

Workshop: How to do EU advocacy when you are not based in Brussels?

Zagreb, March 2024

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Netherlands Helsinki Committee**

Agenda and purpose of the workshop

- **Agenda:**
 - 10.00 – 10.15 Introduction & tour de table
 - 10.15 – 11.00 Key ingredients for an effective lobby strategy
 - 11.00 – 11.45 The Brussels maze: how does decision making in Brussel work?
 - 11.45 – 12.00 Coffee Break
 - 12.00 – 13.00 How can CSOs engage in decision making in Brussels?
 - 13.00 – 14.00 Lunch
 - 14.00 – 15.00 Case studies & sharing lessons learned
 - 15.00 – 15.30 Assignment
 - 15.30 – 16.00 Presentations & wrap up
- **Goal:**
 - Give some insight into how we as a non-Brussels based CSO engage with the EU institutions
 - Provide some practical tips, resources and tools for developing your EU lobby and advocacy activities
 - Have an exchange on successes and failures from practice to encourage knowledge sharing and alliance building

Key ingredients for an effective lobby strategy:

- Lobbying to influence decision-makers: specialized form of advocacy. It is a strategic, planned, and informal way of influencing decision-makers
- No one size fits all
- Four central questions:
- What, who, why, how,?

Key ingredients for an effective lobby strategy

10 step process:

- 1. Define your vision and your goals - what needs to change?
- 2. From problems to solutions - models, models and more models!
- 3. Do your research - facts and data.
- 4. Map your ecosystem - stakeholder power mapping.
- 5. Craft your message - framing, storytelling and narratives.
- 6. Get your message out there - working with the media.
- 7. Build, engage and activate your community - power to the people!
- 8. Plan your actions.
- 9. Monitor and evaluate - measure the change you created.
- 10. Upgrade your skills - competences for advocates.

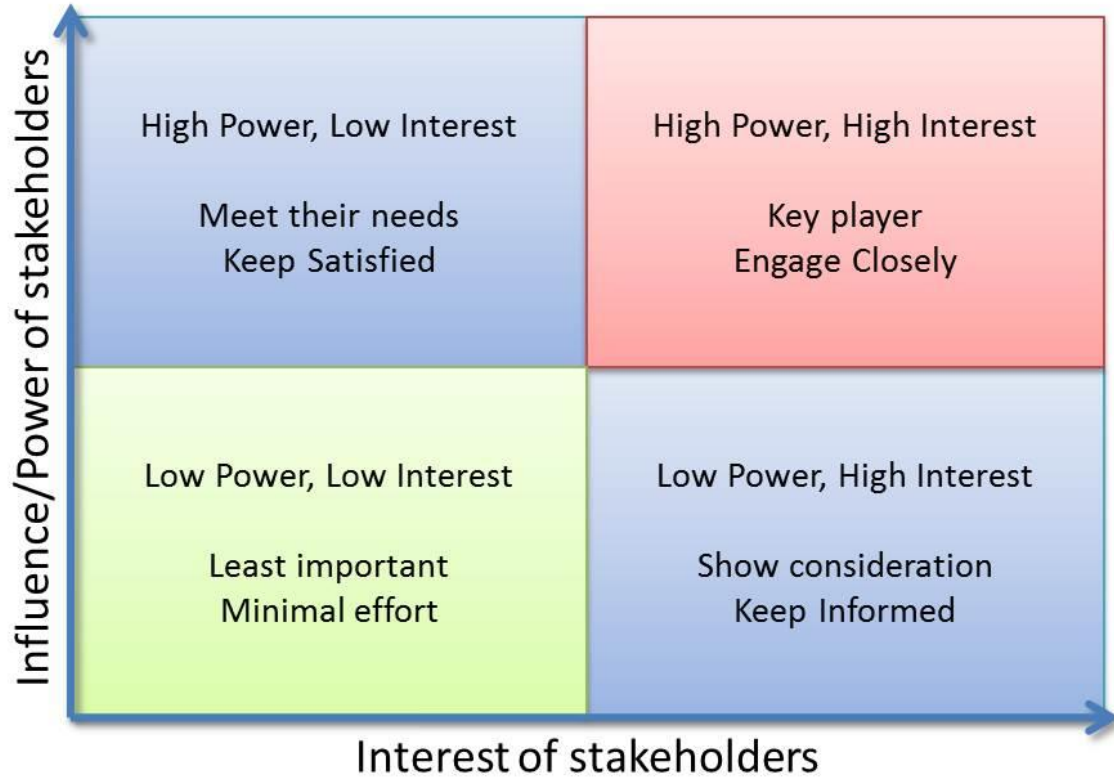
Key ingredients for an effective lobby strategy:

