Comunicação e sociedade

Special Issue | 2020
Estudos em relações públicas avançadas

Spanish lobbies listed in the European transparency register

Lóbis espanhóis no registo europeu de transparência

Ana Almansa-Martínez and Elizabet Castillero-Ostio

Translator: Ana Almansa-Martínez and Elizabet Castillero-Ostio

Electronic version
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/cs/3326
ISSN: 2183-3575

Publisher
Centro de estudos de comunicação e sociedade

Printed version
Date of publication: 30 July 2020
Number of pages: 109-126
ISSN: 1645-2089

Electronic reference
Ana Almansa-Martínez and Elizabet Castillero-Ostio, "Spanish lobbies listed in the European transparency register", *Comunicação e sociedade* [Online], Special Issue | 2020, Online since 30 July 2020, connection on 05 February 2021. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/cs/3326

Revista *Comunicação e Sociedade* by CECS is licensed under a Creative Commons Atribuição-Uso Não-Comercial 4.0 International.

Comunicação e Sociedade, special vol., 2020, pp. 109-126
https://doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.0(2020).2743

Spanish lobbies listed in the European transparency register

Ana Almansa-Martínez
Audiovisual Communication and Advertising Department, Sciences of Communication Faculty, University of Malaga, Spain

Elizabet Castillero-Ostio
Audiovisual Communication and Advertising Department, Sciences of Communication Faculty, University of Malaga, Spain

Abstract

Lobbyists are political agents of great importance, since they operate with the objective of influencing the decision making of different institutions. In order to improve knowledge about these pressure groups, the present research analyses the composition and functioning of the 745 Spanish lobbies that are, until the date of the study, registered in the Transparency Register of the European Union. Through a content analysis, we tried to show the relevance and influence that these groups have on the European Parliament's political decision-makers. The results showed that the category formed by the pressure groups of the companies of the commercial, business or professional associations is the most numerous, assuming 50,6% of the studied sample. Regarding the individuals who run these groups, it was noted that they are mostly men, in a proportion that corresponds to twice the number of women who perform this function. On the other hand, it is observed that only 8,18% of Spanish lobbies have their headquarters in Belgium, compared to 91,81% who are not domiciled in the place where the main administrative headquarters of the European Union is located. This indicates that the lobbying activity of Spanish groups is still low.

Keywords
political communication; public relations; lobbies; pressure groups

Lóbis espanhóis no registo europeu de transparência

Resumo

Os lobistas são agentes políticos de grande importância, já que operam com o objetivo de influenciar a tomada de decisão de diferentes instituições. Visando melhorar o conhecimento sobre estes grupos de pressão, a presente investigação analisa a composição e o funcionamento dos 745 lóbis espanhóis que se encontram, até à data do estudo, inscritos no Registo de Transparência da União Europeia. Através de uma análise de conteúdo, procurou-se mostrar a relevância e a influência que estes grupos detêm sobre os decisores políticos do Parlamento Europeu. Os resultados mostraram que a categoria formada pelos grupos de pressão das empresas das associações comerciais, empresariais ou profissionais é a mais numerosa, assumindo 50,6% da amostra estudada. Em relação aos indivíduos que dirigem estes grupos, notou-se que são maioritariamente homens, numa proporção que corresponde ao dobro do número de mulheres que desempenham esta função. Por outro lado, observa-se que apenas 8,18% dos lóbis espanhóis dispõem de sede na Bélgica, em comparação com 91,81% que não estão domiciliados no lugar

onde se encontra a principal sede administrativa da União Europeia. Tal indica que a atividade de *lobbying* dos grupos espanhóis ainda é reduzida.

Palavras-chave
comunicação política; relações públicas; lóbis; grupos de pressão

Introduction

Lobbies play an important role within the political process (Bentley, 1908; Berry, 1989), as well as in their relations with public authorities, through planned communication strategies (Almiron & Xifra, 2016; Castillo-Esparcia, 2018).

This study showed that the level of presence of Spanish pressure groups depends on the type of organization (consultancies, professional and employer associations, companies, non-governmental organizations, religious communities, academic or research institutions and local or regional authorities). In addition, it also evaluated the knowledge Spaniards have in relation to the national implications of European policies, as well as the effort invested in influencing these policies, by analysing the human resources invested and the available budget.

In the European Union, it is useful to maintain good relations with political agents in order to know and influence decision-making so that they are closer to the needs of countries. This two-way communicative process contributes to the improvement of informational and participatory flows and facilitates the realization of citizens right to participation in the political process, through associations that represent them (lobbies).

