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## LOBBYING ON TRANSPORT ON THE EUROPEAN UNION FORUM

### Abstract

This article has been written to identify and analyse lobbying on transport on the European forum. The paper presents the definition of lobbying and main objectives of the EU transport policy. It describes interest representatives and their interest as well it contains analysis of the number of lobbyists and the budget spent on lobbying in transport. There are examples of lobbying in transport presented based on researches conducted in the framework of the doctoral thesis.

**Keywords:** lobbying, transport, competition, interest representation

### Introduction

Lobbying triggers often negative associations not focusing on the importance of a term and its role in the decision making process. Conservative attitudes towards lobbying derive from the insufficient knowledge and from unfair business practices. In Poland the phenomena of the professional interest representation is in its initiating phase and there are only few elaborations on it in the Polish academic literature. In some countries, lobbying is perceived only through the corruption prism, while in some other countries it is treated as an indispensable tool of communication.

In general, there are over 15 000 professional lobbyists working in Brussels, out of them 3000 are active in the European Parliament. In the EU capital there are over 500 European and international coalitions of interest groups and consultancies. Over 3000 interest groups have their permanent representations in Brussels, where 600 out of them belong to Member States and the EU regions. In the early 60s there were around 300 lobbying organisations, in 1980 there were already 600, and ten years later – almost 3000. The most numerous were business and agriculture

representations, accounting all together about 50–55% of the total number engaged organisations. Transport companies belong to the most numerous group represented in Brussels in the service sector.

## 1. Lobbying in the European Union

The word 'lobbying' derives from the Latin *lobia* which means gallery, corridors of the Roman senate, where the exchange of political information took place.

Lobby, according to the dictionary of foreign words, is an extra-parliamentarian group influencing national authorities by economic and political means in the interest of political, economic or social groups – in general: each influential group in an environment or in an enterprise (Eng. *lobby*) (Sobol et al., 1995). Lobby should define such a group, which sets up the office or sends the representatives to the capital to lobby in the governmental institutions and offices, employs professional lobbyists or consultants. Generally, the term of lobbying includes groups or individuals, who organise themselves to represent their interest vis-a-vis decision makers (Beyers, Eising, Maloney, 2010).

F.R. Baumgartner and B.L. Leech describe lobbying as an effort to influence the political process (Baumgartner, Leech, 1989). A.J. Nownes defines lobbying as an attempt to influence governmental activities (Nownes, 2007).

According to K. Beyme, lobbying means different intensive activities of social groups, chambers of commerce and firms in political and biurocratic vestibule. L.W. Milbrath saw lobbying mainly as a communication process. The communication is the only mean of influencing and changing the perception, therefore lobbying is a communication process. P. Koeppel regarded lobbying as an intention or a success in influencing by the interest representatives legislative and administrative decisions taken by public authorities. The influence is intentional and is focused on legislative or executive organs. According to a definition of A. Warleigh and K.J. Fairbrass, there are differences between lobbying, exchange of information, building of coalitions, formal and informal contacts, planned and unplanned relations. With other words, all forms of interactions, which are programmed to represent concrete ideas, to influence decision makers in order to change opinions or perspectives to, at the end, influence the policy, are called lobbying. Lobbying is a professional activity based on representation of private and public interests towards the law- and decision- makers (Charrad, 2010). This is a professional practice of public or governmental bodies influencing decision makers through promotion of their own point of view. The objective of lobbying is to gain influence in governmental bodies.

There are many definitions describing intentional political influence: lobbying, interest representation, public affairs, mobilisation, etc. (Karr, 2007).

