

Working together towards more trust and transparency in EU policy-making

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

On behalf of EPACA, the [European Public Affairs Consultancies' Association](#), we would like to inform you about our industry, our association, and its core values and mission.

About Lobbying

Decisions taken by the EU have the potential to affect the lives of millions of European citizens and businesses, and should therefore be taken as openly and inclusively as possible. Interactions between EU institutions and a wide range of interest representatives lead to a better understanding of citizens' and businesses' concerns, more creative and innovative solutions, and ultimately, better decisions. Activities described as *lobbying* are therefore an integral and legitimate part of the democratic system.

The European Commission defines lobbying as all activities *“carried out with the objective of directly or indirectly influencing the formulation or implementation of policy and the decision-making processes of the EU institutions”*.¹

Lobbyists can assume various forms. From professional and self-employed consultants, to in-house corporate teams, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), lawyers and law firms, trade, business and professional associations, academic institutions and think tanks, civil society groups, consumer associations and unions. In a sense, any organization aiming to add facts and arguments to the political debate is lobbying, although other designations can be used such as *advocacy*, *government relations*, or *public affairs*.

About EPACA

EPACA is the representative trade body for public affairs consultancies working with the EU institutions. We represent 40 members employing over 600 consultants advising their clients (including companies, trade associations, NGOs, and non-profit organizations) on a daily basis about various aspects of EU policy-making.

Our mission is to promote best lobbying practices amongst our members and in the broader EU policymaking environment. We strive to lead by example, upholding the highest ethical and professional standards, advocating for more transparent decision-making, and being the go-to organization for anyone who has questions about our industry's activities.

Integrity and transparency are the core values of our association. They are at the heart of [EPACA's Code of Conduct](#) which binds our members to act in an honest, responsible, and courteous manner at all times. The Code is recognized by the European Commission and European Parliament and regularly updated to ensure that it reflects best practices, responding to shifting social, economic, and political landscapes as well as new

¹ Interinstitutional Agreement 2014, paragraph 7

communications technologies. Compliance with the Code is enforced via an independent complaints mechanism.

Since its creation, EPACA has been instrumental in pushing forward the transparency agenda. Over the years, we have been actively advocating to expand the EU Transparency Register's scope and to make it mandatory. These measures would further improve the level playing field as the incentives to sign up to the register would be strengthened. More transparency, however, should not become an undue burden. To that end, EPACA is actively campaigning for a system which is more accessible, usable, and steers away from putting up unhelpful administrative obstacles.

Building trust and transparency together

Having trust-based relationships is crucial for our role as the link between businesses, MEPs, other EU policymakers, and civil society. Trust and transparency, however, are a two-way street and can only be enhanced if commitments are taken by both the interest representatives and the MEP. Therefore, we would welcome if you were to choose to only meet with registered lobbyists and request unregistered lobbyists to sign up to the Transparency Register and its Code of Conduct. Last term, the European Parliament already took steps in this direction. This legislative term provides new opportunities to continue on this path.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our determination to work with the MEPs to achieve great results in lobbying transparency.

We would be more than happy to discuss these issues with you in person at your best convenience.

Yours sincerely,

The EPACA Management Committee

EPACA members