In this investigation, we sought to know the degree of presence of Spanish pressure groups in the European Union through the analysis of their official registration. This register lists the organizations that wish to know and participate in European policies and in its different norms, directives, regulations, dictates, among others. European decisions have a major influence on regulatory frameworks in national policies.

Thus, having the possibility to know the European dynamics and to interfere in the construction of policies, as well as to intervene in the norms that are being created is important. This participation in the European decision-making process allows lobbyists to propose improvements in decisions so that they meet the social reality of each country. In addition, lobbies can propose new regulations by raising awareness and educating participants in the regulatory process (European Commission and European Parliament).

Theoretical framework

The establishment and maintenance of relations with political powers through lobbying (Castillo-Esparcia, Smolak-Lozano & Fernández Souto, 2017; Xifra, 1998) is one of

the relevant functions of public relations. Thus, one of the most important audiences for organizations is the political powers and there are, therefore, numerous professions that practice lobbying. In Spain, the term lobbyist is not commonly used since it has negative connotations. In this sense, it is preferred to use the term "institutional relations".

The articulation of social requests towards power is the cornerstone of democracy, pluralism and citizen participation (Arévalo Martínez & Herlinda Ortiz, 2018 Castillo-Esparcia, 2011; Chalmers, 2013; Harris & McGrath, 2012; Svolik, 2012). This articulation of the interests of the different social agents was also studied by Cabral, Andrelo and Granato (2018), by Canelón (2005), by Castillo-Esparcia, Guerra-Heredia and Almansa-Martínez (2017), by Klüver (2012), by Rebollo-Bueno (2019) and by Schendelen (2010). Barron (2011), for example, introduced cultural differences as a determining factor in the role played by the different political agents involved in decision-making.

In the specific case of Europe, the contributions of Bernhagen, Dür and Marshall (2015) stand out. Studies on the European Union's regulatory role in national aspects focus on legal, political and social elements, with citizens being the last recipients of decisions by European institutions. European and national regulations themselves highlight the predominance of European decisions over national regulatory contexts.

As a result of the increasing influence of European agreements in the activities of member states, national social requests cannot be transmitted only through the European Councils, but also through the participation of society in the normative process. The participation of pressure groups in the European Union is, therefore, an idea developed since the 90s. With the creation of the Transparency Register, lobbies have an active voice in the process of approach, discussion, elaboration and implementation of public policies. This participation can be conveyed in an active, reactive or proactive way, but it describes social organizations as agents of European public policies through their participation.

Regulations through norms "tend to modify certain social conducts and practices that have repercussions both on institutions (...) and on individuals" (Moya Díaz, 2018, p. 88). Thus, "it is important to discuss the relationships established between formality and informality, the role that institutions play as mediators of social action and the effect of modernizing processes on governments" (Moya Díaz, 2018, p. 89).

It is true that the regulation of lobbying has been a constant almost everywhere in the world. In the United States, the country with the highest concentration of lobbyists, in 1938 the FARA (Foreign Agents Registration Act) was passed, which required the registration of agents representing the interests of other countries.

This interest contrasts with the fact that, in the scope of public relations, lobbying activity was not particularly important, since they were more focused on media relations (Almansa-Martínez, 2003). However, the theoretical and practical development of this theme, showed that the media role is not an end, but an instrument for the dissemination of planned actions and messages. In this sense, the study of lobbying as a communicative process has references influenced by public relations (Castillo-Esparcia, 2018;

Xifra, 2016). In the international context, the analysis of the management of political influence has ample baggage and an undeniable Anglo-Saxon contribution (Bentley, 1908; Milbraith, 1963; Truman, 1968).

Lobbies have an increasing participation in the political process due to two fundamental factors:

1. citizens and organizations are aware that they must participate in the public or political discussion of the social issues that affect them and for that, they must have political channels for this purpose. In the traditional political model, the main vehicle is political parties, but social complexity requires a greater realization of interests through social associations. This transfer of social interests can be partial (demand for specific requests from groups, such as improvements in assistance, wages or conditions) or transversal (defence of the environment, consumer rights, among others). It is a sector characterized by the socialization of the State (Castillo-Esparcia & Smolak, 2017);
2. the growing social problems of contemporary societies require greater participation by public institutions in the management of affairs. Thus, Harris (2002) states that the State increasingly participates in the regulation of collective requests in the context of social nationalization.

