
Lobbying and Interest Groups

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Introduction

The study of lobbying and interest groups is related to political participation beyond elections. It is a recurring issue in the political life of modern democracies. Citizens and political actors demand to be heard by the government authorities and participate more directly in the process of drafting public policy. Some analysts even believe that democracy is changing and there is a shift from a representative to a participative system.

Seen from the communicational perspective inherent in their status as influential players, interest groups have become structuring agents in society. Moreover, living in a society of social groups and movements involves significant consequences for exercising power within state institutions. Insofar as interest groups exercise a role in creating regulations, it is important to analyse how they operate and their activities from both a functional and empirical perspective, as well as from a regulatory standpoint.

There are several topics that are covered in the majority of texts on this phenomenon: activists, civil society, social movements, deliberative democracy, participative democracy, lobbies, interest groups and pressure groups.

Studying the demand for more civic participation through interest groups involves focusing on the relationship between the representatives of certain social, economic and political interests in the public arena. We concentrate on the way in which these interests are represented and the influence that this representation may have on the public decision-making process in terms of its personal (influence on decision-makers) and public dimensions (debates in the public arena) (Xifra, 2009).

1. Lobbying and Lobbyists

Over the years, many authors have defined the terms lobbying, lobbyist and interest groups.

Adopted by several languages, the English terms 'lobbyism' and 'lobbyists' original comes from the word 'lobby', in the sense of a hall or corridor, the etymology of which goes back to the Latin term '*lobia*', meaning a covered passage or cloister.

The evolution of its original meaning first took place in England when the term 'lobbyists' was used pejoratively to refer to the journalists who waited for the Members of Parliament in the corridors of the House of Commons. However, it was in United States of America that the term describing the activity in its modern sense originated and flourished. In the early days of the young North American republic, the bribery of political representatives to ensure they voted favourably for particular interests was fairly blatant.

The modern meaning of the verb also dates back to 'lobby' in the sense of a hotel entrance hall. When General Ulysses Grant was the president of the United States, after the Civil War, there was a fire at the White House, which forced the president and his family to move to a hotel in Washington. Legend has it that the president was overwhelmed by the numbers of people seeking favours and influence that constantly harassed him in the hotel's lobby.

Lobbying refers to any action designed to influence the actions of government institutions. It covers all government authorities and those of any other public bodies, whether they be at a local, regional, national or international level. The scope of the concept includes legislation, regulation and political decisions, as well as negotiation with respect to contracts or subsidies from the public sector. It is the specific branch of public relations which has a public authority as its ultimate target audience. If the ultimate recipient is not a public authority, it is not a case of lobbying but rather public relations.

Lobbying is a planned communication process with content that its predominantly informative. Its intention is to convey a positive idea of the represented interests based on the veracity of the information transmitted and the legitimacy of the arguments put forward, thereby generating a favourable setting with the aim of swaying the public decision or decisions in a way that is beneficial to the interests represented, without violating the public interest.

Lobbying is a persuasive communication process that strives to influence the decisions of public authorities, to amend or cancel initiatives promote new ones. The professional practice of lobbying consists of trying to

influence public authorities through communication actions, either directly by an organisation or through a third party in exchange for some type of consideration.

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In 1787, James Madison published the tenth instalment of *The Federalist Papers*, a series of essays in which he advocated the ratification of the Constitution of the United States. The tenth instalment focused on the issue of protecting oneself from “faction”, groups of citizens with interests at odds with the common good. Madison argued that a large, strong republic would be able to overcome these dangers more effectively than smaller republics (such as the federal states, for instance).

The term ‘persuasive communication’ refers to the fact that lobbying is based on persuasion, that it is the phenomenon through which a person or group of people modify their attitudes, opinions or behaviour as a result of the influences received through verbal discourse or any other code used.

In 1215, King John of England granted the barons of his kingdom the right of petition before him to raise their grievances about any violation of the new rights enshrined in the Magna Carta. More than five centuries later, the American colonies felt so humiliated by King George III that they revolted and reaffirmed this right in both the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the First Amendment to the Constitution of the incipient country’s Constitution in 1791: the right of petition before the government to rectify injustices represents, to this day, the basis for lobbying in the United States.

Lobbyism has always been a fixture of North American life. In fact, the creation of the United States itself is the work of the distinguished lobbyists James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and George Washington, who distributed the Federalist Papers –which were really no more than propaganda pamphlets in favour of the Constitution– among the opinion makers of the time.

In order to fully understand the modern phenomenon of lobbying, we need to refer to the founding of the United States. Farnel (1994, pp. 19-21) stresses that the right of non-governmental interests to participate in the implementation of legislation amounts to a basic principle of the Government of the United States, together with the balance of the three powers: the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

First Amendment, United States Constitution (Adopted in 1791)

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances”.

In essence, lobbying is as old as mankind's collective action. Even within a family, some members put pressure on the parents (the authority) to side with their opinion and the family collectively chooses between one place or another to go on holiday, whether to buy this car or that one, or which play to see at the theatre.

The precursors to modern political lobbying date all the way back to Demosthenes in Ancient Greece, in Fifth-Century Athens (5th Century BC). With eloquence and skill, he seduced and persuaded the people of the city of the legitimacy and suitability of the decisions pursued by the authorities. Another great orator who strove to sway and influence public decisions in Rome was Cicero in the 1st Century BC.

In Europe, interest groups date back to the corporations and guilds of the Middle Ages. In France, until the French Revolution, collectives of people sharing **non-professional** interests did not have the right to citizenship. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in 1789 paved the way for the recognition of political, philosophical and other kinds of associations.

Economic and social pressure groups, as we know them in their current form, emerged as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Economic expansion triggered a dialogue that was often antagonistic between economic operators and public authorities. The evolution of the economy itself gave rise to the appearance of new social aspirations accompanied by the corresponding demands to the state.

Old-fashioned lobbying was practiced by people with relationships and contacts who, thanks to their personal address book, were able to interact with decision-makers. It was an unsophisticated but often effective method. The increasing complexity of national and international affairs has made that approach obsolete. Modern lobbying combines rigorous techniques and diverse disciplines, requiring considerable specialisation. We will see this in detail with our case studies.

For the purposes of the European Transparency Register, "lobbying", together with interest representation and advocacy are "**all** activities designed to influence – **directly or indirectly** – policymaking, policy implementation and decision-making in the European Union institutions, no matter where they are carried out or which channel or method of communication is used. The emphasis is on 'what you do' rather than 'who you are'".

A lobbyist, as the US Senate sees it, is:

"Any individual who (1) is either employed or retained by a client for financial or other compensation (2) for services that include more than one lobbying contact; and (3) whose 'lobbying activities' constitute 20 percent or more of his or her services on behalf of that client during any six-month period."

Lobbying and, within it, government relations are, alongside investor relations and public relations, a strategic form of corporate communications. Unlike the role of investor relations, which is a corporate image tool integrated within capital market communications and public relations, government relations is a lever for targeted participation in the public decision-making process. Lobbying can help companies dependent on political and administrative decisions improve their competitiveness by obtaining advantages or avoiding disadvantages. This is true for all sectors, not only those which are highly regulated, such as essential services, e.g. water, gas, electricity or telecommunications. (Joos, 2011, p. 42).

1.1. Typology

There are many ways to classify lobbying, the most common of which are listed below.

Depending on the **nature of the strategy and the techniques used** in the lobbying campaign, we differentiate between direct and indirect lobbying.

Direct lobbying refers to lobbying public authorities without intermediaries or, in other words, on a one-to-one basis, avoiding the involvement of third parties, such as the pressure of public opinion, the media or political parties. It is based on participation on public decision-making processes, whether it be through legal channels of inclusion and/or through contact with the corresponding civil servants or elected official. In contrast, in the case of indirect lobbying, although the actions are ultimately aimed at the public decision-maker, the target audience of the message some party other than the decision-maker themselves (media, grassroots or other interest groups, for instance). Indirect lobbying aims to create a state of opinion and/or a favourable setting for the interests pursued by reinforcing the influence on public authorities. This approach is articulated through action on social media and increasingly on social networks.

Within the framework of indirect lobbying, there is a particularly significant role for **grassroots lobbying**. The strategic foundation of this approach is rooted in the mobilisation of public opinion, using petitions, e-mails, letters or telephone calls from the people to political decision-makers, in the guise of spontaneity.

In contrast to grassroots lobbying, there is **grasstop lobbying**. In effect, the idea in this case is not to influence the general public on the streets but rather to concentrate the action on a group of individuals or organisations that are particularly well placed in relation to the topic involved in the decision, such as elected representatives, senior officials in public authorities and think tanks.

Most campaigns combine different types of lobbying.

Based on **who lobbies**, we can differentiate between integrated and independent lobbying. the **integrated lobbying** is practised directly by the company or interest group through its public relations or institutional relations department. In this case, no consultancy or lobby is hired. In contrast, **independent lobbying** is practised by independent professionals, either individual lobbyists or members of a professional agency or lobby, on behalf of an organisation in exchange for remuneration (generally financial). The legal nature of such lobbying is a service agreement.

In terms of the **subjects promoting the campaign**, we can differentiate between company lobbying and group, federation and confederation lobbying. **Company lobbying** is practised by a large national or multinational company on an individual basis (Xifra, 2009).

Direct lobbying and indirect lobbying

From the perspective of establishing relations, in terms of content, direct lobbying involves creating relationships between the representatives of public authorities, while indirect lobbying focuses on establishing relationships with other audiences that contribute towards strengthening support for the interest in question, beyond the person implementing the strategy.

2. Interest Groups

2.1. Concept

An **interest group** is an organisation, other than a political party¹, established to represent or defend its members' common interests and which regularly or occasionally exercises a direct or indirect influence (through political parties or the media) on public authorities to obtain decisions that are aligned with their interests.

⁽¹⁾A political party is an organisation of people with common opinions that aims to take part in forming the collective will of the state through the election of its members to positions of representation

Therefore, an interest group is an organised body formed by active members with clear objectives. The members of the groups have to mobilise to achieve their goals that affect certain public policies.

In Wilson's opinion (1990), interest groups are organisations with a certain degree of independence from the government and political parties, which aim to influence public policy. This degree of separation from the government and political parties can vary considerably.