The term 'interest representation' does not trigger problematic associations or limitations to concrete areas and it is used in the academic literature aiming to refer to these practices, tactics and strategies of governmental and non-governmental organisations, which influence the European policy. It is worth to stress that this term is used by the European Commission in its communication referring to i.e. lobbyists'

registry or all legal frameworks regulating contacts with them. In the Commissions' definition lobbying is described as all activities objectively influencing policy and decision-making process of the European institutions. Other definitions contain aspects of communication, interests and policy. In the Green Paper on European Transparency Initiative it is written: "Lobbying is a legitimate part of the democratic system, regardless of whether it is carried out by individual citizens or companies, civil society organisations and other interest groups or firms working on behalf of third parties (public affairs professionals, think-tanks and lawyers)". Activities which have character of lobbying include contacts of members or EU institutions' staff with lobbyists, preparation and distribution of: communication, info material, defensives or position papers; organisation of events, meetings or promotion actions in the official seats of bodies in order to support representatives of a given interest. Lobbying is a form of political consultation. There is nobody, who would have all the necessary knowledge to feed a policy or a strategy, therefore politicians are allowed to use external expertise.

S. Kallas said that lobbying is a completely normal phenomena in the democracy and that the citizens and organisations want to and should influence decisions determining their life and activities.

Often with the word of lobbying, the term of association (ger. *verband*) is linked. The interests' group suggests more pluralistic approach, while *verband* is associated with a picture of a more structured and organized group. Governmental agencies or regional and national representations are perceived as lobbying groups and the term *verband* is not used in their cases.

'Lobbying is an important part of parliamentarism', because delivers information and contributes to the decisions taken in the legislative process. It offers companies a chance to acquire information from the politicians, who are important and indispensable base for their own business decision (Klemans, 2011).

In the business area, lobbying is a special form of the external communication between companies and the investors, so called investors' relations. Acquiring good investor conditions is seen as a guarantee of a good market communication, is an obvious and a normal element of the business activities. Market exchange reacts more nervous on incomplete information, therefore active seeking for a dialog with the investor and implementation of the trust building measures has a tremendous meaning in the era of global financial and economic crisis, which commenced in 2007.

All mentioned definitions were created based on transfer of information. J. Klemans classifies phenomena taking place between receivers and senders of communication depending on a character of the transferred information and the addressee.

Having under consideration the level of specialization of the transferred communication, its addressee and the sender, international lobbying can be defined as a transfer of communication, expertise, opinion, demands, and needs of the international character through the international associations, networks and by creating international coalition, whose objective is to influence organizations, societies and international institutions or people from other cultures. Consequently, euro-lobbying is a communication, interest representation, influencing European

institution (the European Parliament, the Council of European Union, the European Commission, The European Social Economic Committee, European Investment Bank etc.) in socio-economic affairs referring to the EU area by building coalitions of firms, national, regional and local governments or through participation in the international organizations, associations or networks.

## 2. European transport policy

The economic results of the country and its level of development depends on transport connectivity and good functioning of transport.

Transport policy belongs to the first of the economic development pillars of member states since the Treaty of Rome. The Treaty of Maastricht introduced in 1992 regulations referring to trans-European transport infrastructure and transport became one of the European Commission's competencies. Since the beginning of the European Union, liberalization of the transport sector was a very important subject and today this sector got almost liberalized. Due to the bigger competitiveness on the market, the prices of tickets decreased and the quality of transport service improved. Following liberalization of the transport, the mobility of the European citizens increased and lately it attracts the most attention, especially in the context of the CO<sub>2</sub> emission in this sector, what has a negative impact on the climate.

Transport policy, which is regulated by art. 90–100 of the Lisbon Treaty, is one of the most strategic common policies in the EU. In 2011, the Commission adopted White Paper – Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system from 2011, which contains 40 initiatives to enhance economic growth and employment, decreasing dependency on import fuel and limitation of the CO<sub>2</sub> emission generated by the transport sector by 60% by 2050 (White paper on transport, 2011).

In the White Paper the Commission sets Ten Goals for a competitive and resource efficient transport system: benchmarks for achieving the 60% GHG emission reduction target. The Paper is divided in three main parts:

- Developing and deploying new and sustainable fuels and propulsion systems;
- Optimising the performance of multimodal logistic chains, including by making greater use of more energy-efficient modes;
- Increasing the efficiency of transport and of infrastructure use with information systems and market-based incentives.