Methodology

The present investigation has as main objective to know and to analyse the composition and the activity of the Spanish pressure groups present in the Transparency Register of the European Union. For this, content analysis models were developed with the following variables:

1. date of registration: this information was obtained with the objective of determining the sectors or pressure groups that first registered and that adapted to the transparency policies;
2. lobbies with headquarters in Brussels, Belgium: this variable made it possible to determine which are pressure groups based in the city where the main administrative headquarters of the European Union is located; these groups show better relations with the decision-makers of the European Parliament and, therefore, have a more intense activity;
3. data of the individuals who make up the lobbies in order to know their profiles and their composition: name, sex, position held by the person representing the groups, total number of people who make up the groups, average number of individuals working for these groups, how many of those work full-time, as well as the indication of the groups that have the largest number of people in their staff;
4. objectives pursued by the lobbies;
5. information on annual costs, to learn about the lobbies, as well as the sectors that allocate more economic resources to the activity;
6. the areas of greater interest to registered pressure groups.

It is possible to access the *corpus* of study of this investigation through the public website made available by the Transparency Register of the European Union[1]. It is a database in which, on a voluntary basis and exactly as described on the Registry's own website, are listed "organisations that try to influence the law-making and policy implementation process of the EU institutions"[2]. This register describes the interests of pressure

[1] See https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/homePage.do?redir=false&locale=es

[2] Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/homePage.do?redir=false&locale=es

groups, states who represents those interests, on whose behalf, as well as the budget that each group has. In this way, the register contributes to public control, providing citizens and other lobbies with the opportunity to monitor the activities of each pressure group.

The sample studied is composed of 745 Spanish pressure groups that, until the date of the study, were registered in the EU Transparency Register. The analysis was carried out between February and March 2018.

Results

Table 1 shows the 745 Spanish interest groups registered in the EU Transparency Register up to the date of the study, ordered according to the organization's category and subcategory, indicating the number of lobbies for each. The most numerous category is that of "pressure groups within companies and commercial, business or professional associations" with 337 registered lobbies, within which stands out the subcategory "trade and business associations" which brings together 170 groups. The minority group is that of religious organizations, where only one pressure group is registered.

Organisation category listed in the EU register	Organisation sub-category listed in the EU register	Number of entities
Professional consultants, law firms and external self-employed consultants	Professional consultants	52
	Law firms	8
	Self-employed consultants	13
	Total	**73**
Pressure groups within companies and commercial, business or professional associations	Companies and groups	115
	Trading and corporate associations	170
	Trade unions and professional associations	57
	Other entities	35
	Total	**377**
Non-governmental organisations	Organisations, platforms and non-governmental networks and akin	167
	Total	**167**
Reflection groups, academic and research institutions	Reflection groups and research institutions	46
	Academic institutions	26
	Total	**72**
Organisations representing churches and religious communities	**Total**	**1**
Organisations representing local, regional and municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.	Regional structures	12
	Other non-national public authorities (lower levels)	5
	Transnational associations and networks, representing public regional or non-national authorities	7
	Other public or mixed entities, created by Law, to act in support of public interests	31
	Total	**55**
Total of groups: 745		

Table 1: Organisation categories and number of Spanish entities listed in the EU Transparency Register

Data collected of the registration day for every Spanish group of interest listed in the EU Transparency Register

The EU Transparency Register started on 23 June 2008, and the first 10 Spanish groups of interest to be listed were the following shown in Table 2.

Entry date	Organization name
23/06/2008	Telefónica, S.A.
24/06/2008	Eurosenior
04/07/2008	Cooperativas Agro-alimentarias de España
16/10/2008	Asociación Multisectorial de la Información (Asedie)
07/11/2008	Plataforma de ONG de Acción Social (POAS)
21/11/2008	Confederación Española de Transporte de Mercancías (CETM)
27/01/2009	Puerto de Celeiro S.A.
25/02/2009	European Federation of Rural Tourism (Eurogites)
30/04/2009	Cámara Oficial de Comercio, Industria, Servicios y de Barcelona (COCIN BCN)
08/05/2009	Confederación Española de Cajas de Ahorros (CECA)

Table 2: Entry date for the pressure groups listed in the EU Transparency Register

The subcategories of the pressure groups that entered the register first and that, therefore, adapted earlier to the transparency policies are shown in Table 3. To determine this order, we considered the elapsed time (three months) from the beginning of the registration until the formalization of the registration, calculating the average for each subcategory.