The body that forms the interest group has personnel to put a series of activities into practice designed to change, improve or maintain a governmental, legal or regulatory policy, etc. The objectives of some interest groups may be to change certain environmental conduct, improve working conditions, abolish child labour or any other humanitarian, social, economic, political or cultural cause. Interest groups may oppose the government, institutions or private companies.

Moreover, interest groups and companies can form an alliance to carry out lobbying actions. The broad range of lobbying strategies and tactics available to companies to intervene before public authorities is pragmatic and varied. Depending on their short- or long-term needs, companies may choose to associate with interest groups that are active in their sector of activity. Alternatively, they might instigate their own organisational services or may even contract consultants specialising in this type of mediation. In many situations, lobbying is practised through a combination of these three factors.

From a functional point of view, as subjects of lobbying, companies have to be considered as interest groups, particularly in the case of larger organisations.

However, public opinion tends to rate the link between companies and government relations negatively. It is considered unethical and is related to the traffic of influences, particularly when the legitimacy of lobbying is cast

into doubt by state representatives. In fact, in a democratic society, any group, including companies, is entitled to put forward its points of view and try to influence the corridors of political power.

Therefore, the public image of lobbying is closely linked to societies' conceptualisation of democracy and its moral values (Farnel, 1994).

On certain occasions, lobbying has been associated with attempts to influence state decisions to safeguard particular interests, with varying degrees of legitimacy.

The perception of exerting influence on public authorities varies depending on who is involved. Public opinion tends to be more positive about the influencing activities of humanitarian groups or community associations than of companies. In principle, as in the case of practising law, lobbying enables the causes and interests of all individuals and groups to be represented and defended. Not all causes are as legitimate as others, but the appreciation of these causes varies depending on the age and cultures, the environment and social positions of each of them. Moreover, when interest group has many financial or political resources to promote its position on the political scene, an issue of injustice may arise (Xifra, 2009).

Juan Francés, who held positions of responsibility in the communication departments of several Spanish Ministries in the government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, tells a very illustrative anecdote from his time in the Ministry of Economy. In 2009, the government was preparing a Royal Decree regarding bank restructuring and the draft version was sent to various political parties. To his surprise, the comments from the socialist PSC (Partit Socialista de Catalunya) and the Catalan Liberal Democrat and Christian coalition CiU (Convergència i Unió) were identical. They were exactly the same, word for word. What had happened is that the two parties had delegated the analysis of the text and the proposal for changes to the leading and all-powerful financial institution in Barcelona, La Caixa (lacaixa.es) (Francés, 2013).

2.2. Elements

There are three structural elements required by any interest group:

- They must be **organised**.
- They have an **interest** or interests to defend.
- They exert **influence** over the public authorities.

1) The group as an organised body

The first element in defining an interest group is the idea of an **organised group**. To qualify as an interest group, the existence of a minimal **formal structure** is required. In other words, a demonstration would not qualify for

this category despite bringing together a set of individuals and having the purpose of influencing a certain political process. A demonstration is a tool of influence, one of many means of action that may be used by an interest group or social movement.

Demonstrations and strikes are short-lived. If the demonstration is spontaneous, it disappears as soon as the individuals that have taken part disperse. If it has been organised by a group or committee, it is these bodies that, if applicable, fall into the category of interest group.

Moreover, there may be some doubt about the classification of interest group in the case of groups that meet regularly and keep in permanent contact, but which do not have the objective in these meetings to develop a common strategy. For instance, this happens in the case of the regular meetings (often meals) between political and economic officials with differing opinions, when they discuss current affairs.

Legally formalised and institutionalised bodies may meet the first requirement to be considered an interest group but that, in itself, is not enough. In addition, they have to be committed to one or more causes. As such, the term interest group does not apply to public relations consultants and firms of professional lobbyists or lobbies. They are organised in order to conduct influencing activities, but they are just commercial firms, intermediaries and representatives of their clients, who may indeed be considered interest groups (Xifra, 2009).

Example of an organised group

Freedom House (<https://freedomhouse.org/>)

Founded in 1941, Freedom House (FH) is a global non-profit organisation that is independent from any political party. Its objective is to advocate democracy around the world. Based in Washington DC in the USA, it has offices in several emerging and ex-communist countries.

Freedom House promotes the expansion of freedom, encouraging North American politicians, international institutions and democratic governments to adopt policies that drive progress in terms of human rights and democracy around the world. Moreover, FH provide support for people who work in young democracies to overcome the burdensome legacies of tyrannies, dictatorship and political repression. It also works with activists in repressive societies that are striving to achieve greater freedom and openness in their countries. FH converts the intangible values of freedom into a strong and tangible impact, combining analysis, advocacy and action.

Freedom House is primarily known for its famous annual global indexes of Freedom in the World. Regimes that have a foot in both camps, sharing some features with democracies and others with autocracies, often pay close attention to whether they fall or rise in terms of the various freedom indicators.

Through a series of international programs and publications, Freedom House works to drive progress in the global expansion of political and economic freedom. It publishes specific reports on certain countries, such as Zimbabwe, China and Egypt, and on the

situation of particular groups of the population, such as women. It also publishes an index of freedom to use the internet entitled Freedom on the Net.

2) Interest

Interest is at the very core of the concept of an interest group, as the name suggests. It can be considered the constituent element that drives the members to organise themselves and strive to exert influence.

Interest is a willingness to adopt a perceptible behaviour that obeys an external reality. It is an attitude that is taken to act or react depending on an immediate objective.

Interest is affirmed and demonstrated by the action initiated by the group, which may cover a broad spectrum within or outside of the law. Organising a campaign to raise public awareness and launching a rebellion are demonstrations of an interest. The difference is that the first action is legal and the second, obviously, is not.

As far as Truman (1951) is concerned, social groups are the social reality in which all political action originates. He believed that interest groups emerge when a threat emerges due to other interests or when a political balance is lost. In contrast, in his analysis of the reasons for individuals' reasons for membership and participation in interest groups, Olson (1971) reaches the conclusion that forming part of and taking action in an interest group was illogical and irrational. For instance, let's suppose that I am a hunter and I have an interest in the urban planning authorities preserving enough natural habitat and increasing the number of forest rangers to catch poachers and prevent fires. Why should I bother to become a member of the hunters' association that defends these interests if I can be a free rider or, in other words, benefit from the results obtained from other people's efforts without having to raise a finger?

To offset the effects of the tendency of individuals to act like free riders, interest groups offer incentives through benefits that can only be accessed by members. In the case of hunters, examples of the selective benefits could be receiving the association's magazine, special discounts on clothing and hunting accessories, preferential access to organised trips or the association's annual gala dinner. Such benefits may also be symbolic, such as members being given badges or t-shirts, etc.

The distinguishing feature of interest groups is that they carry out actions with political ends, just like lobbyists. Their members are mobilised in pursuit of goals that affect certain governmental policies.

The Boy Scouts or the Rotary Club² (www.rotary.org) are not interest groups, even though these groups may be mobilised politically for a particular reason.

⁽²⁾An association of business people and professionals who form a global alliance for the purpose of providing humanitarian services.

The defence of interests by interest groups requires two phases: firstly, reaching an agreement between people with a common interest (**aggregation of interests**) and, secondly, choosing and carrying out activities to fulfil this purpose (**articulation of interests**).

This concurrence of activities reveals the main function of interest groups: defending their interests by directly or indirectly influencing the political authorities (Xifra, 2009).

3) Influence

Strictly speaking, as soon as an organised group that shares an interest tries to affect specific policies and makes concerted efforts to have an impact and change certain public decisions, it becomes what we call an interest group or pressure group.

As organisations of people acting within the political process in pursuit of certain objectives, these groups aim to influence public authorities to defend their interests. They can do so through a range of different activities, including the following:

- Directly lobbying public decision-makers or, in other words, contacting them directly without intermediaries.
- Mobilising the electorate to support one party or another depending on their position with respect to the group's objectives.
- Awareness raising campaigns.
- Actions to mobilise different groups, ranging from establishing alliances to raising awareness among the general public so that citizens take action.

The actions taken can be extremely diverse, ranging from a discreet consultancy contract with a lobbying company right up to a civil disobedience campaign. However, they all share the fact that they channel a desire to influence.

An interest group's desire for influence may evolve into a desire to participate in political power itself, not from the outside but rather exercising such power directly. Some green political parties, for instance, originated from environmental interest groups that, at some point, decided to go a step further

and challenge the exercise of power at elections. Originally, workers' and socialist parties provided a vehicle for the interests of the working class and trade unions (Xifra, 2009).

Chasse, pêche, nature et traditions (CPNT.fr – 'Hunting, fishing, nature and traditions') is a French political party created in 1989 in the form of an association. Its objective is to defend a certain number of traditional values of rural France, principally hunting. In the 2017 electoral cycle, they have a partnership with the Republicans, in both the presidential and legislative elections.

Although there is not an absolute impermeable division between interest groups and political parties, the latter cannot be confused with the former, precisely in view of their essential role in the pluralist political system.

Interest groups also have to be differentiated from other similar bodies, such as social movements. In terms of public relations theory, social movements have to be seen as informal structures that act systematically using the public relations techniques, without which their demands would not exist on the media agenda or, amounting to the same thing in modern societies, they would simply not exist.

It is often the case that social actions take the form of movements, and these social movements go on to become interest groups as they formalise. In other words, they gradually regulate the membership of their members, obtaining sources of funding and defining the management team and its strategy (Rubio, 2003). An example of a social movement that has given rise to political parties is the wave of protests against the austerity measures in Spain during the recession, known as the 15-M movement, due to the large mobilisation of 15th May 2011. The 15-M movement gave rise to the left-wing party Podemos and Ada Colau's political space in Catalonia.

The key factors determining the likelihood of an interest group influencing a proposal for a public decision as follows:

- The phase of the decision-making process: the earlier they intervene, the greater the probability that the intervention will be influential.
- The characteristics of the proposal: the more technical it is, the more necessary the intervention will be.
- The capacity for intervention and action of the lobbying professionals: the more suitable the influencing action is, the greater the likelihood of success.
- The importance of contacts and the agenda: the more extensive the network of contacts, the more likely the influence will be decisive.