The White Paper describes the strategy to be implemented. The Commission proposes: Single European Sky, Single European Railways Area, "Blue Belt" in the seas around Europe; opening of high quality jobs and good working conditions markets, improvement of safety and increase of security in the transport system, further consolidated passengers' rights, and better accessibility. Proposed solutions aiming to success in introduction of the innovation for the future, are a result of many technological solutions and changes in more sustainable behavior. Modernization of infrastructure concentrated around multimodal basic network requires big resources, differentiated financial resources and intelligent payment

systems. More than anything else, the process must reflect costs and the deviations should be mitigated, therefore in the future the users of transport system will have to pay bigger part of costs than today and there will be two market instruments applied: energy taxation and system of the emission rights. The external dimensions of the transport sector will be finally adjusted to the double tendency in liberalization of markets and balancing of internal aspects (European Parliament, 2016).

### 3. Stakeholders

Because of its specification, transport attracts attention of many interest groups active in areas of: environmental protection, employers, safety, passengers' rights, handicaps, employees, international trade etc. Among them there are both public bodies, as the representatives of the private sector, the representatives of the local authorities, a motor industry, and world oil potentates.

During the Open Days in 2007, annual event organized by the European Commission (DG Regio) and the Committee of the Regions, the most – 132 regions – declared interest in the regional policy. The second place in the classification of the interest among the local authorities in the European Union was taken by the environment. Transport was on the third place (Figure 1).

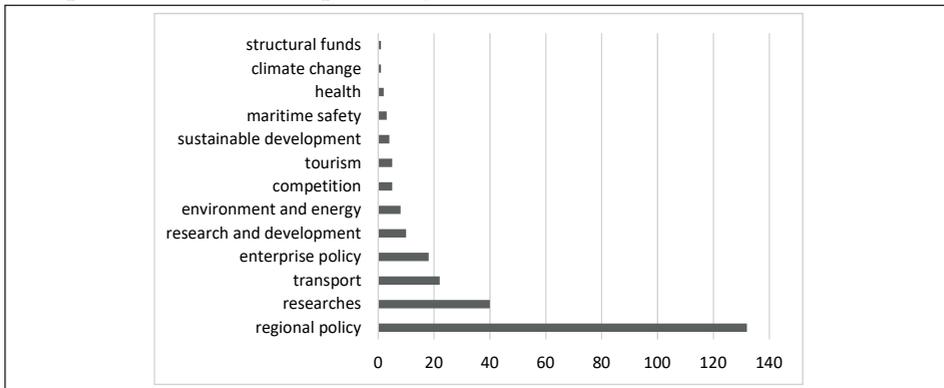


Figure 1. Declared priorities of the EU regions, as a subject of international lobbying in Brussels, 2007

Source: (own elaboration based on: EU European Commission, EU Committee of the Regions, 2007)

In the Transparency Register there are 7846 lobbyists registered Transparency Register (2015), out of them 2297 registrants declared interest in the transport sector. Among them there are:

- Consultancies/law firms/independent consultants;
- Professional lobbyists/branch associations/industries/trade unions;
- Non-governmental organizations;
- Analytical centers, science and research institutes;
- Organizations representing local, municipal, regional authorities; other public or mixed bodies, etc.

The presence of small- and medium-size companies and influential organizations is characteristic for the road transport. The railways transport is characterized by the traditional market players, who became competitors due to the liberalization of the market. The aviation market is specified by the big market players, like airlines and the airlines alliances. The maritime transport is very differentiated and based on both – traditional industry, small and medium-enterprises, and the modern global companies.

In the defense of the public interest there are few environmental groups and consultancies specialized in the transport sector. Stakeholders of the maritime transport belong mostly to traditional market players, who got used to the protectionist legislation, but among them there are also representatives of international/global firms i.e. in the fuel sector, SMEs, cruise ships and recreations boats constructors. There are also huge state owned companies, like ship repair yards (Michalowiz, 2007).