The first subcategory of organization to register was the "other organizations", integrated in the "pressure groups within companies and commercial, business or professional associations", with an average of 63 months until registration. Next is the group "organizations that represent local, regional and municipal authorities, other public or mixed bodies, etc.", with the subcategories "other non-national public authorities (lower levels)" that registered in 69 months and the "regional structures" that took 74 months. Fourth, there is the group of organizations formed by the "trade unions and professional associations", integrated in the "pressure groups within companies and commercial, business or professional associations" with an average enrolment time of 76 months.

Ranking	Interest groups (subcategories)	Average time (in months) until registration is completed, for each sector	Category
1	Other organisations	63,37	Pressure groups within companies and commercial, business or professional associations
2	Other non-national public authorities (lower levels)	69,8	Organisations representing local, regional or municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.
3	Regional structures	74,91	Organisations representing local, regional and municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.
4	Trade unions and professional associations	76,77	Pressure groups within companies and commercial, business or professional associations
5	Law firms	79,12	Professional consultants, law firms and external self-employed consultants
6	Trading and corporate associations	79,74	Pressure groups within companies and commercial, business or professional associations
7	Non-governmental organisations, platforms and networks, or akin	81,81	Non-governmental organisations, professional consultants, law firms and external self-employed consultants
8	Professional consultants	83,17	
9	Reflection and research institutions	85,89	Reflection groups, academic and research institutions
10	Companies and groups	86,77	Pressure groups within companies and commercial, business or professional associations

11	Other public or mixed entities, created by law, to act in support of public interests	88,19	Organisations representing local, regional or municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.
12	Self-employed consultants	88,53	Professional consultants, law firms and self-employed consultants
13	Academic institutions	94,84	Reflection groups, academic and research institutions
14	Transnational associations and networks representing regional public authorities or at an inferior administrative level	98	Organisations representing local, regional or municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.
15	Organisations representing churches or religious communities	104	Organisations representing churches and religious communities

Table 3: First sectors listed in the EU Transparency Register

Data on Spanish pressure groups based in Belgium

Of the 745 Spanish pressure groups that, until the date of the study, were registered in the EU Transparency Register, only 61 are based in Brussels, Belgium. Thus, only 8,18% of these lobbies have their headquarters in Brussels, compared to 91,81% of the groups that are not established in the place where the main administrative headquarters of the European Union is located. The sub-category "companies and groups" is the one with the largest number of lobbyists with an address in Belgium, accounting for 21,31%, followed by "organizations, platforms and non-governmental networks and the like" with 18,03%, third in this count are the "commercial and business associations" with 14,75%.

Of the addresses presented in the register, 18 of them are coincident, which means that the offices of these groups share the same building. Between these organizations 38,8% are "professional consultants" and 22,22% refer to "commercial and business associations".

Data related to individuals operating in pressure groups

The total number of people working in the Spanish pressure groups in the Register is 3.851. Of those, 1.806 work in those groups continuously. Thus, the average number of employees in each group is five people.

The pressure group with the largest number of employees (165) is Fundación Tekniker. This foundation fits into the "think tanks, academic and research institutions", more specifically in the "think tanks and research institutions" subcategory. Then there is the Fundación Secretariado Gitano with 124 employees, which belongs to the "non-governmental organizations". In third place is the Universidad de Alicante with 88 lobbyists, integrated in the "reflection groups, academic and research institutions".

Considering the sex of the individuals who represent the lobbies and who are responsible for maintaining the dialogue with the European Union, men (509) are twice as many as women (236), with percentages of 68,32% and 31, 67% respectively. This pattern is repeated in all the pressure groups studied.

Analysing the positions performed, we distinguish positions that are held by individuals who have the highest management and directional authority in the administration of the group, as well as other managerial positions. The following terms are those that describe the highest authority positions: president, executive director, general director, manager, executive, delegate, chief, executive, executive president, principal officer, advisor and CEO. There were 305 people in charge of mediating relations with the European Union, and 440 individuals with other functions. This presupposes that 40,93% are directors of maximum authority and that 59,06% occupy other positions. This situation occurs in all pressure groups, being a little more egalitarian in the case of non-governmental organizations, in which 83 of the positions are leaders and 84 perform other functions.

Objectives pursued by lobbies listed in the EU Register

With the analysis carried out, few of the groups studied claim to have a specific mission and objectives related to the change of legislation, or that were constituted due to some specific and concrete fact.