- The attitude of public opinion: the broader the support, the more effective the influence.
- The degree of commitment of the politicians and civil servants involved: the closer the influence of the common ideology, the more likelihood it has to succeed.
- The attitude of rival or opponent interest groups: the less involved they are, the more likely the influencing action is to be conclusive.
- The attitude of the interest groups that give support: the more committed they are, the more effective the action will be.
- The implementation of alliance strategies: the greater the number of alliances, the greater the probability that the action will be decisive (Xifra, 2009).

2.3. Typology

Interest groups can be classified in many ways. We can differentiate between them, for instance, in terms of the degree of organisation (confederations or individual associations with individual members), the structure (formal or informal and, in the case of formal structures, according to different legal structures), and the interests that they defend (material or moral).

According to the nature of the groups, they can be classified as private or public, depending on whether or not they are organically dependent in the state (Castillo, 2001).

Confederations are common in federal or supranational systems. In this respect, the largest interest groups in Brussels are confederations, such as Business Europe (until recently, UNICE).

Business Europe (formerly UNICE): www.busesseurope.eu

The origins of Business Europe date back to 1949, with the creation of the Conseil des Fédérations Industrielles d'Europe (CIFE – European Industrial Federation Council) by OECD member countries, with 24 federations from 17 countries. In 1958, after the creation of the European Economic Community, it changed its name to the UNICE (Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe) and set up its headquarters in Brussels.

It now represents industrial confederations in all EU Member States and Turkey, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and San Marino. Spain is represented through the CEOE (Spanish Confederation of Business Organisations, www.ceoe.es).

Another example is the counterpart to the businesspeople's confederation or, in other words, the (European Trade Union Confederation), which brings together 85 unions in 36 European countries and 10 industrial union confederations. It was founded in 1973 and has its headquarters in Brussels.

Formal groups have a charter or another written legal basis, keep files on their activities and grant explicit powers of representations to their leaders. Many formal groups develop from informal groups, as may be the case of a collective of parents of disabled children that ends up becoming a legally recognised association in order to negotiate with the authorities more effectively.

Groups are often classified in terms of the types of interests that they pursue. Some focus on private interests, with objectives that only benefit the category to which their members belong. Meanwhile, others pursue public interests, with goals that benefit society as a whole, such as associations aiming to help the environment, defend consumers or fight corruption.

Private interest groups can be subdivided depending on the nature of the members that they represent. There are groups in the economic sector (trade unions and business associations), professional associations and groups inspired by ideological or moral reasons (social movements, religious denominations). Another separate category are groups focusing on a single cause, such as the association of victims of the terrorist attacks in Madrid on 11th March 2004.

Case Study A: Transport. Mr. Joan Amorós. President, FERRMED (Promotion du Grand Axe Ferroviaire de Marchandises).

FERRMED or the Mediterranean Corridor lobby



Joan Amorós, President and founder, FERRMED

Brussels, March 2017

Fermed is a non-profit association founded in 2004, with its headquarters in Brussels. Its objective is to contribute towards improving European competitiveness by strengthening rail transportation with what were known as the Ferrmed standards, improving port and airport connections with their respective hinterlands, the conception of a great rail freight axis connecting Scandinavia-Rhine-Rhone-Western Mediterranean, and more sustainable development through the reduction of gas emissions that affect climate change.

It is a multisector association created by the private business sector and spearheaded by the retired automobile executive Joan Amorós (Vila-Sacra, Catalunya, 1938).

Joan Amorós defines Ferrmed's lobbying as altruistic, striving to enhance the common good at a European level by improving the transport system across the continent in a way that was less harmful to the environment and cheaper as well.

The association lobbies the European Union and the Member States to achieve its objectives.

Amorós founded Ferrmed the 2003, a year after retiring as the general director of the automobile company Nissan in Spain Espanya, having first-hand experience of the hardships of transporting freight around Europe.

In Spain, Ferrmed is primarily known as one of the main advocates of the Mediterranean Rail Corridor, as it is known. In reality, the association is far more than this – it is a lobby with trans-European and even intercontinental ambitions.

Fermed focuses on rail transportation but it has a broad range of members: private companies, business associations, transport trade unions, Chambers of Commerce, the ports of Rotterdam, Anvers and Marseille, to name but a few, and airports, such as Lleida Airport in Alguaire. Another member is the public company Ports de la Generalitat (Catalan Government Ports), as well as other ports on an individual basis. A number of city councils are members through municipal logistics and research institutions, such as the urban development agency Barcelona Regional.

The Spanish public rail company RENFE is not a member, but the logistics company Geodis is, which belongs to the French rail company Société Nationale de Chemins de Fer (SNCF).

Fruit and vegetable producers and distributors have a direct interest in improving trains as a means of transportation, as do manufacturers of pottery and other industrial goods.

Other members include road transportation companies, which are motivated by the need to have efficient railway lines on which to load trailers and thereby shorten the time that their lorry drivers are behind the wheel. Therefore, they can get further for cheaper.

In total, Ferrmed has 150 members in 14 different countries, including Russia and China.

Big objectives, modest means

The concept of Ferrmed was devised in 2003, when Joan Amorós used his professional contacts at the Port of Barcelona to plant the seed that would later grow into a great European lobby. The first members of Ferrmed were the Port of Barcelona and two logistics companies that operated there: Autotérmino and Logística y Transporte Ferroviario SA, the latter of which Joan Amorós had helped to create in 1997 and which was dissolved in 2014.

Therefore, it all began with the personal contacts and relationships of trust of a leader with a vision and the determination to make it a reality. Not even his wife believed in the venture, telling him not to let his imagination run away with him.

The membership fee for full members of Ferrmed is €6,000 per year, while the associate membership fee is €1,200. These rates have not risen since 2004.

The association's headquarters in Brussels is based within a private international engineering consultancy. This is a common strategy among European interest groups.

The salary budget is kept to an absolute minimum. To oversee the association's public affairs, the equivalent of two full-time staff members are appointed, according to the European Transparency Register, of which the association has been a member since 2009.

As also tends to be the case for non-profit interest groups that work for the common good, Ferrmed is fully aligned to all the transparency measures of the European Union and other regions in which it operates. It would not object to the European Register becoming compulsory, considering that the change would be irrelevant for its activities.

The association does not participate in European committees or expert groups that advise the European Commission, nor is it involved in industrial forums and intergroups in the European Parliament.

Its usual channels of communication and influence are specific meetings (formalised through letters to the European authorities) and research. They also organise several international conferences in different European countries, with hundreds of private and public participants. These events are organised using the human and material resources of the local Ferrmed members, which often take the initiative of holding a Ferrmed conference in different aspects of European rail transportation.

The fact that it is an extremely decentralised and, in fact, polycentric body, like the corridors that it represents, enables it to operate with a very low level of organisation and budget. The Chairman of Ferrmed works on a pro bono basis, without receiving a salary or allowance. Recently, a group of engineers has been added, who are retired like the Chairman, who help to contribute ideas and put them into practice. Joan Amorós says that he receives around 60 e-mails per day as well as plenty of offers of voluntary collaboration. In such cases, the alignment of the volunteer's skills and Ferrmed's needs is crucial, as is their compatibility with the rest of the team of professionals.

This European association considers itself a thinktank specialising in European transportation and competitiveness, as well as an interest group in the most classical sense of the term.

Ferrmed does not present awards itself, but it participates as a member of the jury for the Golden Chariot international transport award.

Fulfilling its vocation to influence, Ferrmed's website is offered in five languages: English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

Ferrmed's greatest success: A rail transportation paradigm shift in Europe

The biggest triumph of Ferrmed lobbying, as far as its Chairman is concerned, is having introduced the concept of a *reticular and polycentric network* within the railway policy of the European Union. One of the Ferrmed standards states the following:

"A reticular and polycentric Core Railway Network with a great socioeconomic and intermodal impact, with two parallel lines (double tracks each) in each of the corridors of the Network. One for high-speed trains (primarily passengers) and one for conventional trains (freight and passengers with same priority)".

In other words, Ferrmed places the emphasis on connecting economic centres, transport infrastructures and areas with high population density by train, with an overall continental vision rather than simply a cross-border perspective. It prioritises ensuring that the main ports, airports, logistic centres and industries have a rail connection to the principal European axes.

Amorós explains that, in the early years of the new century, in Europe, people used to speak about cross-border projects rather than networks. The European Union approved a list of cross-border rail projects to overcome a number of bottlenecks and to improve the flows between Member States. This did not include the Mediterranean Corridor

Ferrmed believes that it has changed the paradigm of rail infrastructure policy in the European Union with the introduction of both the concept of reticular and polycentric connections and the need to adapt common standards, which are known as the Ferrmed standards.

If this is the case, it is a fantastic return on the investments of the association's members, who pay at most €6,000 per year.

The Standards that FERRMED intends to implement in the major rail freight networks in the EU and neighbouring countries are as follows:

a. Unified coordination at EU level of the economic fund allocation for Railway Core Network and the implementation of common standards.

b. Reticular and polycentric Core Network with great socioeconomic and intermodal impact, with two parallel rail lines (both double track) in each corridor, one for high

speed trains (basically for passengers) and another for conventional trains (for freight and passengers at the same priority rate).

c. Electrified Lines (preferably 25,000 volts).

d. Width of the track UIC (1,435 mm).

e. Loading gauge UIC-C.

f. Axle load 22.5 ÷ 25 tonne.

g. Possibility of having freight length trains reaching 1,500 metres and 3,600 to 5,000 tonnes. Usable length of sidings and terminals for 1,500 metre trains.

h. Maximum slope: 12‰ (15‰, on an exceptional basis, over very short distances of just a few hundred metres).

i. Huge city bypasses for freight.

j. Availability of a network of intermodal, multifunctional and flexible terminals with high level of performance.

k. ERTMS System (at least level 2) with two-way control on each track.

l. Traffic schedules available for freight transportation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

m. Free competition, giving all companies open, non-discriminatory access to tracks.

n. Standardization and simplification of the homologation processes, administrative formalities and social legislation.

o. Unified management, monitoring and tracking systems (through ITS) established by Mega-Regions and main corridors and coordinated at EU level, including pre-arranged train paths and reserve capacity.

p. Competitive management criteria based on the principles of R+D+4i (Research, Development, innovation, identity, impact and infrastructure) throughout the global chain of added value, including balancing of freight flows.

q. Favourable and homogeneous fees for the use of infrastructures.

r. Reduction of the environmental impact of the freight transportation system (particularly noise, vibration and CO₂ emissions) as a result of the gradual retrofitting/replacement of the old railway rolling stock, infrastructural solutions when needed and an increase of the long-distance rail share of land traffic of up to 35%.

s. Freight locomotive and wagon concepts adapted to FERRMED Technical Standards.

