



Lobbying in Ireland:

How does it measure up?



POLICY ACTION



Policy Action – background

- **10 years in existence**
- **Brussels, London, Dublin, Ireland**
- **Owner-run agency**
- **Team of 25+ lobbyists**
- **Part-owned by College Hill Group**



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Setting the scene

BRUSSELS

10,000 lobbyists, 2 public affairs associations, 2 institutional registers

DUBLIN

? lobbyists, 0 public affairs associations, 0 institutional registers





Setting the scene: Policy Action

BRUSSELS

ETI registered, clients ETI registered, EP registered, ETI Code of conduct adhered to, all staff SEAP registered and signed up to SEAP Code of Conduct

DUBLIN

Member of PRII, self-regulatory way of doing business





Access to institutions

BRUSSELS

European Parliament: Streamlined, fair, based on MEP vetting system and police check, strict rules relating to activities in the EP, adjudication through Quaestors, individual post boxes

European Commission: Ad-hoc, based on requirement and ID verification, ETI register has resulting in 'grading' of lobbyists

Council of Ministers: Very limited access, ID requirements.





Access to institutions

DUBLIN

Dail Eireann: No procedure in place, ad-hoc, access, arbitrary allocation of long-term visitors passes to former staff / journalists etc, no post boxes, little security

Civil Service: Ad-hoc, no ID requirements, often 'off-site' meetings





Money

BRUSSELS

ETI register, not perfect, but indicative; Tax returns

DUBLIN

No declaration of funds required; Tax returns; FOI requests





Cultural

BRUSSELS

Respected profession, push-pull-push relationship with civil servants and politicians

DUBLIN

You're a 'wha'?; civil servants generally nervous and off the record; politicians relatively open but very constituency-centric





Lobbyist profile

BRUSSELS

political science/law/economics, 'trained' in public affairs, public affairs very distinct from public relations

DUBLIN

ex-politicians/political party, 'one man shows', public affairs seen as sub-section of public relations





Campaigning

BRUSSELS

Monitoring is comprehensive with access to public and non-public sources

DUBLIN

Monitoring is difficult due to lack of specialist publications and nervousness of politicians / civil servants to divulge

BRUSSELS

Awareness raising is constant with a generous number of hooks and good attendance / participation

DUBLIN

Awareness raising tends to fall under the PR banner, attendance at events is patchy





Campaigning

BRUSSELS

One-to-one meetings very easy to secure and often requested by the civil servants / politicians

DUBLIN

One-to-one meetings with politicians is sporadic; with civil servants is poor

BRUSSELS

Written communication generally recognised in a timely manner (not always)

DUBLIN

Written communication is largely ignored





What needs to change in Ireland?

- **Acceptance that lobbyists have a valuable role to play**
- **Modernise access and force transparency**
- **Eventually Introduce a simple register linked to Dail Eireann access, based on TD/Garda vetting**
- **Breakdown 'strongholds' and allow wider access**





What needs to change in Ireland?

A Review Group be established, comprising public bodies and private interests to examine lobbying in Ireland. The Review Group should seek to define the term lobbying and to identify which stakeholders are currently involved in that activity. The Review Group should then make recommendations on how best to streamline professional lobbying activities in Ireland so as to ensure transparency across all stakeholders either lobbying or being lobbied.





What needs to change in Ireland?

On the basis of the work done by the Review Group, Government Guidelines on lobbying should be issued. An assessment of how these guidelines are being implemented should then follow, with a view to introducing stricter measures in the event of a failure by lobbyists and those being lobbied to adopt these guidelines.

As an interim measure, a register of lobbyists should be established and a system whereby registered lobbyists can access debates in Dáil Eireann at any given time, should be introduced.





Thank You

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