The specific objectives found were the following:

- pressure group "organisations representing local, regional or municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc."/"regional structures":
    - Agència Catalana de l'Aigua: to draft laws and decree-laws in the field of water;
- pressure group "organisations representing local, regional or municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc."/"other non-national public authorities (inferior administrative level)";
    - Ayuntamiento de Barcelona: local entity in charge of local legislation;
    - Ayuntamiento de Huelva: local entity in charge of local legislation;
- pressure group "NGO":
    - Access Info Europe: its mission is to ensure that the right of access to information is enshrined in law and applied in practice. This includes the right of access to European Union documents as established by Article 15 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;
    - European Agroforestry Federation: the main objective of the organization is achieved through policy recommendations from the states of the European Union and the Common Agrarian Policy (CAP);

• Asociación Afectados del Vuelo Jk5022: its main objectives are to clarify what happened after the accident and to provide support to victims;

• Alianza de Solidaridad Extremeña: the aim of this group is to get 0,7% of GDP to go to aid and cooperation with poor countries;

• Women of the World Platform: its aim is to try to enact laws or guidelines that do not ignore, reverse or undermine the identity of women, the dignity and values of mothers or the priority of family dedication.

Data on the participation of Spanish pressure groups in intergroups, industrial forums and expert groups

Participation of Spanish interest groups in intergroups is only 2,95%, and the same figure (2,95%) shows for forums. Participation in expert groups is higher, with 9,79%.

These interest groups participate in the following intergroups: Intergroup on Sport, Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development and those related to fishing. In the industrial forums, these are the European Energy Forum and the EUROPECHE.

Lastly, Spanish interest groups are present in the following expert groups:

- Comité consultatif pour la sécurité et la santé sur le lieu de travail;
- Commission expert group Civil Society Forum on Drugs;
- Commission operational expert group of the European Innovation Partnership on Raw Materials;
- Digital Transport and Logistics Forum;
- Corporate Bond Market Liquidity;
- EU Bioeconomy Stakeholders Panel;
- European Sustainable Shipping Forum;
- Noise Expert Group;
- Payment Systems Market Expert Group;
- Rural Network's Assembly;
- Skills development and careers in the blue economy;
- Standing Committee on Precursors;
- Steel Advisory Group;
- Structured Dialogue with European Structural and Investment Funds' partners group of experts.

Information on annual budget of groups to learn about the lobbies and sectors with the largest budgets

Table 4 shows the 10 interest groups with the highest annual budget.

	Entry date	Name of the organisation	Sub-category	Estimated expenditure (absolute amount)	Estimated expenditure (intervals)	Average expenditure/ exact
1	2012/03/01	Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas (FIIAPP)	Other public or mixed entities, created by Law, to act in support of public interests	€34.777.770		€34.777.770
2	2012/01/24	Fundación Tekniker (IK4 - Tekniker)	Reflection groups and research institutions		€5.500.000 -€5.749.000	€5.624.500
3	2016/11/09	Institut d'Investigación en Ciències de la Salut Germans Trias i Pujol (IGTP)	Academic Institutions	€2.943.000		€2.943.000
4	2016/10/17	Instituto Nacional de Investigación y Tecnología Agraria y Alimentaria (INIA)	Other reflection and research institutions		€2.750.000 -€2.999.999	€2.874.999,50
5	2016/05/31	Centro Tecnológico del Mar – Fundación Cetmar (Cetmar)	Other public or mixed entities, created by Law, to act in support of public interests		€2.750.000 -€2.999.999	€2.874.999,50
6	2017/04/10	Organización Interprofesional Agroalimentaria del Porcino de Capa Blanca (Interporc)	Trade and corporate associations		€2.500.000 -€2.749.000	€2.624.500
7	2016/11/02	Idiada Automotive Technology, S.A (Idiada)	Companies and groups		€2.500.000 -€2.749.000	€2.624.500
8	2008/06/23	Telefónica, S.A.	Companies and groups	€2.000.000		€2.000.000
9	2018/02/08	Ajuntament de Barcelona (Barcelona)	Other public non-national public authorities (local or regional)		€1.000.000 -€1.249.999	€1.124.999,50
10	2017/07/06	Comisión Nacional de los Mercados y de la Competencia (CNMC)	Other public or mixed entities, created by Law, to act in support of public interests		€1.000.000 -€1.249.999	€1.124.999,50

Table 4: Pressure groups registered with the largest budgets

Considering the categories of pressure groups and their average spending, a ranking of the lobbies that have the largest budgets for their activity was established.