In 2005 Ferrmed, proposed the concept of a Core Railway Network, consisting of a maximum of three or four corridors running from north to south and three or four running east to west. It announced that it was conducting an in-depth study to test the practical viability of these proposals.

In 2009, it published the report, which marked a turning point for this sector: the Fermed Global Study. It advocated what has gone on to become the famous Great Axis of the Freight Rail Network, spanning from Scandinavia to Algeciras and beyond, along the Moroccan coast: Scandinavia-Rhine-Rhone-Western Mediterranean. Fermed argued that this axis should be prioritised and backed up its arguments with scientifically proven data. It predicted that the investments in this axis, in line with the Fermed standards, would have a rate of return of 11.1% per year, which is a spectacular figure.



North-South Corridor

The study concluded that the 30 projects completed at that point that had been prioritised by the European Union's Trans-European Transport Network, combined with the investment plans of the Member States, would only serve to continue the downward trend in European rail transportation that had witnessed over the past 50 years. It called for a drastic change in direction to shift transport from roads to railways, thereby improving European competitiveness and preserving the environment.

This study cost €2,800,000. Another of Fermed's big successes was convincing the European Union to co-finance the study, through the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).

Joan Amorós' stroke of genius was managing to expand the focus from a logistical problem in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, first designing the Mediterranean Rail Corridor and then a great north-south European axis, before finally adding two enormous vectors that connect Europe with China, crossing Russia in the north and the south. From Catalonia, the Spanish Mediterranean axis passes through Europe, encompassing an intercontinental vision.

From this perspective, it is no coincidence that, right from its origins in 2004, Fermed established itself as a non-profit association under Belgian law rather than

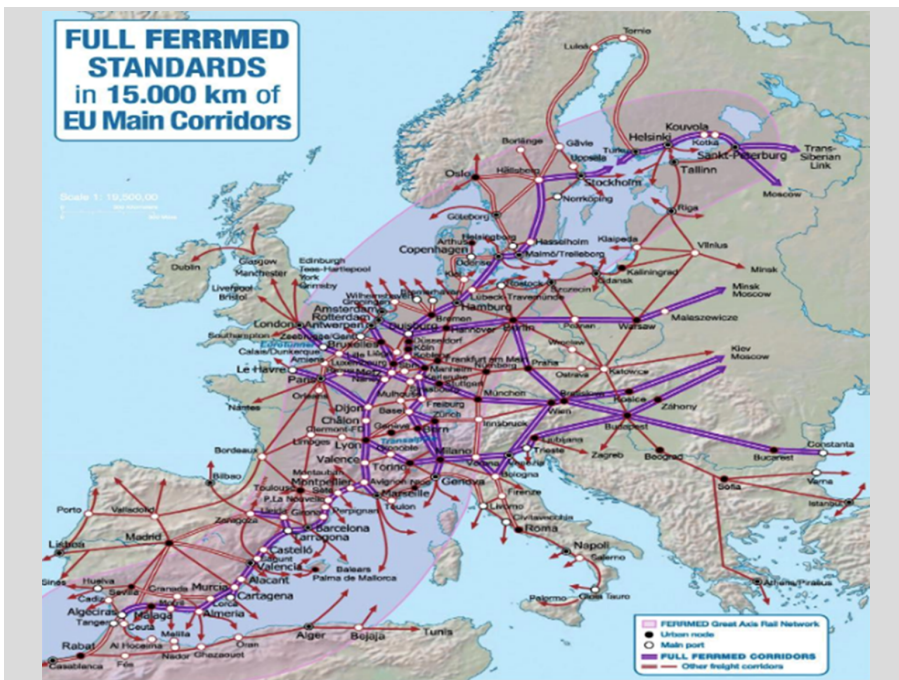
in Barcelona. Every decision of a company and interest group has a communication and brand positioning dimension.

In 2013, the European Union approved the Regulation that established a Core Railway Network, which including investments into 70,000 km of railway line across Europe up to 2030.



EU Core Railway Network

However, Fermed believes that, within the network itself, it is necessary to prioritise 15,000 km of key corridors that would give a higher and more immediate socioeconomic return.



15,000 km of EU Core Network

In November 2016, the association adopted the declaration entitled “Moving towards a Eurasian dimension”), which presents the following three large vectors of progress:

- 1) The first vector is the well-known North-South axis and the one known as EULER³, which connects the most economically dynamic regions of the European Union, including Catalonia.
- 2) The second vector is the Mediterranean axis, which included road and sea transportation. The most important commercial route in the world comes from Asia and passes across the Mediterranean Sea. Joan Amorós explains that a corridor that runs from China to the Iberian Peninsula world encompasses 70% of the world's population. It is perfectly logical that China is investing in ports in the Mediterranean: the Piraeus in Greece and the Port of Barcelona.
- 3) The third vector is the Eurasian, which would run from the south of the British Isles to Korea, passing through Benelux, Germany, Poland, Russia, the Asian post-Soviet republics and Siberia. The Baltic, Danube and Mediterranean Corridors would connect with this Eurasian vector.

The European regions in which these vectors meet offer a higher level of economic opportunity: northern France, Benelux, Germany, Austria and Denmark to the north, and south-eastern France and the Iberian Mediterranean to the south.

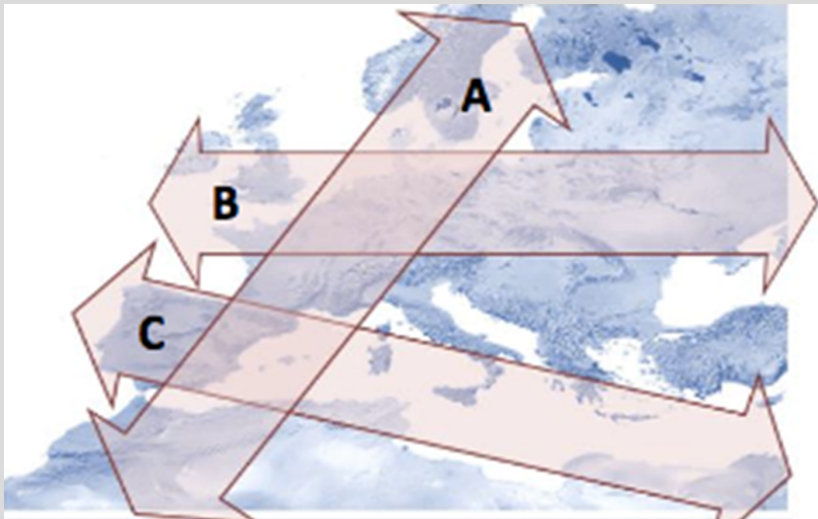


Image of the 3 vectors

Ferred's unachieved goal: Completing the Mediterranean Corridor bypassing Málaga

Joan Amorós has been troubled by multiple delays in terms of the investments required in Mediterranean Corridor in Spain. However, he would not hesitate to identify the completion of the Corridor in Andalusia across an inland route as the failure in terms of the project's objectives that upsets him most and an issue on which he does not want to admit defeat.

The Spanish government decided, with Europe's approval, that the Mediterranean Corridor will run inland from Almería to Algeciras, through Granada and not directly along the coast to connect Málaga.

In Joan Amorós's opinion, this deviation breaches the conditions set by the European Union itself: connecting ports and other transport nodes, economic centres and cities with more than a million inhabitants, such as Málaga. Going through inland Andalusia will make transportation longer, slower and, as a result, more expensive.

In 2013, the mayor of Málaga wrote a letter to the European Commission arguing that the city's metropolitan area had more than a million inhabitants, as well as an important port and airport. The European Executive responded that they had to use the official figures of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (Statistics Institute).

Joan Amorós intends to persevere, striving to ensure that the investments in rail infrastructures are made in line with rational criteria. He says that Ferred is not a train lobby but rather a lobby for the competitiveness of European industry and the greater welfare of its citizens. He sees the train as a solution for cheaper and more environmentally-friendly transportation.

Amorós believes that the successes achieved so far are a result of effort and passion and his faith in three saints: Saint Perseverance Saint Constance and Saint Patience.

He plans to keep going along the same lines for as long as he can manage it.

⁽³⁾European Union Locomotive Economic Regions – the name is also in honour of the famous Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler (1707-1783)

3. Lobbying and Public Affairs in a Democracy. Legitimacy

Academics recognise that modern societies and democratic systems of government are inconceivable without the aggregation and representation of interests. Even if the positions represented are, per definition, individual, without them there would be no pluralism of opinions and views. Democratic politics are always shaped by confrontation, negotiation, agreement and, ultimately, compromise. The sum of interests, conflicts and consensus together constitutes politics. Political decisions take place in complex procedures shaped by formal and informal rules –many of which are unknown to the general public. Lobbying thus presents numerous positive aspects: the aggregation and communication of interests; political involvement; lessons about politics for business leaders; and the satisfaction of companies' and organisations' needs in communication with politicians. Lobbying is therefore not only necessary but also democratically legitimate (Joos, 2011, p. 41).

Good lobbying fosters mutual knowledge and communication, by helping to find common ground between authorities and businesses and also civic groups. Communication and understanding between politicians and interest groups may be difficult. Lobbying can provide intermediate structures for information exchange and mutual participation in major decisions. In the best case scenario, they all work together for the public good (Joos, 2011, p. 41).

The right of association is a fundamental right in any society that claims to be democratic. According to Wilson (1990), it appears that interest groups may redress some of the failures of majority democracy. Based in the texts of Tocqueville and Rousseau, Wilson suggests that interest groups represent an alternative to traditional politics and often attract a higher participation. Such groups draw attention to issues that are often overlooked in election campaigns. As such, through the force of union, they enable the minority to make its voice heard on issues and processes that affect them directly.

Interest groups also act as a buffer between the state and citizens. They warn public authorities of the discontentment of certain segments of the population with respect to a particular policy or legislative project. In this way, they play a preventive role in terms of negative repercussions and suggest changes to legislative content. In short, they contribute towards democracy through their everyday input into the decision-making process of public authorities.

