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Lobbying MEPs

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+ Lobbying Your MEPs

Currently there are about 15,000 lobbyists in Brussels (consultants, lawyers, trade associations, corporations, NGOs) seeking to influence Commission officials and MEPs in their decision-making process. Officially, MEPs attend to their own government policies, the political grouping they belong to in the European Parliament (EP), their constituents and lobby groups in Brussels.

You can lobby an MEP to:

- Vote in a certain way on legislation.
- Represent an opinion in committee discussions on new laws.
- Put you in touch with other MEPs interested in your campaign.

Your MEPs also have a responsibility to help you understand European laws and advise you on their impact.

+ Tips for Lobbying

Targeting the right MEP - A full list of MEPs is available at: www.europarl.eu.int/members/public.do? language=en.

To target and prioritise whom to lobby, you need to research MEP's interests:

- Which Parliament Committee do they belong to? (Prioritise members over substitutes.) www.europarl.eu.int/memberrrs/expert.do
- Do they chair or vice chair their European political group?

www.europarl.eu.int/members/expert.do

• Are they the spokesperson for their home party in the EP? Visit the EP website or MEP websites. MEPs either have their own sites, or home party sites. Search on www.google.com for each MEP by name.

• Which constituency does the MEP represent? Having a local connection with an MEP gives you the advantage of knowing what that MEP's interests are.

+ Contacting the MEP

Enquiries are dealt with in Brussels or in the home country of the MEP, so you can contact an MEP at either office. Some MEPs have a preference, however, so phoning the home office to ask an MEP's assistant howbest to proceed may help. The kind of contact MEPs are most likely to respond to is a personal letter or email. This needs to be signed (or contain the constituent name and address), easy to read, and explain in a few sentences your reasons for contacting the MEP and what your main arguments on the issue are.

+ Meeting the MEP

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MEPs spend some time in Brussels, Strasbourg and their constituency office, so you can arrange to meet them in Belgium, France or their home country. The meeting should be well prepared for - it is important to express your concerns clearly. Prepare a short speech of approximately 10 minutes, and write your arguments in a position paper to leave with the MEP. If you see the MEP together with other people, make sure your position is clear and that no contradictions confuse the issue.

+ Targeting the Rapporteur

If your local MEP is not involved in the issue of your concern, you need to contact the rapporteur (designated MEP) who is in charge of preparing the committee's report on the relevant legislative proposal. Find an MEP who is on the committee you are interested in and ring them to ask who the rapporteur is. If you do not speak a common language with the rapporteur, lobbying will be more difficult and you may need to contact your home country MEP on the Committee, and work through them. Once you know who the rapporteur is, a letter campaign directed at them, whatever their native language, still highlights the issue.

+ Follow-Up

Once you have sent a letter or email, you need to follow up by phoning the MEP some time later, to re-emphasise your points. and supply authoritative information on risk control in healthcare facilities and clinical practice guidelines and standards.

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