First in the ranking are "organizations that represent local, regional and municipal authorities, other public or mixed bodies, etc." and within these, "other public or mixed bodies, created by law, whose objective is to act in the public interest" with an average expenditure of €1.391.057,43. This is followed by "associations and transnational networks of regional public authorities of a lower category than the national" with an average expenditure of €326.428. Finally, there are the "other public authorities of a lower category than the national" with an average expenditure of €257.999.

In second place is the category of "reflection groups, academic and research institutions", being the "reflection groups and research institutions" that stand out the most, with € 196.547 spent. "Academic institutions" have an average expenditure of €179.588,56 and "professional consultancies, law firms and self-employed consultants" have a similar expenditure. In this last subcategory, "professional consultants" have an average expenditure of €196.320.

Thirdly, "pressure groups within companies and commercial, business or professional associations" appear, with emphasis on "companies and groups", whose average expenditure is € 173.861,91 and for "unions and professional associations" with €132.610 spent.

Most attractive areas of interest among the pressure groups listed in the register

The areas of greatest interest in lobbies are shown in Table 5.

	Areas of interest for listed interest groups	Relevance in %
1	Environmental issues: 446 groups interested	59,86%
2	Research and technology: 403 groups interested	54,09%
3	Energy: 312 groups interested	41,87%
4	Corporate: 311 groups interested	41,74%
5	Climate change: 292 groups interested	39,19%
6	Competency: 274 groups interested	38,77%
7	Trade: 259 groups interested	37,56%
8	Domestic markets: 263 groups interested	35,30%
9	Information society: 262 groups interested	35,16%
10	Education: 257 groups interested	34,49%
11	Business and finance: 252 groups interested	33,82%
12	Consumers: 252 groups interested	33,82%
13	Employment and social affairs: 252 groups interested	33,82%
14	Food safety: 246 groups interested	33,02%
15	Agriculture and rural development: 235 groups interested	31,54%
16	Transports: 223 groups interested	29,93%
17	Regional policy: 218 groups interested	29,26%
18	Trans-european networks: 210 groups interested	28,18%

19	Development: 209 groups interested	28,05%
20	Public health: 209 groups interested	28,05%
21	External affairs: 205 groups interested	27,51%
22	General and institutional affairs: 198 groups interested	26,57%
23	Taxes: 193 groups interested	25,90%
24	Fishing and aquaculture: 178 groups interested	23,89%
25	Justice and fundamental rights: 170 groups interested	22,81%
26	Culture: 155 groups interested	20,80%
27	Youth: 152 groups interested	20,40%
28	External affairs and security: 147 groups interested	19,73%
29	Communication: 141 groups interested	18,92%
30	Audiovisual and media: 133 groups interested	17,85%
31	Customs: 126 groups interested	16,91%
32	Budget: 122 groups interested	16,37%
33	Humanitarian assistance: 101 groups interested	13,55%
34	Domestic affairs: 96 groups interested	12,88%
35	Financial stability, financial services and capital markets union: 83 groups interested	11,14%
36	Extension: 66 groups interested	8,85%
37	Sports: 63 groups interested	8,45%

Table 5: Areas of interest for listed pressure groups

The following (Table 6) shows, in decreasing order and divided by categories, the pressure groups that are interested in a greater number of topics. It appears that the "academic institutions", the "other non-national public authorities (lower admin rank)", the "professional consultancies", the "consultants who work on their own" and the "reflection groups and research institutions" are the lobbies concerned with a greater number of subjects.

Ranking	Interest groups (subcategories)	Average number of areas of interest for each group	Category
1	Academic institutions	18,9	Reflection groups, academic and research institutions
2	Other non-national public authorities (lower admin rank)	18	Organisations representing local, regional or municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.
3	Professional consultants	14,94	Professional consultants, law firms and external self-employed consultants
4	Self-employed consultants	11,61	Professional consultants, law firms and external self-employed consultants
5	Reflection groups and research associations	10,71	Reflection groups, academic and research institutions

6	Trading and corporate associations	10,5	Pressure groups within companies and commercial, business or professional associations
7	Other public or mixed entities created by law to act in support of public interest	10,03	Organisations representing local, regional or municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.
8	Trade unions and professional associations	9,66	Pressure groups within companies and commercial, business or professional associations
9	Non-governmental organisations, platforms and networks and akin	9,5	Non-governmental organisations
10	Companies and groups	9,43	Pressure groups within companies and commercial, business or professional associations
11	Transnational associations and networks representing regional public authorities or non-national ones	9	Organisations representing local, regional or municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.
12	Lawyers' office	8,37	Professional consultants, law firms and external self-employed consultants
13	Other entities	7,2	Companies and trading, corporate or professional associations interest groups
14	Regional structures	6,58	Organisations representing local, regional or municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.
15	Organisations representing churches and religious communities	4	Organisations representing churches and religious communities

Table 6: Most attractive areas of interest for the listed groups

Discussion and conclusions

The group constituted by "pressure groups within companies and commercial, business or professional associations" is the one that has the greatest representation in the European Union's Transparency Register, with the aim of influencing the legislative process and the application of public policies of the institutions of the European Union.