Moreover, interest groups are often the creators of new ideas and solutions to emerging problems. As they operate on the ground level, they detect problems and propose corresponding plans of action. They act as a counterweight to the influence of the bureaucratic and legislative apparatus on political issues. Nevertheless, some opponents of lobbying highlight the Machiavellian aspect of these kinds of influential communications, the perception of which is all too often sullied by criminal wrongdoings such as bribery or dubious financial rewards.

From a normative perspective of what should be the case, the practice of influencing through lobbying is perfectly legitimate, in view of the reasons presented above. It is a different matter if certain agents act in an underhand or unprofessional way. It should be remembered, however, that this happens even in the most noble of professions: medicine, law, journalism, etc. Moreover, the law exists to prevent such cases, as well as to legitimate in legal terms the participation of civic agents in the public decision-making procedure.

Article 9.2 of the Spanish Constitution states that “it is the duty of the public authorities [...] to facilitate the participation of all citizens in political life”, while Article 23.1 stipulates the citizens’ right to “participate in public matters, directly or means of representatives freely elected in regular elections by universal suffrage.” Furthermore, Article 105.a establishes that “the law shall regulate the hearing of citizens directly, or through the organisations and associations recognised by law, in the process of drawing up the administrative provisions that affect them” (Xifra, 2009).

4. The Role of the Press and Agenda-Setting

4.1. The Role of the Press

Qualified journalists and public relations professionals are in high demand from interest groups. These communication specialists can help an interest group to establish relationships of mutual interest with representatives of the public authorities. They create information dossiers and networks of contacts. They set up meetings, organise events and manages the group's relations through the internet and social media. In fact, social media have triggered such a revolution in terms of public relations and lobbying that we shall dedicate an entire section to them in Module 2, where we will also analyse the role of the Big Data revolution that is already under way in public communication.

Such professionals are needed to design lobbying action plans that involve press relations. The media constitute a platform for expression and opinion that enables thousands or even millions of people to be reached through the mass dissemination of information conveyed to journalists, as well as their role in terms of promotion and publicity (Xifra, 2009).

In politics, they say that if you are not in the media, you do not exist. With a notable exception, the same can be said of lobbying.

The arms lobby is the exception to the rule that more coverage is always better.

On the Feast of the Holy Innocents, 28th December 2007, Spain pass the Arms Trading Act 53/2007.

Oxfam, Amnesty International and Greenpeace, three non-governmental organisations in an alliance to tighten controls of the trade of weapons, congratulated themselves, albeit with reservations, for the passing of the Spanish Arms Trading Act. These NGOs complained that the government had given favourable treatment to the Spanish arms association to the detriment of civil society. As the dealings with the association were not seen in public, the favourable treatment it received was not the focus of media coverage and public opinion.

Grouped together in the AFARMADE (Spanish Association of Manufacturers of Weapons and Defence and Security Material), arms manufacturers protected their export markets by lobbying as discreetly as possible throughout the

period in which the law was processed. Both sides were aware of the popularity of their position and, as such, the arms manufacturers did not want publicity while the NGOs did.

After a period of internal upheaval, the AFARMADE was dissolved in September 2009.

The media enhance public recognition and visibility. For instance, an appearance by the spokesperson of an environmental association in defence of women who have suffered domestic violence on a televised debate or news programme can give the group media exposure that may eventually give rise to an increase in the number of members or a change in perception in terms of public opinion in relation to the interest group central issue. This visibility can be gained or reinforced through advertising supports.

Secondly, social media offer a source of information for interest groups. The press often publicises legislative initiatives that represent the starting point from which certain opponent groups take action in terms of press relations to promote their opinions. In addition, the media sometimes provide the ideal setting for exchanging ideas in order to trigger public reflection. Therefore, an opinion article on palm oil published in the printed press may lead to a step forward in terms of changing the eating habits of the general public and spark demands for legislative changes (Xifra, 2009).

Controversy about palm oil: the Nutella scare

In recent years, consumers are increasingly worried about palm oil and its possible carcinogenic effects. Palm oil is the most consumed oil globally, representing an annual business of \$44 bn. It is not easy to fill your shopping cart in a supermarket with palm-oil-free products: almost half of all packaged goods there will contain it.

Apart from its potential health risks, the enormous popularity of palm oil threatens tropical rainforests, where it comes from.

The cancer risk associated with palm oil is due to compounds called glycidyl fatty acid esters (GE), that are produced when palm oil is heated above 200 degrees Celsius.

According to a 2016 report by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), at 200° C, palm oil generates more of a contaminant that may potentially cause cancer than other oils. But the European authority made no recommendation against palm oil in particular, adding that further study was necessary. Nevertheless, the media picked up the subject and it quickly became a major controversy. Interestingly, most of the attention focused on one single brand: the popular chocolate spread Nutella.

4.2. Agenda-Setting

The theory of agenda-setting suggests that the media have great influence on the public through their selection of which stories are considered to be of journalistic interest and the degree of protagonism and amount of space assigned to them.

In accordance with the agenda-setting theory put forward by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in the 1970s (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), the media set the agenda of public opinion, by highlighting certain issues. Agenda-setting theory helps the public understand the dominant role of the media. The theory requires salience transfer, which is the media's capacity to transfer the important matters on their media news agendas to the public agendas.

Agenda-setting refers to a competence among people who put forward issues to grab the attention of media professionals, the public and government authorities. It is the process by which the mass media determines what the general public thinks and what it is concerned about. Agenda-setting is used to remodel all the events that happen within a certain environment and simplify them before they are presented to the public.

The two most fundamental assumptions of agenda-setting are:

- 1) The press and the media do not reflect reality, but rather they filter and shape it.
- 2) Concentrating resources on a few issues leads the public to perceive that these issues are more important than others.

The timeframe is one of the most critical aspects of determining the mass media agenda.

The first level of agenda setting is the selection of the object or issue for attention ("what to think" or salience transfer).

Media coverage can generate prominence for the issues or people in question. The media tell people WHAT TO THINK ABOUT but not WHAT THEY THINK.

Society responds to the pseudo-environment created by the media, formed by the perception of what is and what is not the case in relation the environment that surrounds them.

Agenda-setting establishes the key issues or images in the public's mind.

There are three basic kinds of agenda-setting: public, media and political.

First of all, the media's agenda has to be set, followed by the public agenda. Lastly, in response to the public agenda, political leaders have to create a political agenda.

In the simplest model, the media agenda directly affects the public agenda, which, in turn, directly affects the political agenda.

Agenda-setting is the selection of attributes for thought (“what to think”). These attributes are the characteristics and properties that define the images of each object and issue.

The media tell people what they have to think in the following ways:

- 1) Priming = Focusing on certain issues.
- 2) Framing = Interpreting stories.

Priming

- Some issues are featured, while others are relegated.
- An important question: How do journalists select the news?

Framing

- How does the media tell the story?
- For example, young people “with a squatter’s appearance” or “marginalised”.
- Framing is inevitable, but it must be exercised with caution.

Positive aspects of Agenda-setting theory

- It has the power to explain why most people prioritise the same issues above others.
- It has the capacity to predict whether a group of people exposed to the same media will coincide in terms of considering the same stories to be important.
- It is a succinct and uncomplex theory that is easy to understand.
- It can be proven to be false. If a group of people are not exposed to the same media, they will not coincide in terms of considering the same stories to be important.
- It is a springboard for further research.
- It helps to organise knowledge that exists in relation to the effects of the media.

Negative aspects

- Media users may not be as ideal as the theory assumes. People may not be well-informed nor deeply involved in public matters. In fact, many people pay occasional and intermittent attention to public matters, often ignoring the details.
- For people who have already made their decisions and formed their opinions, the affect of agenda-setting is weakened.

- The news cannot create or hide the problems. The effect of agenda-setting can simply modify the degree of awareness, the priorities and the prominence of a set of problems.

One of the most common criticisms of agenda-setting theory is that it is too hard to measure. Surveys on media contents and public responses often divide the choices into very general categories and the results are often not conclusive enough to be considered really relevant or precise. In itself, agenda-setting is inherently informal, both in terms of its topographical method and the number of variables that affect the results.

Thanks to technological advances, there are now many more types of media, and potentially many more kinds of media that can influence the masses. When this theory was developed, the media followed a unidirectional communication model, with the radio, television and cinema churning out content at the audience. With this idea in mind, it is easy to see how agenda-setting theory came to the fore.

However, now we live in an age in which the media are just one of the two channels of communication and an almost unlimited number of sources of content have been generated. The Internet and social media enable citizens to take part in public discourse and become sources of content for the media. This idea had no precedents in the early days of agenda-setting theory.

So, the media does not have as much influence as it used to and, as a result, McCombs and Shaw's agenda-setting theory is not as fashionable as it once was.

5. Think Tanks, Public Relations and Lobbying

The term “think tank” was first used during the Second World War to refer to a safe place where military planners could discuss strategies. Nowadays, we associate the term institutes that are not educational in nature, that bring together experts to discuss important social, economic and political problems. They are also known as “studentless universities” because they have academics but nobody to teach.

Think tanks have become ubiquitous. Before the 1990s, very little attention was paid to political research institutes. However, their recent proliferation has led to increasing interest in studying them beyond the Anglo-Saxon world in which they emerged. It is calculated that, in the United States, there are around 1,500 think tanks.

Think tanks vary enormously in terms of size, structure, scope and significance. The term “think tank” has extensively been applied to any organisation that conducts technical or scientific research and analysis dedicated to public policies. In Anglo-Saxon countries, they are independent or autonomous from the state, but this is often not the case in continental Europe (especially in France and Russia) and China. In Japan, it is common for companies to set up their own think tanks.

The British and United States’ definition of a think tank is a relatively autonomous organisation that analyses political issues independently from the government, political parties and interest groups. Their autonomy is relative because their financing often depends directly on these organisations, although they try to maintain freedom with respect to their research. Think tanks try to influence or inform public policies through intellectual arguments and analysis and not with direct lobbying (Stone, 2004).

Think tanks play a very significant role in the political process, as the elected officials take their opinion into account when making changes to public policies. In many respects, the more complex the issue, the more influence think tanks have. For instance, nobody would ever expect a government to embark on a reform of the welfare state or Social Security, healthcare or education system without taking inspiration from the work of think tanks.