Transport is a subject which triggers many controversial around the climate change and its impact on the environment, therefore it attracts the attention of these societies.

In the table below there are few examples of the companies registered in the Transparency Register of the European Commission, which declared transport as a main domain of their interest. In general, in the Register there are 450 transport companies representing all transport means.

The above mentioned data show that only few companies have their representation offices in Brussels. Among them, there are companies, which were registered long before the Register entered into force (01.01.2015). Companies employ their own staff, in-house lobbyists, who defend interests of the company. The employment oscillates between 1–3 persons, but there are cases, like Bulgarian Society for Rail Transport, where the representation counts 18 lobbyists. The data shows that annual budget dedicated to the interest representation can reach one million euro, but the majority of firms declares smaller lobbying budget. Among lobbyists there are also many companies from outside Europe. Declared areas of common interest are mainly common for all representatives from this group: climate change, competitiveness, consumers, environment, trans-European networks, transport, employment and the social policy. The majority of companies in the heading referring to aims of lobbying declared influence on European legislation which has an impact on the functioning of the companies and their financial results.

Table 1. Examples of employment, budget, fields of interest and specific lobbying activities in the transport companies

(Organisation) name	Seat in Brussels	Registration date	No of persons involved from the organisation expressed in % of working time	Fields of interest	Estimate of the annual costs related to activities covered by the register (in euro)	Specific activities covered by the Register
IATA International Air Transport Association	×	31.10.2008	100% – 3 persons	Climate Action Consumer Affairs Environment General and Institutional Affairs Home Affairs Trans-European Networks Transport	> = 900 000 <999 999	Air passenger rights/ environment/transport policy/ airport infrastructure/ATM and Single European Sky/ safety & Operations/Security/ Commercial issues/liberalisation/ Customs matters
Airlines for America		1998	25% – 2 persons	Climate Action Competition Consumer Affairs Customs Economic and Financial Affairs Employment and Social Affairs Energy Environment External Relations Foreign and Security Policy and Defence Taxation Trade Transport	<9 999	Aviation related EU initiatives, policies and legislative files including US-EU bilateral affairs, fair competition, privacy, security, safety, consumer protection, taxation and the environment

(Organisation) name	Seat in Brussels	Registration date	No of persons involved from the organisation expressed in % of working time	Fields of interest	Estimate of the annual costs related to activities covered by the register (in euro)	Specific activities covered by the Register
Brussels Airlines SA/NV	×	18.02.2015	50% – 3 persons 25% – 3 persons	Climate Action Competition Consumer Affairs Employment and Social Affairs Environment External Relations Trans-European Networks Transport	<9 999	European initiatives on ground handling, slots, noise, passenger rights, single European sky, environment, PNR, Aviation package
FINNAIR OYJ	×	14.04.2015	100% – 1 person 50% – 1 person 25% – 3 persons	Competition Consumer Affairs Customs Economic and Financial Affairs Employment and Social Policy Environment Trans-European Networks Transport	100 000–199 999	Finnair follows EU initiatives and policies that impact aviation, e.g. aviation package, aviation and airport regulations, external mandates, environment, passenger rights
Ryanair	×	03.02.2015	25% – 1 person	Competition Employment and Social Affairs Enterprise Environment Internal Market Regional Policy Transport	50 000–99 999	Any EU legislation, policies or initiatives affecting the business of Ryanair