As mentioned earlier, registration in the Transparency Register is voluntary, so the pressure groups' registration date reveals its interest in adapting to transparency policies. In addition, registration presupposes the possibility of access to meetings related to the preparation and application of public policies in the European Union. Without that registration, it is not possible to have any influence regarding European legislation and its implementation. In this way, the information related to registration says which organizations are most willing to promote their interests in front of public authorities. With the results obtained, it is possible to determine that of the first ten Spanish lobbies registered in the European Union's Transparency Register, eight belong to the subcategory of "other groups", which is integrated in the "pressure groups within companies and commercial, business or professionals".

In relation to the location of Spanish lobbyists, few were found to have an address in Brussels. The pressure groups that have offices in this capital and that, therefore, have a closer relationship with the European Parliament's policy makers, are those that belong to the category of "companies and groups".

The study of people who work in pressure groups in the European Union shows that about half (46,9%) do it on a full-time basis and the remaining employees work part-time. As for the individuals responsible for representing the groups before the European Union, it was concluded that the number of men is twice the number of women.

From the results obtained, it was also observed that only a small number of pressure groups pursue specific objectives related to the change in legislation or, on the other hand, that have been constituted due to a specific fact.

With reference to data on the participation of Spanish pressure groups in intergroups, industrial forums and expert groups, it is possible to see that this participation is still very low. These forums and groups serve to give lobbies a voice, which means that their intention to achieve involvement in the European Union's sphere of influence and decision-making structures is still scarce.

Further on, based on the analysis of economic data, it is easy to verify that the category "organizations representing local, regional and municipal authorities, other public or mixed bodies, etc." is the one that allocates more economic resources to lobbying.

Finally, based on the observation of areas of greatest interest to pressure groups, it is possible to determine that the environment, research and technology, energy and corporate, are the subjects on which they will be most committed when pressing policy makers.

Translation: Ana Almansa-Martínez and Elizabet Castillero-Ostio

Acknowledgements

This research has been financed by the "Lobby and Communication" project, the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, the Spanish R&D Programme (Programa Estatal de Investigación, Desarrollo e Innovación Orientada a los Retos de la Sociedad – project reference: CSO2016-79357-R).

References

Almansa-Martínez, A. (2003). Estrategia de comunicación institucional en sistemas democráticos. In J. I. Aguaded Gómez (Ed.), *Luces en el laberinto audiovisual = luzes no labirinto audiovisual: Congreso Iberoamericano de Comunicación y Educación* (pp. 1-15). Huelva: Grupo de Investigación Agora, Grupo Comunicar.

Almiron, N. & Xifra, J. (2016). Influence and advocacy: revisiting hot topics under pressure. *American Behavioral Scientist, 60*(3), 253-255. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764215615161

Arévalo Martínez, R. I. & Herlinda Ortiz, H. (2018). Análisis de modelos de relaciones públicas en Facebook de las organizaciones del tercer sector de México, Chile, Inglaterra y España. *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas, 8*(15), 85-106.

Barron, A. (2011). The impact of national business cultures on large firm lobbying in the European Union: evidence from a large-scale survey of government affairs managers. *Journal of European Integration*, *33*(4), 487-505. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2011.579752

Bentley, A. F. (1908). *The process of government. A study of social pressures*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Bernhagen, P., Dür, A. & Marshall, D. (2015). Information or context: what accounts for positional proximity between the European Commission and lobbyists? *Journal of European Public Policy, 22*(4), 570-587. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2015.1008556

Berry, J. (1989). *The interest group society*. Illionis: Scolt Foreman/Little.

Cabral, R., Andrelo, R. & Granato, M. (2018). A privatização da ética no Brasil: posicionamento da Petrobrás no canal do Youtube. *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas, 16*(3), 207-228. https://doi.org/10.5783/RIRP-16-2018-12-207-228

Canelón, A. R. (2005). Comunicación organizacional: del lobby a la ciudadanía corporativa. *Estudios venezolanos de Comunicación, 131*, 82-91.