For the above reasons, it is advisable for interest groups to be able to count on think tanks when developing their influence strategies, particularly in the medium and long term.

One of the recurring issues in relation to think tanks is that it is very difficult to determine their degree of influence in terms of the methodology to follow. In view of the fact that think tanks have to convince their own target audiences (members, benefactors, media contacts and public authorities) of their relevance, they can easily exaggerate the real extent of their influence. It may equally be the case that think tanks have a real influence or that the public decision-makers, in order to gain legitimacy, back up their arguments with the position of think tanks that coincide with the position they already had (Stone, 2004).

In Spain, there are relatively few think tanks. As an institution, they belong to a foreign tradition and, as such, we tend to neglect financing their research and all aspects that do not yield a return in the immediate future. However, some Spanish think tanks have become well consolidated. In the sphere of international relations, notable examples include the Real Instituto Elcano, the Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE) in Madrid, and the Centre d'Investigacions Internacionals i Desenvolupament (CIDOB) in Barcelona (Xifra, 2009).

The functions of think tanks

Despite running the risk of generalising and over-simplifying, some of the typical functions of think tanks are listed below:

- Analysing the political problems from the perspective of different academic disciplines.
- Focusing on political ideas and concepts, investigating the context in which public decisions are made.
- Gathering and organising relevant political information.
- In line with their academic nature, rather than political management institutions, maintaining a medium- to long-term perspective focusing on trends rather than the immediate reality.
- Striving to influence political decisions through their publications and impact on the public debate, or alternatively through direct contacts, but always keeping their distance from the partisan or political realm. This quest for influence brings them closer to interest groups.
- Aiming to inform a large audience, using the latest mass communication techniques and public and media relations strategies. Think tanks want to be relevant for politics and civil servants, as well as for society.

The objective of all think tanks is to influence the climate of opinion in which political actors operate and to inform public decision-makers or people who may have an impact on them.

Typology

As in the case of interest groups, think tanks can be classified in many ways, such as by their organisation or the goal pursued, their size or ideology. In view of the disparity of opinions among the experts with respect to an exact definition of a think tank, there is not currently any classification that does not leave out some types.

McGann and Weaver (2000) differentiate between four types of think tank:

- 1) Academic (studentless university)
- 2) Contractual
- 3) Advocacy or defence
- 4) Party-affiliated

Citing McGann and Weaver (2000), Abelson (2002) and Stone (2004), Elliott (2005) provides a table of the characteristics of each kind of think tank. We reproduce a version of this table adapted to a political framework that goes beyond the bipartisan model in the United States:

An **academic** think tank employs academics and, in particular, professors with a solid experience in research and publication. However, unlike universities, the experts do not have to teach classes. They usually specialise in publishing books and topics that politicians will take into consideration in the long run. They place particular importance on the rigour and prestige of their research and are often financed from various sources, which are predominantly private. Their agenda or objectives are determined internally, being heavily influenced by the researchers.

An example of an academic think tank

The Brookings Institution

Brookings is considered to be the world's first think tank. Founded in 1916 by a wealthy trader, Robert Brookings, the objective of this non-profit institution with headquarters in Washington DC is to provide politicians with research that can be used in the future, rather than focusing in the political issues of the time. Its mission is to carry out in-depth research that contributes new ideas for resolving society's problems at a local, national and global level.

Its objectives are: 1) Strengthening democracy in the United States; 2) Promoting socioeconomic, security and opportunities for all Americans; 3) Ensuring a more open, safe, prosperous and cooperative international system.

It has more than 300 researchers and it is extremely proud of its independence, which it can afford to maintain thanks to a total capital of \$473.8 million according to its annual report in 2016.

Like academic think tanks, **contractual research** think tanks contract employees with PhDs and good academic qualifications. They also emphasise rigour in their research and strive to uphold the reputation of their work being objective and credible. They differ from academic think tanks in that they are financed by contract. They have clients, which obviously influences their agenda and the type of product that they offer. As a general rule, they receive public funding and adapt their objectives to the public client. Their output tends to be reports that are submitted to the client. They may be integrated within universities, forming part of the institutions but operating with autonomy.

Advocacy think tanks specialise in providing public decision-makers with research on current issues. As the name suggests, they try to 'sell' their ideas to specific audiences, rather than upholding objectivity. According to McGann and Weaver (2000), despite maintaining formal independence, advocacy think tanks are tied to particular ideological groups or interests. Their attitude with respect to the political process is to try to convince and help their own ideas advance.

Example of Advocacy tank

The Centre for European Reform

Based in London, The Centre for European Reform is a think-tank aiming at making the European Union work better and strengthening its role in the world. The CER is pro-European and anti-Brexit but defines itself as "not uncritical". It regards European integration as largely beneficial but considers that in many respects the union does not work well. CER also thinks that the EU should take on more responsibilities globally, on issues ranging from climate change to security. The CER aims to promote an open, outward-looking and effective European Union and is now advocating for the softest Brexit possible. Its model for the EU-United Kingdom relationship is Switzerland's.

Lastly, a **party-affiliated** think tank is organised around a specific party's issues or program. Its employees are often current and former party officials, politicians and party members (Xifra, 2009).

An example of a party-affiliated think tank

FAES, Fundació para el análisis y los estudios sociales (Foundation for social analysis and studies)

The FAES is a private non-profit foundation that works in the field of central, liberal and reformist political ideas and proposals. Linked to the Spanish Partido Popular (People's Party) since its creation in 1989, its president is José María Aznar. In October 2016, it officially disassociated itself from the Partido Popular, renouncing the public subsidies

that it received as a party foundation and removing the board members formed part of the conservative party.

The FAES organises discussion forums, seminars, conferences, summer camps and training courses. It edits electronic publications, books, the journal *Cuadernos de Pensamiento Político* (Notebooks on Political Thought), studies and books written by the foundation and the publisher Gota a Gota. In addition, it is in contact with other foundations and think tanks in Europe, the United States and Latin America, as well as thinkers and academics all over the world.

Case Study B: Think tanks in Spain. Mr. Francesc Ponsa Herrera, PhD in Social Communication. Director of the *Observatorio de los think tanks en España*. (Spanish Think Tank Observatory).

March 2017

- What recommendations would you give to corporate communication professionals with respect to using think tanks as another option for communication objectives?

Think tanks are organisations that produce knowledge with significant applicability. For this reason, their output can be useful, firstly, for backing up corporate arguments with data, statistics or comparative policies and, secondly, they can help to identify risks or threats in the geopolitical sphere. As such, departments of institutional relations, communication, research and strategy should monitor the output of think tanks (and other institutions) to guide the direction of the organisation's own action.

- In your opinion, what are the merits and errors or shortcomings of the Spanish and Catalan transparency laws with respect to the think tanks in our country?

The transparency laws have led to a paradigm shift for Spanish and Catalan political culture. In this respect, there are still many aspects to improve on, such as, for instance, the certainty that greater transparency implies greater confidence and, as a result, more capacity to access more sources of finance. The aforementioned laws do not specify the quality of the access to the information. In other words, it does not ensure that the information that can be consulted is comprehensible. Let's not forget that information overload (large volumes of data) is another method of concealment.

- For example, you say that the majority of Spanish subsidies to think tanks go to party foundations. Can you give us some specific statistics?

I posted an article on my blog in 2012 that answers this question. Here are some excerpts from the article:

The Spanish model of foundations linked to political parties is halfway between the two predominant models: the Germanic and the British. On the one hand, like Germanic foundations, Spanish party think tanks receive significant public funding for conducting activities related to promoting democracy. On the other, as in the British model, they benefit from private donations, generally from companies but also from individuals, that contribute towards financing the party.

In accordance with the Germanic model, political party foundations are heavily dependent on public authorities in terms of financing the activities that they undertake. In this respect, one of the main channels of public funding of political party foundations are the subsidies awarded by the different administrations specifically intended for them. In the case of Spain, these subsidies were created in 1994, in the period when the PSOE was in power with a minority government with the support of CiU.

Alongside these state subsidies, the Catalan government, through the Department of Justice, has also created its own specific subsidies for Catalan political party foundations. Other institutions, such as the Barcelona Provincial Council, certain large city councils and other departments of the Catalan Government, grant subsidies on an extraordinary and nominal basis for party foundations.

Coinciding with the arrival of these subsidies, most political parties created their own foundations in Catalonia. This is the case of *Nous Horizons* (*Iniciativa per Catalunya*; noushorizons.cat), which was founded in 1994, and the *Fundació Trias Fargas* –known as *CatDem* since 2009– (*Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya*, known since July 2016 as the *Partit Demòcrata Europeu Català*; catdem.org), which was founded shortly after the first subsidies were awarded. Before 1994, there were only two such foundations: the *Fundación Rafael Campalans* (*Partit Socialista de Catalunya*; fcampalans.cat); created in 1979, and the *Institut d'Estudis Humanístics Miquel Coll i Alentorn* (*Unió Democràtica de Catalunya*; INEHCA.cat), founded in 1992.

The emergence of specific public subsidies for private non-profit organisations linked to political parties generated a 'creation effect' in terms of political party foundations, in order to access these subsidies. In short, there was a boom in the creation of organic foundations associated with Spanish political parties intended to finance activities within the broad category of promoting democratic culture. Over time, these foundations became a useful financing tool for political parties.

All in all, political party foundations have a long way to go to demonstrate their status as catalysts of ideas for the benefit of society. There has been no shortage of challenges: the recession, self-government, social cohesion, political disillusionment, etc. However, until they produce evidence to the contrary, the instrumentalisation of these foundations by parties still weighs heavily. To put it simply, there is a lot of 'tank' but not much 'thinking'.

- What should European think tanks do to be more like their counterparts in the USA? Is there a possibility that Spanish think tanks could play in the European leagues or, even further afield, in North America?

First of all, they would have to guarantee their financing in order to expand their structure. That is the crux of the matter. US think tanks have three times the budgets and staff of their European counterparts. It has been well-demonstrated that the greater the budget, the greater the media presence. More presence in the media implies more calls to appear before parliamentary chambers. More appearances and media impacts increase the perception of influence among opinion leaders. Therefore, for Spanish think tanks to be able to increase their specific weight on the global scene, they need to access more sources of finance.

- How can the general public exert pressure to ensure that these think tanks stop being elephant graveyards and old boys' networks, to become less self-serving and more useful to society?

