



Lobbying in Cyprus

By Mary Pyrgos

LPAP Cyprus Association of
Lobbyist & Public Affairs Professionals

PACE Meeting, Nicosia 1st June 2018

Lobbying in Cyprus

- Lobbying is a democratic right of every citizen in a democratic country.
- In Cyprus as in other countries it always existed but it was not identified as lobbying and nobody talked about it

Perception of lobbying in Cyprus

- Cypriots are not aware of the term 'lobbying' and do not understand what it actually means and entails.
- Although they know that pressure groups representing specific interests influence the decisions of public authorities, the practice as such is not identified as 'lobbying'
- Occasionally they hear about 'lobbying' through the media who link it with scandals and incidents of corruption. Because of this, lobbying is linked with corruption, and bribery, and cypriots look upon it with suspicion and mistrust.
- In general it has a rather bad reputation amongst citizens, and even some politicians.

Major players in Lobbying

1.Executive power in Cyprus

In Cyprus

- The President of the Republic has the executive power. This power is exercised through the Ministries.
- The house of Representatives has the legislative power on all issues
- The judicial system is separate and independent
- Independent officers and bodies
 - Attorney General
 - The auditor General
 - The governor of the Central bank
 - The Ombudsman
 - The Municipalities for local matters

2. Powerful political parties

- In Cyprus we have a multi-party system
- We currently have 7 political parties
- The most powerful political parties dominate the political landscape and they have the power to nominate all the officials
- They are also targeted by lobbyists
- The parties play an important role in lobbying

3. Civil Society

- The civil society is weak without financial resources and depends on voluntary work and sponsorships

Lobbying in Cyprus

- At the moment there is no legislation regulating lobbying and therefore lobbying is not defined by any Cypriot law
- There are no regulations
- There is no register of persons that lobby the government
- There is no code of Conduct of elected representative
- The code of conduct of government employees is unsatisfactory
- The number of professional lobbyists is minimal
- Now there is a professional Association

The role of the media

- In In some countries, where there are no regulations for transparency, the role is taken by investigative journalists who often uncover scandals of corruption and information about who is influencing whom.
- In Cyprus, the Media are concentrated in the hands of few influential individuals, political parties, and the church, who exert influence on the media
- The media in general are not independent from the influence of political parties and most of the times cannot take an investigative role
- Media very rarely mention lobbying
- Media do not discuss lobbying and ethics as it is not yet an issue

Who are the lobbyists in Cyprus

Lobbying in Cyprus, is undertaken by

- Representatives of corporations
- NGOs, trade unions and representatives from industry and professional associations
- Individuals, non-professional lobbyists, who are lobbying in an unofficial manner in order to gain access to public officials and politicians participating in decision-making processes

Lobbying in Cyprus

In Cyprus,

- the public does not have sufficient knowledge in reference to the lobbying of their representatives,
- the public does not know what issues are being lobbied,
- the public does not know when and how issues are being lobbied,
- the public does not know how much is being spent in the process
- the public does not know what is the result of the lobbying efforts.

The reason for all the above is due mainly

- To lack of hard legislation
- To absences of and omission of hard and soft legislation and regulations
- To lack of transparency in lobbying

Measures taken 2017-2018 some progress

- The government and the members of Parliament in an effort to meet the demands of society, who considers the parties corrupted and responsible for the lack of transparency and corruption, are beginning to take measures for transparency and corruption
- Civil society pushes for such change. In recent years a number of NGOs demand transparency and measures against corruption

Legislative measures

The voice of civil society against corruption forced the government to take some legislative measures

In general legislation relevant to transparency is scattered in many laws from a report prepared from the ministry of Justice we know the legislation relevant to transparency is found in 29 laws. Here we shall refer only to the most important legislation that passed during 2017 and 2018

- -Greco legislation was passed in 2017
- The Law on Access to Public information was voted in December 2017
- The Law on the creation and operation of the independent Authority against corruption of 2017
- The law on transparency in the public decision-making processes
- At the moment a legislation is prepared which amongst other it regulates lobbying
- -Whistleblowing legislation

Codes for civil servants

- Cyprus has in place a Code of Conduct for civil servants, post-/ pre-employment, restrictions however this code is inadequate.
- In addition the Parliament enacted legislation 99(I)/20152 which allows public officials to hold political party positions simultaneously.
- There is no code of conduct of Members of parliament

General conclusion

- Cypriots are not very well informed about lobbying
- Cypriots very rarely talk about lobbying
- Cypriots believe they can handle lobbying by themselves
- Cypriots do not want to spend money for Lobbying except when it is absolutely necessary
- Cypriots very rarely use professional lobbyists
- Cypriots rarely search for partners
- Cypriots never organise professional lobbying campaigns. They use some tools of the campaign in an unorthodox way

Measures to be taken

- In concluding, we may say that, in Cyprus, the discussion on lobbying and regulation of lobbying is only beginning
- Legislation on regulating lobbying must be implemented
- Codes of conduct of government employees and parliamentarians must be reinforced
- An information campaign must be undertaken in order to inform citizens and politicians on the benefits of professional lobbying