Castillo-Esparcia, A. (2018). Los lobbies en España. Análisis de su tratamiento mediático. In M.C. Carretón (Ed.), *Oportunidades en la estrategia de relaciones públicas* (pp. 185-219). Valencia: Tirant Lo Blanch.

Castillo-Esparcia, A. (2011). *Lobby y comunicación: el lobbying como estrategia comunicativa.* Zamora: Comunicación Social.

Castillo-Esparcia, A. & Smolak, E. (2017). *Lobbies y think tanks. Comunicación política en la red.* Barcelona: Editorial Gedisa.

Castillo-Esparcia, A, Smolak-Lozano, A. & Fernández Souto, A.B. (2017). Lobby and communication in Spain. Analysis of the presence of lobbies in Spanish prestigious press. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, *72*, 783-802. https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2017-1192en

Castillo-Esparcia, A., Guerra-Heredia, S. & Almansa-Martínez, A. (2017). Comunicación política y think tanks en España: Estrategias con los medios de comunicación. *El profesional de la información*, *26*(4), 706-713. https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2017.jul.14

Chalmers, A. W. (2013). Trading information for access: informational lobbying strategies and interest group access to the European Union. *Journal of European Public Policy*, *20*(1), 39-58. https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2012.693411

Harris, P. (2002). The evolution of strategic political lobbying in the UK and the Psychological Network Underpinning Machiavellian Marketing. *Journal of Political Marketing*, *1*(1), 239-251. https://doi.org/10.1300/J199v01n01_17

Harris, P. & Mcgrath, C. (2012). Political marketing and lobbying: a neglected perspective and research agenda. *Journal of Political Marketing*, *11*(2), 75-94. https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2012.642745

Klüver, H. (2012). Informational lobbying in the European Union: the effect of organisational characteristics. *West European Politics*, *35*(3), 491-510. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2012.665737

Milbraith, L. (1963). *The Washington lobbyist*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Moya Díaz, E. (2018). Transparencia y lobby. El desafío en escenarios de coexistencia entre lo formal e informal. *Transparencia & Sociedad*, *6*, 83-102.

Rebollo-Bueno, S. (2019). Los think tanks y su presencia en la agenda mediática española. *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas*, *9*(17), 165-188. https://doi.org/10.5783/RIRP-17-2019-09-165-188

Schendelen, R. V. (2010). *More Machiavelli in Brussels: the art of lobbying the EU*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Svolik, M.W. (2012). *The politics of authoritarian rule.* Cambridge, USA: Cambridge University Press.

Truman, D. B. (1968). *The govermental process political interest and public opinion*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Xifra, J. (1998). *El lobbying: cómo influir eficazmente en las decisiones de las instituciones públicas*. Barcelona: Gestión 2000.

Xifra, J. (2016). El lobbying europeo: escenario y bases para su desarrollo. *Revista Organicom*, *8*(14), 167-180.

Biographical notes

Ana Almansa-Martínez is a professor at the Faculty of Communication Sciences, in the Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising at the University of Malaga. Her main lines of research are political communication, citizen participation, lobbying, public relations and institutional communication. She teaches these subjects in the undergraduate and master's degrees. He also teaches Communication at the Interuniversity Doctorate. She is coordinator of the Master's in Strategic Direction and Innovation in Communication. She is an editor of the *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas*.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0256-6369

Email: anaalmansa@uma.es

Address: University of Málaga, Sciences of Communication Faculty, Calle de León Tolstoi, s/n, Campus de Teatinos, 29010 Málaga, Spain

Elizabet Castillero-Ostio is a professor at the Faculty of Communication Sciences, in the Department of Audiovisual Communication and Advertising at the University of Malaga. She holds a PhD in Communication Sciences from the University of Malaga, has a degree in Advertising and Public Relations and a master's in Strategic Management and Innovation in Communication. She specializes in organizing congresses and events. Her main lines of research are political and institutional communication, the protocol and the organization of events, topics on which she published several articles in scientific journals, several book chapters, and was responsible for in several communications at international congresses.

ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0546-7262

Email: ecastillero@uma.es

Address: University of Málaga, Sciences of Communication Faculty, Calle de León Tolstoi, s/n, Campus de Teatinos, 29010 Málaga, Spain

*** Submitted: 02/07/2019**
*** Accepted: 31/10/2019**