Firstly, we need to eliminate the invisibility of these institutions. Most of them are unknown by the majority of the population. In the case of party foundations, I would opt for eliminating direct subsidies (however many euros for however many seats in parliament) and replace them with competitive subsidies with rigorous monitoring and evaluation.

- Is there any quality assessment for the publications and output of Spanish think tanks? If they achieve higher quality, the media would probably want to invite them, rather than the more or less well-worn representatives that they currently use, some of whom are very poor and sectarian?

I don't know in general. Some think tanks that I have published with have a thorough peer review and editing system. But I don't think that is the norm.

6. The Business of Lobbying: Consultancies and Professionals. Deontology

As we saw at the beginning, under US law, a lobbying firm refers to a person or organisation that has one or more employees who lobby on behalf of a client. Therefore, freelance lobbyists are also considered lobbies or lobbying firms.

Consultancies

Lobbying consultancies are mainly either law firms, public relations agencies, or lobbies created by former high-ranking public officials –which often take the form of law firms.

The art of influencing the legislative process requires experts in law, but also in communication.



K Street is the name of the street in Washington where the majority of the lobbies operating in the US capital have their offices.

Public relations consultancies mainly focus their efforts on public opinion through communication campaigns and grassroots lobbying.

The advantage that they have over law firms is the great range of services that they offer their clients. A large consultancy will have specialists in lobbying, publicity and media relations. Some offer spokesperson training services for senior executives. In view of this trend, some law firms have decided to create a subsidiary company specialising in public relations and lobbying. This is the case, for instance, of one of the most prestigious law firms in Washington, Arnold & Porter, which owns the agency Apco Associates (Xifra, 2009).

In the European Union, an analysis of the list of the leading 200 public relations consultancies, prepared by the AALEP (Association of Accredited Public Policy Advocates) reveals that many lobbying consultancies are delegation of large North-American firms.

Top Brussels lobbying consultancies according to the AALEP

- Fleishman-Hillard (Belgium): 59 declared lobbyists, 46 European Parliament access passes.
- Burson-Marsteller (Belgium): 60 declared lobbyists, 33 EP access passes.
- Kreab Gavin Anderson (Belgium): 45 declared lobbyists, 29 EP access passes.
- FTI Consulting Belgium (Belgium): 40 declared lobbyists, 26 EP access passes.
- APCO Worldwide (USA): 25 declared lobbyists, 28 EP access passes.
- FTI Consulting Belgium (Belgium): 40 declared lobbyists, 26 EP access passes.
- G Plus Ltd (UK): 41 declared lobbyists, 25 EP access passes.
- FIPRA International Limited (UK): 24 declared lobbyists, 21 EP access passes.
- Cabinet DN Consulting (Belgium): 31 declared lobbyists, 19 EP access passes.
- Hume Brophy (Ireland): 24 declared lobbyists, 18 EP access passes.

Lastly, lobbies run by former politicians or senior executives are often law firms in legal terms, as we will see in the Case Study O on lobbying in the United States.

Professionals

Lobbyists are any individuals who conduct the activity of lobbying. They have to be in a position to access the public authorities to try to influence and persuade them. Some lobbyists, in fact the majority, are professionals, offering their services to defend the interests of third parties in return for financial remuneration. However, as we have already seen, lobbying may also be carried out by individual citizens, NGO volunteers or members of an association or pressure group pursuing a specific objective.

Lobbyists identify the key players in the public decision-making process and make contact with them in order to advance their clients' positions. They may operate as consultants or, in other words, performing their services for several

different clients. They may also be employed by a company and, in that case, they only defend the interests of that company. Alternatively, they may be employed by an association, federation or other interest group.

These professionals are often lawyers, economists or public relations specialists. Lobbying is one of the career alternatives available to former civil servants and elected politicians. Former senior executives in public administrations and politics have better insight than anybody else in terms of how the inner workings of power function. Moreover, they have a valuable network of personal contacts.

A foundation in law and economics is very useful when it comes to drafting alternatives to laws and economic provisions. However, specific cases require experts on an ad hoc basis. For instance, an association of animal feed producers may contract a vet to monitor the legislative developments affecting the sector and draw up the association's proposals and counter-proposals in relation to phytosanitary matters. In addition, public authorities will benefit from the specialised knowledge of the professionals representing the various interest groups.

A good lobbyist adapts to the particular circumstances of each environment in which the public decision in question will be taken, in order to exert maximum influence.

- They try to be positive and contribute something to the exchange with the public authority or political representative. Of course, this is not a matter of doing anything illegal, but rather a case of contributing technical or some other kind of information, perhaps political or economic in nature, that the decision-maker considers valuable.
- They work with a long-term perspective and avoid improvising. They are strategists.
- They implement a communication strategy. They are an excellent and persuasive communicator and they like to take the initiative. They are proactive rather than reactive. They strive to achieve their objectives actively rather than defensively (although, as we know, there are times when defensive lobbying is required).
- They are prepared to make compromises and know exactly the limits of the concessions they can make in a negotiation. They are flexible but have a clear and resolute idea in advance of the minimum conditions required for an agreement.
- They know and respect the uses, administrative cultures and dynamics of each institution that they deal with, at whatever level it may operate (local, regional, national, supranational or global). If their lobbying

focuses on the supranational or international level, they have a command of several languages.

- In terms of their academic and intellectual qualifications, a good lobbyist has a firm grasp of public relations and strategic communication techniques in general, and is familiar with negotiation and arguing techniques. They have a solid foundation in Law, Economics, Business Management, Political Science and Administration, or they find specialist collaborators who do (Xifra, 2009).

Deontology

According to the definition by the Stanford Dictionary of Philosophy:

“The word deontology derives from the Greek words for duty (*deon*) and science (or study) (*logos*). In contemporary moral philosophy, deontology is one of those kinds of normative theories regarding which choices are morally required, forbidden, or permitted”.

The deontology of lobbying consists of exercising it with integrity, honesty and respect.

In order to assert their ethical standards and burnish the legitimacy of lobbying, many lobbyists' associations around the world have adopted an ethical code of conduct. As an example, we have reproduced part of the code of conduct of the Association of Accredited Public Policy Advocates to the European Union, AALEP.

Code of Conduct of the Association of Accredited Public Policy Advocates to the European Union (fragment)

The Code of Conduct for Interest Representatives is an important initiative for promoting public trust in the integrity of European decision-making. To that end, public office holders, when they deal with the public and with lobbyists, are required to honour the standards set out for them in their own Codes of Conduct.

For their part, interest representatives communicating with public office holders are expected to apply the principles of openness, transparency, honesty and integrity and must abide by the standards of conduct, which are set out below:

In the context of their relations with the European Parliament and the European Commission, Interest Representatives shall:

- Always identify themselves by name and by the entity or entities they work for or represent; declare the interests and where applicable the clients or the members, which they represent;
- Not obtain or try to obtain information, or any decision, dishonestly;
- Not claim any formal relationship with the European Parliament or the Commission in their dealings with third parties, nor represent themselves as to the effect of registration to mislead third parties and/or EU staff;

- Ensure that, to the best of their knowledge, information which they provide is complete, up-to-date and not misleading;
- Not sell to third parties copies of documents obtained from the European Parliament or the European Commission;
- Not induce EU staff, or Members' assistants or trainees, to contravene rules and standards of behaviour applicable to them;
- If employing former EU staff or Members' assistants or trainees, respect their obligation to abide by the rules and confidentiality requirements which apply to them;
- Observe any rules laid down on the rights and responsibilities of former Members of the European Parliament and the European Commission;
- Inform their clients of their obligations as lobbyists towards the European Parliament and the European Commission.

Case Study C: Self-Determination. Assemblea Nacional Catalana (ANC). Catalan National Assembly. Mr. Hadar Ayxandri. National Board Member, Barcelona, Spain

April 2017

Hadar Ayxandri is a pedagogue by training and a member of the Board of the Assemblea Nacional Catalana (ANC) or Catalan Assembly. He represents the groups and members based abroad, or "Foreign Assemblies".

Catalan Assembly, Catalonia's Largest Civil Society Organisation

The Catalan National Assembly (ANC), despite its name, is a non-governmental organisation. Founded in 2012, it brings together more than 80,000 people from all parts of Catalan society, including different ideologies, religions and nationalities. They work on a voluntary basis for a common cause: to win Catalonia's independence in a completely peaceful and democratic way.

The name *Assemblea Nacional Catalana* is inspired by the other civic society organisation it wants to honour: the "*Assemblea de Catalunya*" or Assembly of Catalonia (1971-1977), a unitary platform of forces across the Catalan political and social opposition against the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco. It ceased to exist when parliamentary democracy was restored in 1977.

The ANC is organised as a large network with a bottom-up approach, respecting the autonomy of local groups. The ANC embraces plurality in debate and the unity of action but always prioritises the needs and idiosyncrasies of each region and community.

ANC is a single-issue interest group: Its goal is to contribute to create the Catalan Republic based on democracy, freedom and social justice principles and values, coacting with political parties and civil entities.

The ANC is not associated with any political party and are entirely financed by membership subscriptions and its own product merchandising.

The ANC consists of:

- 520 Territorial Assemblies (town, district, or regional).

- 38 Foreign Assemblies around the world. The international network's goal is to explain the Catalan independence process to the world.
- 52 professional and social issues assemblies (i.e. Lawyers' assembly, Translators' assembly, LGBT assembly, Women for Independence assembly etc.). These assemblies co-ordinate and unite people with similar professions and interests, to work as think-tanks.

ANC and the European Transparency Register

ANC is recognised as an interest group within the European Transparency Register since October 2016⁴. The aim of the organisation is to be able to reach out to top European officials to lobby in favour of the recognition of Catalonia's right to self-determination, and thus, a democratic referendum.

ANC's main activities as presented in the Register are:

- Record massive and peaceful demonstrations for five years in a row (2012-2016) for Catalan independence.
- International events all over the world explaining the case of Catalonia.
- Ongoing campaign defending elected officials against criminal prosecution for political reasons.

ANC declares spending less than €10,000 per year on lobbying, and does not participate in any European Union advisory committees.

