exists of its citizens, people with different backgrounds and native languages as well as common values, and probably common concerns: will I keep my job or is my workplace being sourced out to the (Far) East? How about stability in the Balkans? Where does the border of the European Union end? Will the last Schengen exit be Iran?

Other questions may arise...more questions concerning the flag with the blue sky and the golden stars...which seems to be behind a cloud of haze... Who rules Europe? What does my deputy in the European Parliament vote for? What (for instance) does qualified majority voting exactly mean? Who can provide information on the Common Agricultural Policy?

One can also consider that the current “crisis” in the European Union encompasses a lack of communication and understanding between its shareholders and stakeholders; between the bureaucratic headquarters, national governments, the civil society, and Europe’s citizenry. Something is missing. The European Union is about its citizens. Europe consists of an amazing and wonderful richness of customs and traditions in its population, a variety of languages, knowledge, and opportunities. The European Union is a political and economic entity, which—apparently—needs to be brought closer to the citizen. How are we to overcome the missing linkages between the centralised power in Brussels, and the population living far away, affected by the political decision-procedures? How is more transparency to be introduced into the decision-making process and to the role of lobbyists? What does good governance mean; how far is good governance implemented?

Let's try to provide some answers by asking more questions: how can we enhance general communication activities on European integration? Would it be advisable to e.g. introduce a new "Europe" subject at school? How could "Europe" be taught? The history of the European Union, the political procedures, the activities of different EU institutions, EU common policies, the interaction of the civil society, and the activities of lobbyists... What could be discussed? How far does the European Union influence the daily life of the local community, offering huge opportunities for school projects, role plays, and hence, a better and more transparent view of how the European Union works. Is it a way to involve more people in European activities in the future?

Coming back to Brussels, representatives of the civil society are actively present on the political parquet; civil society has an interest in more transparency. Some scholars are working on relevant concepts of good governance. The Vice-President for Administrative Affairs, Audit and Anti-Fraud, Siim Kallas, is actively involved in the aspect of transparency. The influence of lobbyists seems to be coming under a spotlight.

Coming back to the Danube region, new challenges arise for regions. Regions may have more opportunity to explain Europe from their own, specific perspective. The Danube region—with its unique spatial shape comprising new, old, and future EU-member states—can play an important future role.

## References

The above-mentioned issues (comprising globalisation, European integration, lobbying, and transparency) have been widely discussed in the academic world. Since this paper was mainly derived from work experience in Brussels, the author refers to internet sites, EU-documents, and information from EU databases. The following references can be used as a first and broad introduction to the topic.

For a list of accredited lobbyists to the European Parliament, see

<http://www.europarl.eu.int/parliament/expert/lobbyAlphaOrderByName.do?language=EN>, downloaded on 30-09-2005.

Commission working paper "Ongoing and systematic policy dialogue with local-government associations". [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/consultation/permanentdialogue\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/consultation/permanentdialogue_en.pdf), downloaded on 09-09-2005.

Concerning the accreditation of lobbyists to the European Parliament, <http://www.europarl.eu.int/parliament/expert/staticDisplay.do;jsessionid=BFA43858FF5C17DB363E75786B831B3B.node1?pid=65&redirection&language=EN>, downloaded on 30-09-2005.

“CONECCS”, Consultation, the European Commission and Civil Society. This database for Consultation, the European Commission and Civil Society provides information on EU consultation processes; e.g. information can be found on the Commission’s formal or structured consultative bodies, in which civil society organisations participate. Furthermore a directory of non-profit making civil society organisations organised at European level can be found. The directory is established on a voluntary basis and is intended for information. [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/civil\\_society/coneccs/index\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/civil_society/coneccs/index_en.htm), downloaded on 09-09-2005.

Definitions of lobbying in French, [http://www.lobbying-europe.com/mod.php?mod=userpage&page\\_id=1](http://www.lobbying-europe.com/mod.php?mod=userpage&page_id=1), downloaded on 30-09-2005.

”Europa-digital.de” is a German website on “Europe”, providing information and analysis on the European Union. See internet, especially referring to the dossier “lobby”: <http://www.europa-digital.de/aktuell/dossier/lobby/>, downloaded on 30-09-2005.

“European Governance—A White Paper”, No.: COM (2001) 428 final form 25-07-2001, [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2001/com2001\\_0428en01.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2001/com2001_0428en01.pdf), downloaded on 09-09-2005.

”Globalisation as temptation or as a threat?” Essay on globalisation by Brigitte Krech, VITE Bulletin, April 2001, Tilburg.

”Governance”, EU-internet-site on Governance, [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/governance/governance\\_eu/index\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/governance/governance_eu/index_en.htm), downloaded on 09-09-2005.

”Green Week” of the European Commission, further information, [http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/greenweek/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/greenweek/index_en.htm), downloaded on 30-09-2005.

”Lobbying in the European Union: current rules and practices”, Working Paper of the European Parliament, Directorate-General for Research, Constitutional Affairs Series, AFCO 104 EN, <http://europa.eu.int/comm/>

secretariat\_general/sgc/lobbies/docs/Workingdocparl.pdf, downloaded on 30-09-2005.

Overview from the European Commission, Secretariat-General of the Commission, on special interest groups (present situation in EU Member States, Community Institutions, Third Countries, and other International Organisations), [http://europa.eu.int/comm/secretariat\\_general/sgc/lobbies/communication/groupint\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/secretariat_general/sgc/lobbies/communication/groupint_en.htm), downloaded on 30-09-2005.

The internet encyclopaedia Wikipedia offers definitions on lobbying (regarding lobbying activities in Washington D.C. and Brussels, as well as several additional internet links on the topic), see internet: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lobbying>, downloaded on 30-09-2005.

Website of Siim Kallas, Vice-President for Administrative Affairs, Audit and Anti-Fraud at the European Commission, [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/commission\\_barroso/kallas/index\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/commission_barroso/kallas/index_en.htm), downloaded on 30-09-2005.