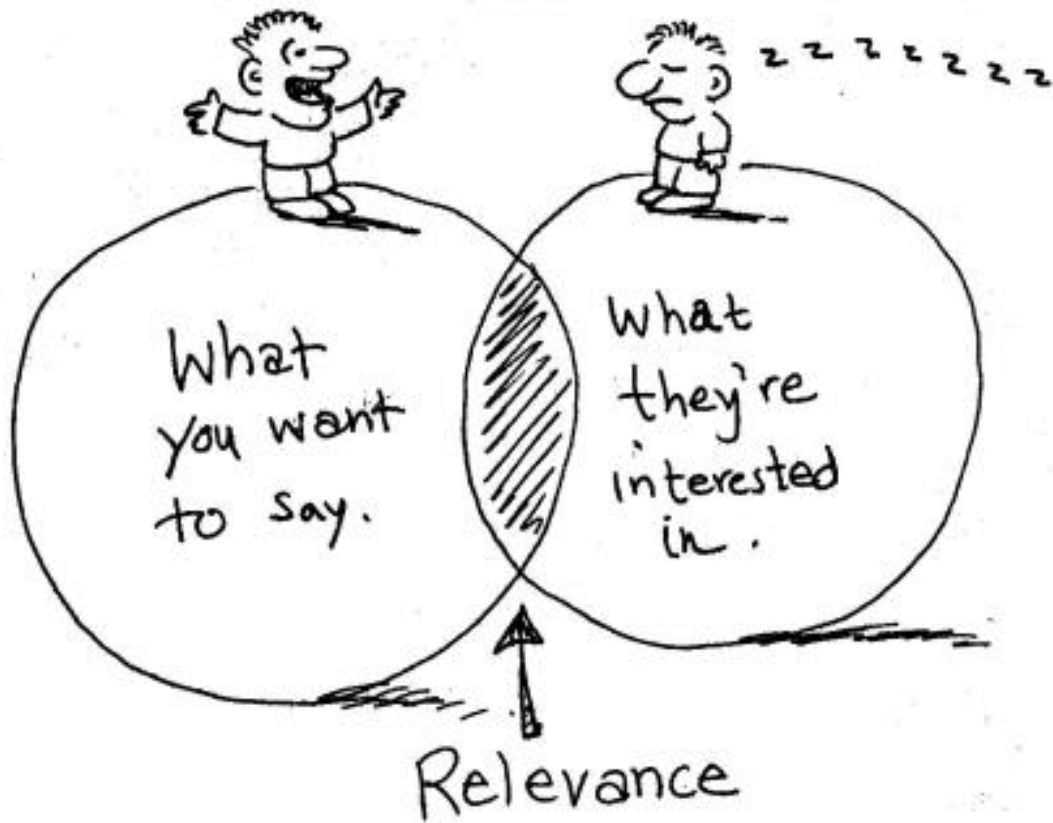
Step 1: Defining your objective and problem definition

- What is your goal?
- Do your homework
- Map your issue
- Consider your capacity

Key ingredients for an effective lobby strategy:

Step 2: A stakeholder analysis





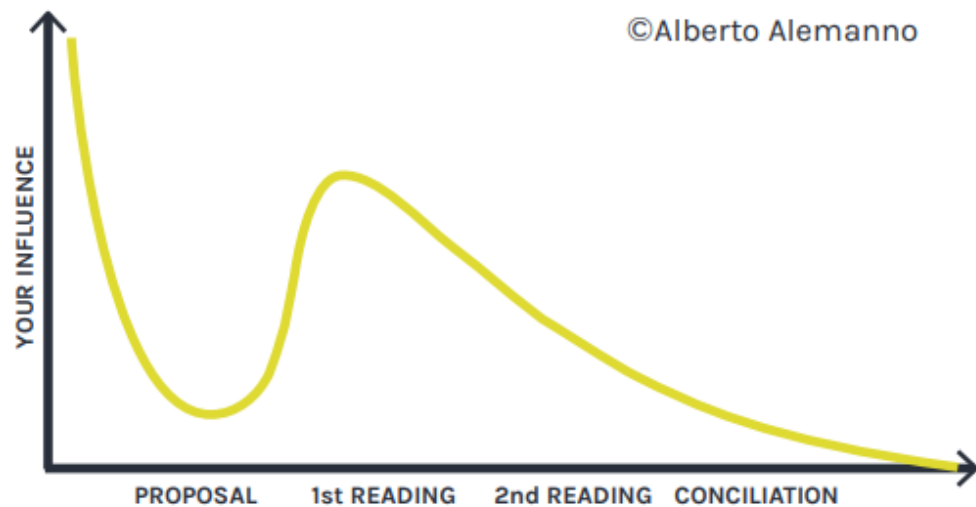
Key ingredients for an effective lobby strategy:

Step 3: Targeted messaging

Per stakeholder you need to reach you answer **three questions:**

- What is the problem? Why is this an urgent problem for the stakeholder? And what should the stakeholder do to solve the problem?
- Keep it simple, be concrete, avoid jargon, don't overask, invest in a relationship

Key ingredients for an effective lobby strategy



STAGES OF INITIATIVE IN POLICY PROCESS

Step 4: timing

Do's and Don'ts

- **Do's**
- • Use data and facts to back your case, and make sure you know how to
 - use them in your specific context.
- • Know the position, interests, knowledge and motivations of your
 - interlocutor or target.
- • Know the counter-arguments to your vision.
- • Be focused on a clear demand for change.
- • Test your messages and campaigns before going public.
- • Adjust your message to the knowledge and interests of your
 - interlocutor
 - or audience.
- • Become an expert on the issue you are fighting for

Do's and Don'ts

- **Don'ts**
- • Don't use only facts and data, real life experiences and grassroots experiences create powerful messages.
- • Don't speak about too many issues in an advocacy action, less is better.
- • Don't claim anything if you are not sure your facts are trustworthy. It is better to say that you will check and come back to someone if you don't know, doing this will make you more appreciated.
- • Don't be confrontational or threatening if you expect your interlocutor to rally to you.
- • Don't meet and engage only people who already agree with you.
- • Don't spend your whole time justifying your credibility towards the decision-maker, build a powerful message instead.
- • Don't feel disappointed by the slow pace of change.

Key ingredients for an effective lobby strategy - Examples

What usually doesn't work:

NHC memo to parliamentarians: Alertness and Action needed for human rights in Europe

18 May 2021

After the 17 March 2021 elections, the Netherlands Helsinki Committee has called on the newly composed Parliamentary Committees on Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Justice and Security to be alert and active in the protection of human rights in Europe, including in the Netherlands. An [eight-page memo](#) (in Dutch) asks for heightened attention to roll back authoritarian tendencies in governance in a range of countries in Europe. In this respect, the capabilities of the Council of Europe and the European Union (EU) need to be harnessed and fully utilized. Parliamentary Mechanisms put in place by the previous parliament to monitor and discuss Rule of Law developments in the EU should be continued, and political attention for increasing Council of Europe effectiveness should be greatly enhanced.

Don't

Talk only about the problem. This can overwhelm your audience and make them feel like the situation is inevitable or cannot be solved.

e.g. Message that focuses only on the problem and the situation that we do not want:

The ministry has excluded CSOs from taking part in planning decisions. This means that only corporations will have a voice before the committees that decide whether to sell them public land and build on it. Within a decade it will be impossible to enjoy our beaches unless we can afford to pay the entry prices demanded by a private park or hotel owner.

[Liberties civic space framing guide](#)

Key ingredients for an effective lobby strategy - Examples

What does work:



Member States need to build on the Anti-SLAPP Directive foundation and draft effective national legislation

THIS INCLUDES

- ✓ Broad scope including domestic SLAPP cases and claims under criminal procedural or administrative procedures
- ✓ Strong early dismissal mechanism to filter out SLAPPs
- ✓ National legislation with clear criteria for damage compensation and imposing fines on claimants for intimidation tactics
- ✓ Non-legal support mechanisms, awareness campaigns, and training for judges/lawyers
- ✓ Ethical considerations for lawyers
- ✓ Data collection and monitoring of SLAPP cases, as outlined in Commission's Anti-SLAPP Recommendation and upcoming Council of Europe Recommendation.



Open letter to EU governments regarding EU funds to Hungary

Dear Ministers of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council,

We, undersigned organisations defending human rights, ask you to protect the rule of law in Europe and support the proposal to suspend EU funds to Hungary under the conditionality mechanism given the government's continued attempts to undermine EU values.

With this letter, we **urge you to vote in favour of the Commission's proposal on the conditionality mechanism** that aims to suspend 7.5 billion euros to Hungary. It is urgent that the Council recognises that systemic rule of law issues are not resolved, that these concerns create a continued risk for the EU budget in Hungary, and ensures that the conditionality mechanism established in December 2020 empowers EU institutions to properly scrutinise and assess progress.