ANC is a global reference in political mobilisation. Who else gets millions of peaceful demonstrators out on the streets five years in a row (2012-2016) and counting? ANC does it every National Day of Catalonia (11 September). Such figures are absolutely exceptional in Europe in the last few decades, and yet, these mobilisations keep happening.

ANC's benchmarking includes innovation. It invented the "demonstration with previous registration" in 2013, after over a million people swarmed the Barcelona centre on 11 September 2012, and were unable to walk a single inch to the supposed end of the march. The next year, inspired by the Baltic Way of 23 August 1989, ANC organised the "Via Catalana" or Catalan Way, where 1.6 million people joined hands along some 400 km of the old Roman Via Augusta. Every registered participant knew in which numbered section of 500 meters they were expected. Nine months later, a gigafoto of the whole Via Catalana was presented, thanks to the cooperation of 800 volunteer photographers.

In 2014, the Catalan Assembly organised another gigantic demonstration with over a million people forming the letter V for "vote" and "victory" on two main converging avenues of Barcelona. In 2015, the massive gathering was again in Barcelona, and in 2016 it became polycentric in five Catalan cities, including the capital.

A series of criminal trials for disobedience against Catalonia's highest elected officials, including the former President Artur Mas, have led to an increase in social mobilisation by ANC and other civil society organisations. ANC considers such prosecutions politically-motivated and worries about the respect of fundamental rights in Spain. Together with other similar organisations with no ties to political parties, in March 2017 ANC drafted a "Report on the political situation and the violation of fundamental rights in Catalonia".

ANC wants to keep the lines of communication open with European Union authorities to assess if the situation of fundamental rights and the rule of law in Spain requires action by Brussels, similarly to what is already happening with Poland and Hungary.

Many pro-independence activists believe that, if the European Union enforces its rule of law mechanisms and keeps Spain from authoritarian reactions against Catalonia, they can do the rest by themselves: exercising the right to self-determination, and gaining independence democratically and peacefully.

Watch a video of the interview with Mr. Francesc Bellavista, member of ANC's International Commission and the National Board. Barcelona, Spain.

⁽⁴⁾Disclosure: The author, Erika Casajoana, is registered as a lobbyist for the ANC and contact person in Brussels

Case Study D: Culture. Pro-Language Platform. Ms. Marga Payola, Executive Board member. Barcelona and Brussels

Brussels, March 2017

Marga Payola is member of the Executive Council and international director of the non-governmental organisation *Plataforma per la Llengua* (Platform for the Language), a role that she has performed on a voluntary basis since 2016 with the support of an International Relations technician based in Barcelona. Marga Payola's duty, which she performs in the EU capital, is to advise the MEP Ramon Tremosa, who was re-elected when he stood for the party *Convergència i Unió* in 2014.

The *Plataforma per la Llengua* (hereinafter, the Platform) has 12,000 members. It considers itself to be the "Catalan language NGO". It works to promote the Catalan language as a social cohesion tool in the various Catalan-speaking regions, from a cross-disciplinary perspective focusing on the socioeconomic and audiovisual spheres, the language acquisition of new residents, universities, education and public administration, among other fields of activity. The accolades it has received include the 2008 National Culture Award for the Social Projection of the Catalan language, presented by Catalan government. Since 2013, the Platform presents its own awards, named after the activist Martí Gasull, for exemplary cases of defence of the Catalan language. In 2017, the award was given to the Sikh Community of Catalonia, after a popular vote.

The Platform's lobbying actions in Brussels are conducted on an occasional basis, in view of the fact that the group's main efforts focus on improving the situation of Catalan within its own linguistic sphere. To this end, they have contacted companies to explain that using Catalan is not simply a hollow gesture, but rather that it makes perfect sense from a business perspective. For instance, it convinced the Swedish multinational IKEA to publish its catalogue in Catalan, and it has been a great move for the company.

In the European Union, 50 million people, 10% of the total, speak a language that is not an official language of the Member States. The Platform believes that the status of unofficial languages is not representative of their importance. As it currently stands, according to EU regulations, an item cannot be labelled only in Catalan because all products have to be labelled in at least one official language. They can be labelled in Catalan, but not only in Catalan.

The Platform is a member of the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD), which is a European network that focuses on linguistic and planning policies for constitutional and regional languages and languages of small states. The member of the NPLD include national and regional governments, universities and associations like the Platform. The objective of the NPLD is to facilitate the exchange of best practices among governments, public planners, professionals, academics and experts across Europe.

The Platform is a member of a second network, the European Language Equality Network (ELEN). ELEN is an international organisation of European civil society that

specialises in the protection and promotion of regional, minority and threatened languages. It represents 44 linguistic groups in 201 European states.

Examples of ELEN member organisations are language immersion schools such as the award winning Diwan Breton medium schools organisation in Brittany, single language organizations such as the Karelian Language Society (Karelia) and Kowethas An Yeth Kernewek (Cornwall), umbrella organisations such as Kevre Breizh (Brittany), Kontseilua (Basque Country), Mudiadau Dathlu'r Gymru (Wales), the Estonian Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, and large cultural organizations such as Acció Cultural del País Valencià (Valencia), and Plataforma per la Llengua and Òmnium Cultural (Catalonia), Conradh na Gaeilge (Ireland), Commun na Gaidhlig (Scotland), and A Mesa pola Normalización Lingüística (Galicia), university departments such as SOMU at the University of Mainz (Germany), and research institutes such as the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (Italy).

ELEN's work is on EU funded language projects with our members, for example, the Digital Language Diversity Project funded by the EU Erasmus Plus programme.

Both the NPLD and ELEN carry out advocacy before nationals, regional and local authorities, as well as the Council of Europe, intergovernmental continental organisations focusing on human rights, education and culture. ELEN works alongside other international organisations, such as the United Nation and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The Platform takes part in these networks' conferences and seminars, which pressure the authorities at different levels to ensure that they comply with the legislation that protects minority languages, such as the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, adopted in 1992 and ratified by Spain in 2001. France signed the Charter in 1999, but it has not ratified it as the country's Constitution prohibits the protection of languages other than French. An attempt to amend the Constitution to overcome this obstacle failed in 2015.

The Council of Europe publishes a report every three years in which it assesses compliance with the Charter. The report is non-binding and it makes recommendations rather than imposing sanctions. Therefore, although it very diplomatically criticizes the compliance failures of countries such as Spain, these criticisms do not bear much weight.

The Platform has had meetings with MEPs, European bodies, experts and members of institutions that promote multilingualism in Europe to inform them of the situation of the Catalan language and linguistic discrimination in Spain.

The Platform also conducts advocacy through the joint organisation of conferences with other bodies to highlight linguistic discrimination in Europe, such as the event held in 2016 at the European Parliament with the support of several MEPs and parliamentary groups.

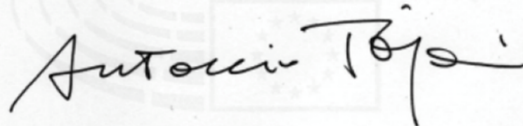
The Platform has carried out a campaign to ensure the application of Directive 2010/13/UE, which includes the rights of Europeans to access audiovisual materials in their language across borders, such as, for instance, the Swedish-speaking population of Finland being able to watch Swedish television channels, or Flemish speakers watching Dutch broadcasts. It has condemned the fact that neither France nor Spain comply with this directive (in the case of Spain, not even between regions) and launched a petition entitled 'Catalan without borders'. In autumn 2016, Marga Payola presented 30,000 signatures to the European Commission.

Marga Payola is particularly satisfied with the success of Platform's communications, which culminated in the public letters written by four presidential candidates for the European Parliament, showing their commitment to the use of Catalan in the Parliament, including the eventual successful candidate to be reflected in January 2017, the Italian Antonio Tajani of the European People's Party. He addressed his Catalan colleagues in the following way:

En primer lloc voldria agrair-los la carta que em van adreçar en relació a l'ús de la llengua catalana al Parlament Europeu. En aquest sentit, de donar-se el plantejament d'aquesta petició per part de les autoritats nacionals davant el Parlament, donat el cas que obtingués la confiança per exercir el càrrec de president, no posaria cap obstacle a la seva aprovació i empraria totes les capacitats de les que disposés per tal que s'aproves el més aviat possible. Per això, compto amb el seu suport en la votació del proper dimarts.

Rebeu una cordial salutació,

Antonio Tajani



Plataforma per la Llengua and European participation

The Platform faces difficulty in terms of contacting all of the European consultative bodies related to language, as it is a cross-sector issue. It would like Spain to ask the European Union for Catalan to be classified as an official language because, in that way, it could stop the enormous and voluntary efforts that it considers are made to win small battles in terms of recognition for a language considered regional or minority. Catalan is the unofficial language of the European Union that has most speakers, with around ten million, more than the official languages of several Member States.

Marga Payola gives the example of the Council of Europe, where Catalan is an official language thanks to the fact that it has official status in a tiny member state, Andorra.

Evaluation of the European Transparency Register

The Platform was a pioneer as the first Catalan non-governmental organisation to sign up to the Register in June 2016, presenting itself as the largest linguistic NGO in Europe.

In Marga Payola's opinion, the Register is reasonably adequate as it is. She advocates avoiding extremes: neither too lax nor too strict. She would not like registering to be compulsory and even less so for MEPs be obliged to give notification of their meetings with interest groups. In her capacity as an advisor to an MEP, she says that, in such a case, they would have to hire somebody else, whose sole responsibility was dealing with the bureaucratic tasks involved in reporting on the meetings, emails, letters and calls received by the MEP Ramon Tremosa from companies and lobbies affected by the European regulation.

Activities

In a European country, the government wants to fulfil its electoral promise to improve tax relief for patronage. However, the recession that has affected the country since 2007 and the obligation to reduce the deficit in order to comply with EU regulations prevent it from doing so. There was a big argument within the government that was later made public: The Ministers of Culture and Taxation disagreed over whether to facilitate patronage with tax incentives, with the Minister of Culture in favour and the Minister of Taxation against.

Imagine that you are an NGO that wants to receive more patronage funds and, as such, want the corresponding taxes to be lowered.

1. In your opinion, what would be the benefits of lobbying in terms of the disagreement between ministers in the same government, in this case the discord between the Ministries of Culture and taxation over patronage? What would be the disadvantages?
2. What alliances between interest groups would you look for in your country in favour of your cause? Which interest groups do you think you be your opponents?

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