SAS AB	×	15.02.2012	25% – 2 persons	Competition Environment External Relations Transport	25 000	Following EU initiatives on e.g. airport package, environment, passenger rights, Aviation package and air traffic management
United Airlines, Inc.		21.11.2013	50% – 1 person 25% – 1 person	Climate Action Competition Consumer Affairs Environment External Relations Foreign and Security Policy and Defence Home Affairs Internal Market Justice and Fundamental Rights Taxation Trans-European Networks Transport	25 000–49 999	United Airlines, Inc. focus in on EU legislation and policies that impact aviation. United also monitors developments in the areas of environment, taxation and competition that are relevant to aviation. United seeks to ensure that strategies, policies and legislation that the EU adopts in the area of aviation are beneficial and cost effective
Transat A.T Inc.		09.02.2015	25% – 1 person	Climate Action Competition Consumer Affairs External Relations Transport	10 000–24 999	Single European Sky Passenger Rights Package travel EU ETS and aviation Aviation Safety Airports package
Bulgarian Society for Rail Transport	×	25.11.2009	100% – 1 person 75% – 3 persons 50% – 4 persons 25% – 10 persons	Regional Policy Research and Technology Trans-European Networks Transport	9800	Railway Infrastructure Railway Passenger and Freight Transport Tramway Infrastructure Tramway Passenger Transport Metro Infrastructure Metro Passenger Transport

(Organisation) name	Seat in Brussels	Registration date	No of persons involved from the organisation expressed in % of working time	Fields of interest	Estimate of the annual costs related to activities covered by the register (in euro)	Specific activities covered by the Register
Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation	×	19.12.2008	25% – 1 person	Climate Action Culture Education Energy Environment External Relations Regional Policy Trans-European Networks Transport Youth	100 000	EU Strategy for Baltic Sea Region European Corridors (TEN-T) Regional and urban policies Northern and Arctic Dimension
Fédération Internationale de Motocyclisme	×	26.11.2012	50% – 1 person 25% – 1 person	Audiovisual and Media Climate Action Consumer Affairs Energy Enterprise Environment General and Institutional Affairs Home Affairs Internal Market Research and Technology Sport Trans-European Networks Transport	50 000–99 999	The FIM follows any policies related to motorcycling e.g.: – Revision of the White Paper on Transport – L-category (Regulation 168/2013) and related regulations – Road safety initiatives including Roadworthiness package – Sustainable motorcycling and e-mobility – Horizon 2020, Green Vehicles Initiative – Intelligent Transport Systems and eCall – Personal Protective Equipment –GEAR 2030

Source: (own elaboration based on: the Transparency Register)

## 4. Channels of influence

The most important, from the lobbyist's point of view, is the information, which is not generally accessible and which is not yet public. If the information had been public, it would have meant that it is too late for reaction. The most expensive information is one which announces new projects, new activities or introduction of important innovations. Informal information enables lobbyists to gain an advantage over his competitors.

Lobbying in the transport sector engages usually few directorates general of the European Commission. Than multifaceted actions should be taken because objectives of each of European institutions and directorates may vary. Transport issues are included in competencies of seven organs:

- 1) European Parliament:
  - a) ECON commission
- 2) Council of European Union:
  - a) Transport, telecommunication and energy
- 3) European Commission:
  - a) Mobility and transport
  - b) Maritime transport and fishery
- 4) European Economic Social Committee:
  - a) Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and Information Society Section
- 5) The committee of the Regions:
  - a) Commission for territorial cohesion policy (COTER)
- 6) European Investment Bank
- 7) Trans-European networks
- 8) UE agencies:
  - a) European Agency of Maritime Safety
  - b) European Agency of the Air Safety
  - c) European Railway Agency
  - d) Executive Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises (EASME)
  - e) European Global Navigation Satellite System Agency (GNSS)
  - f) Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INEA).

Few projects are subject of inter-service consultations, therefore in the legislative process of transport law also the directorates of the European Commission and the commissions of the European Parliament responsible for the environment, energy, health, employment, trade, industry, growth and many others are involved. EU commissions need precise information, expertise and technical knowledge before drafting the legislation, therefore the primary source of information should be transport sector. Due to the limited staff of the European Commission and limited budget, EU institutions outsource sectorial studies and use external sources of information.

