

# **THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF LOBBYING IN CONTEMPORARY HUNGARIAN DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY**

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## **Executive Summary**

Even today lobbying is often viewed with reservation, even though it is increasingly clear that its importance and role in political processes have grown remarkably, not least because both domestic and international political environments have increasingly complicated decision-making processes, many more competing interest groups, and more and more decision-makers and opinion leaders. Lobbying is defined as interest representation, and its goal is influencing decision-makers to achieve a particular goal. This influence does not occur through illegal means. Lobbying is a completely legitimate activity, which occurs within a legally established framework and through specific means, with an emphasis on communication and information delivery. In a well-functioning democracy, lobbying is a valuable opportunity that grants serious social and political benefits. During the lobbying process, decision-makers may obtain such professional arguments and information that can fundamentally influence their decision. If interest groups affected by the law in question can articulate their opinions and interests in the early stages of the decision-making process, it can promote the expansion of the relevant body of information. Thus, decision-makers not only familiarize themselves with the professional suggestions of the given interest groups, but they can also measure the possible consequences of their decision. A professional decision, taking into consideration as wide a field of information as possible and properly integrating the opinions of affected interest groups, considerably increases the probability of lasting public acceptance of the decision, contributing to the efficient functioning of the given field as well as providing considerable potential political benefits for the decision-maker.

Lobbying, however, not only benefits the civil and corporate sectors, but, if utilized properly, it can also be a serious foreign policy tool and weapon for a national government in achieving its goals. Whether it is the European Union, the United States, or any other country or international organization, a country with a well-functioning and efficacious lobbying system – through its diplomats, politicians, representatives, NGOs or civil society organizations, as well as corporations and professional lobbyists – multiplies its chances of success.

The fact that Hungary is a member of numerous cooperative international organizations makes securing her interests more difficult, as many different, sometimes opposing concerns appear simultaneously, all trying to enforce their will. The traditional toolkit of foreign policy and diplomacy, however, is often too constricted or inefficient, possibly overshadowing Hungary's interests on the global stage. Diplomatic activities, together with effective lobbying activities, greatly increase the chances of advancing Hungary's national interests and reinforce

her positions to decision-makers through formal and informal channels as well, thereby eliminating the possibility of misinformation and its potential disadvantages.