

Session III – Public Affairs Basics

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Public Affairs is the effort to secure the strategic interests of your organisation with policy makers

- Despite some opposing views, it is simply the more modern term for ‘lobbying’

Public Affairs is becoming further entwined with **Public Relations**, which is more concerned with building a good reputational profile as a whole to the greater public

In these slides, there may be a little overlap!

What does Public Affairs mean to you?

The dirty word

- I first became a lobbyist as an intern in Brussels in 2013 for a consultancy
- Lobbied for oil, gas and much worse
- But also renewables!
- However, we used the same tools for all of our clients
- This made me realise that this is a profession which can be developed and applied to many different areas – for good reasons
- Regardless of whether at the European vs National level



Who else lobbies?

- Traditionally, lobbying was conducted by individuals literally ‘in the lobby’ outside the voting chambers of the Houses of Parliament in the UK
 - This still goes on..
- Maintaining close ties with policy makers was seen as a personal priority for the leaders of large private corporations
 - This still goes on..
- NGOs, citizens groups, and charities have become more active with the widening of civil society in the 20th century
 - NGOs now make up the largest registered lobbying percentage at the European level **(26.2%)**
- Associations (groups of businesses or NGOs or charities) also merge to have greater influence
- Private consultancies are a large player (client relationship – bespoke services etc)
- Now, there is a growing body of lobbyists who represent public organisations who cannot rely on a high level of governmental support

But what is it about?

Two schools of thought;

1) Insuring your position (old school)

- Identifying what decisions are made by policy makers that directly effect the future of your organisation
- Consider the scope of how tolerable these decisions are
- Operationalise pre-emptive efforts to influence the decisions

2) Growing your audience (new school)

- Creating an environment where your impact is visible to a growing circle of policy makers and the public
- This in turn makes your needs and desires hard to ignore



Anticipatory vs Digested 'communication'

Anticipatory

- Creating a **clear strategy** that identifies what decisions are made by policy makers that directly effect the future of your organisation, and one that has measured the scope of those decisions
- Directly reach out to policy makers to discuss your standpoint
 - Do you have fellow stakeholders in your field who share this standpoint? **Invite them too**
 - Know exactly what you are prepared to say to communicate your message
 - Provide context the policy maker(s) would understand, your hopes / worries, and a clear recommendation
 - Alternatives to direct meetings can be used to showcase your standpoint can be used when you are more focussed on suggestions
 - Panel debates (Chatham house rules)
 - Working dinners

Digested

- Providing information for your internal constituency
 - News monitoring reports that highlight the important items / results considered by policy makers
 - Daily / Monthly updates (more in depth)
- This may sound passive, but is an important tool to gather feedback from your own constituency and form best practices

- This is more related to Public Relations, but within the ‘public affairs’ group of actors.
- Also relies on a clear strategy which focuses on growing the world around you that you want to inhabit.
- Increasing your **public salience** is the key concern
 - How will my organisation become more relevant to a horizontal section of policy makers in different fields?
 - For example, does GÉANT & NRENs own solutions which are created in the fields of data services and connectivity, but can help other sectors? Energy, environment, climate, public health? Can you showcase these things to find further ministerial support?
 - Or at the European level, different DG’s?
 - Note that the digested communication method can be of use here to subtly widen your audience (bottom up)

Key things every practitioner should know

- Names & contact details of your parallel associates in ministerial (or European level) positions
 - And, hopefully, good relationships
- Lines of communication with experts within your NREN who may provide input and information on certain topics to help you develop your standpoint.
- Lines of communication with similar stakeholders.
- Knowledge of the decision-making processes in the institutions you interact with.
- The development of new trends in your field from a technological, political and economic perspective.

- Company X manufactured Liquefied Natural Gas – a by-product of oil refining – and sold it all over Europe
 - This is a fuel source that is used in rural areas that are not connected to mainstream energy sources
 - It gives off less CO2 than traditional fossil fuels
 - BUT it is still a fossil fuel...
- European Commission first launched the 2030 Climate & Energy Framework ‘green paper’ in March 2013 which would set ambitious targets, subsidies and also penalties.
- Company X recognised that it needed to have a position within this piece of policy as it could directly effect the future of the organisation.
- The white paper would be presented by the European Commission (for discussion and eventual adoption by the European Parliament & Council) the following year – so time constraint to act.





- Company X decided to;
 - Create an image of itself as a ‘rural energy provider’
 - Reached out to other organisations who provide ‘rural energy’, including renewables
 - Small scale wind producers
 - Insulating companies
 - Small scale ‘blue energy’ producers
 - Small scale solar etc
- Created an Association based on the idea of ‘rural energy provision’
- Used this body to organise events and host panel discussions on the topic of ‘rural energy’ – inviting the most important policy makers.
- Eventually this created an environment which allowed F2F meetings with policy makers a possibility, which enabled **clear recommendations** to be made on the 2030 Climate & Energy Framework.



- **Effect**

- A clause was added within the amendments of the the Framework during the Parliament – Council recommendations.
- ‘Rural Energy solutions’ - of which LPG was noted as one – were classified to be exempt from the the targeted fuel groups.
 - As such, member states were not directed to view LPG as a ‘problem’ fuel

Conclusion?

- What does this tell us?

Exercise for next 45 mins

- (Very) hypothetical scenario
- Imagine a similar piece of Legislation at the National level in your home country, which;
 - Would aim to drastically reduce funding for research and education networks
 - In order to direct the majority of 'R&I' funding to climate-change oriented research infrastructures in your country
- How would you approach this problem? Would you use any of the previous tools or approaches here?
- Or not? How would an NREN's approach be different?

- Split into groups to discuss
- Quick summaries at the end.