## 5. Examples of lobbying activities in transport on the EU forum

### 5.1. Regional/local authorities

In 2007 the Polish regions had for the very first time a right to negotiate their Regional Operational Programmes (ROP) with the European Commission. Because of the very bad interconnectivities in Poland, almost all regions applied to have a regional airport included into ROP. The European Commission did not agree to support all applications, because not all of them were justified from the economic point of view. Many regions did not conduct market studies showing i.e. potential of the market, capacity prognostics, and forecast of the increase of the passenger numbers on the annual bases. Many regions did not have a list of potential investors, even not an existing infrastructure. The localization of the regional airport in 2007 was not decided yet, authorities of Warmia and Mazury Region successfully defended regional interests and the airport was placed on the list of ROP for 2007–2014.

Regional authorities sought to have a national road Nr 16 on the priority list too. The staff of the European Commission comes from all over the Europe. It is rather common that problems of one country are unknown to the rest of Europe. Regional authorities invited therefore the EU functionaries responsible for the decisions in transport and regional development. Only the study visit allowed to assess the state of play and to understand the regional needs.

Region of Presov participated in the revision of the priority axes of TEN-T. Authorities of this regions wanted to have Via Carpathia, important for the improvement of accessibility of this region, listed on the priority list. Nevertheless, the project was not placed on the priority list, but it was added to the additional plan of the European transport networks.

### 5.2. Associations, organizations and networks

Lobbying plays a very important role in the activities of CPMR<sup>1</sup> in Brussels. For example representation of maritime transport's and islands' interest can be illustrated by the creation of the working group in the European Parliament dedicated to the maritime affairs. In the time, when the Commissioner responsible for transport was J. Barrot, the presidency in CPMR was occupied by Portugal, which channeled activities of CPMR into coordination of maritime corridors. The result of these activities was, among other, Marco Polo Programme.

As the effective example of lobbying in the transport sector, the Secretary General of AER<sup>2</sup> gives a change in the draft of internal recommendations referring to the regional airports. Successful lobbying resulted in implementation of changes of the directive on airport tariffs in the European airports having over 1 mln passengers per year. After a change, the law refers now to airports having at least 1% of the European market share, giving small regional airports a chance to develop.

<sup>1</sup> CPMR – Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions.

<sup>2</sup> AER – Assembly of European Regions.

In the framework of the revision of the priority transport axes, the network NEEBOR<sup>3</sup> prepared the position paper on development of the trans-European networks taking under consideration interests of the regions situated along Eastern external border of the European Union. Transport networks and connectivity are especially important for these regions because of their geographical location and remote distance from the centers of development, what has a negative impact on their economic results.

### **5.3. Transport companies**

An example of the effective lobbying by a transport company are activities of the representation of PKP in Brussels, which aimed to postpone liberalization of the railway passenger's market. The representation of PKP managed to exclude part of trajects subsidized in the framework of Public Service Obligations, what delays by 6 years implementation of the market opening, meaning that it will take place only in 2025 (own researches for PhD dissertation).

## **Conclusions**

According to the OECD data, lobbying is multibillion business, on which expenditures in 2010 in USA achieved a record sum of 3.5 bln \$. Lobbying is also a branch of economy, which is becoming more and more important in Europe giving many millions well educated people jobs. Based on the examples presented in this paper, the conclusion can be drafted that lobbying in transport is a very complex process involving many stakeholders, also ones from other domains than transport. It is not only complicated because of the number of interest groups, but also because of the complex decision making process. It is a playground for interests of private and public players. Transport market embraces interests of both big fuel companies and small associations representing i.e. handicaps or the trade unions representing employees working in the transport structures. Based on the lobbying objectives declared by firms, conclusion can be drawn that European law in this subject is a result of many interests and influences.

Because lobbying not always ends up by implementation or blocking a regulation, it is difficult to evaluate its impact and to compare its effectiveness. Real effects of lobbying are not quantified. Even when the objectives are achieved, it is still difficult to assess whether the positive result is due to the lobbying and arguments used in the interest representation process. Profitability of the lobbying activities is almost impossible to estimate using numbers, with one exception – financial lobbying. Examining effectiveness of methods and lobbying tools, it is necessary to take under consideration all activities and assess used technics in building relations, together with the final result.

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<sup>3</sup> NEEBOR – Network of European External Border Regions.

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