Sharing experiences



EU lobby

Most important EU Institutions:

- European Commission (right to initiative)
- European Parliament
- Council of the European Union

Different from:

- European Council

Other relevant EU bodies (for resources or as allies):

- Fundamental Rights Agency
- European Ombudsman
- European Institute for Gender Equality

EU decision making

Source: [The Good Lobby guide on EU consultations](#)

Infographic - Legislation and Regulations in EU Law

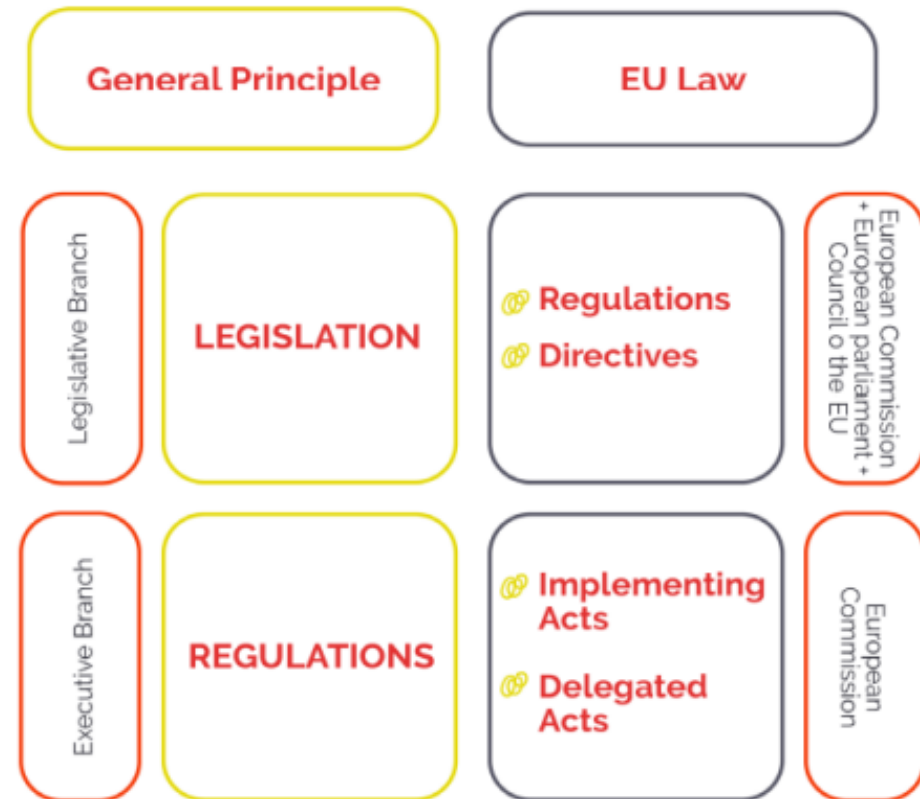
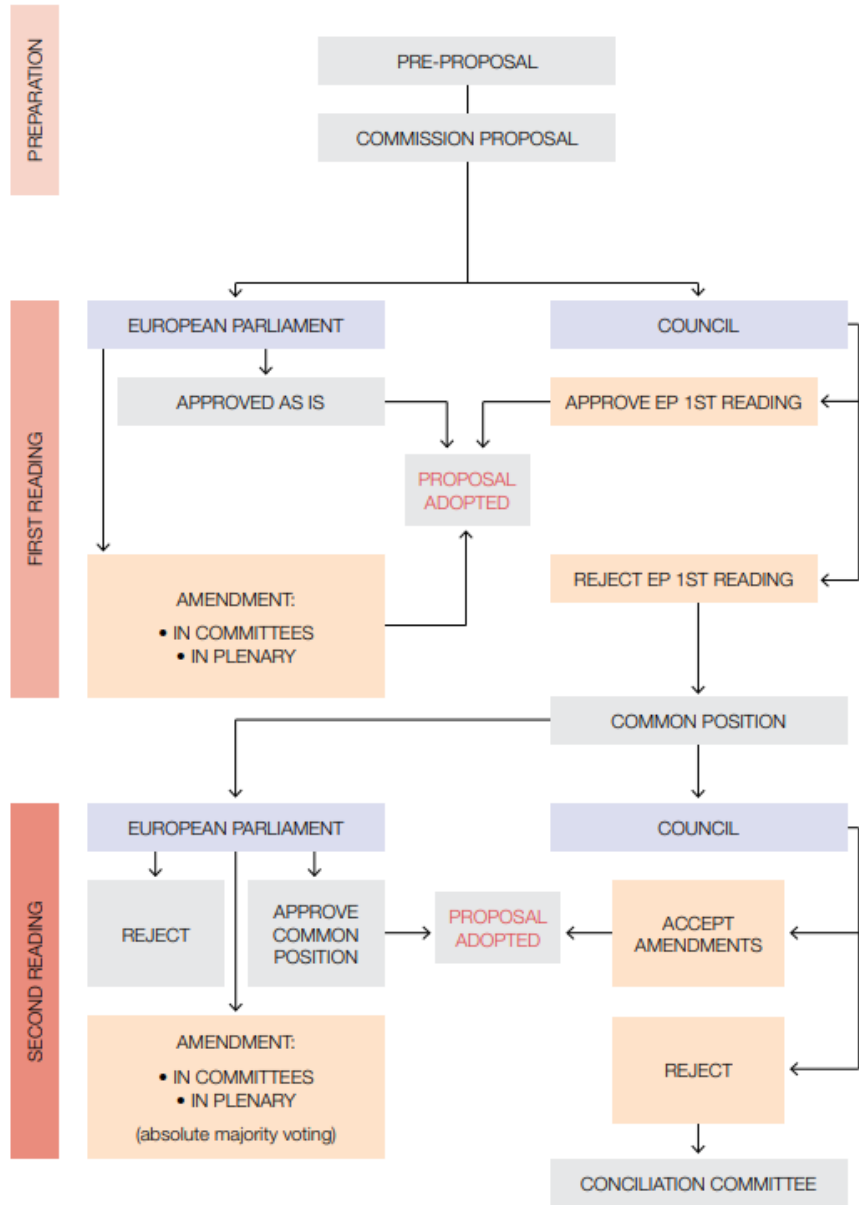
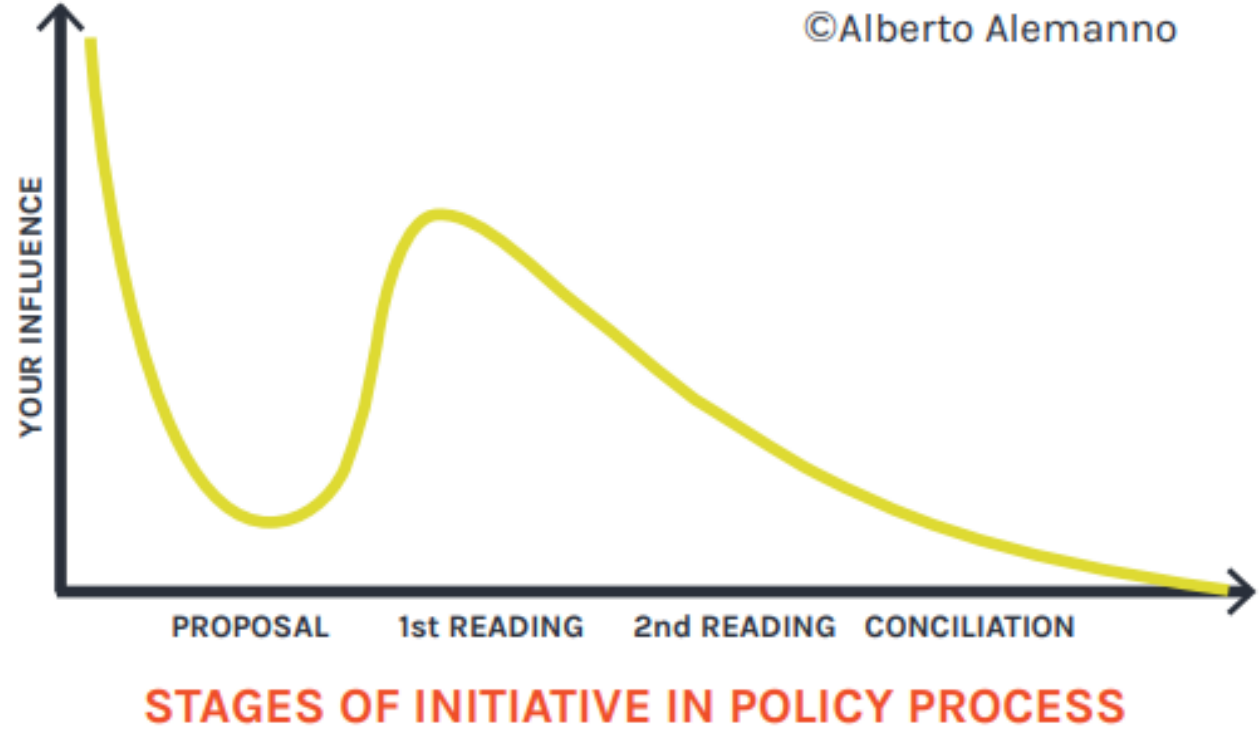


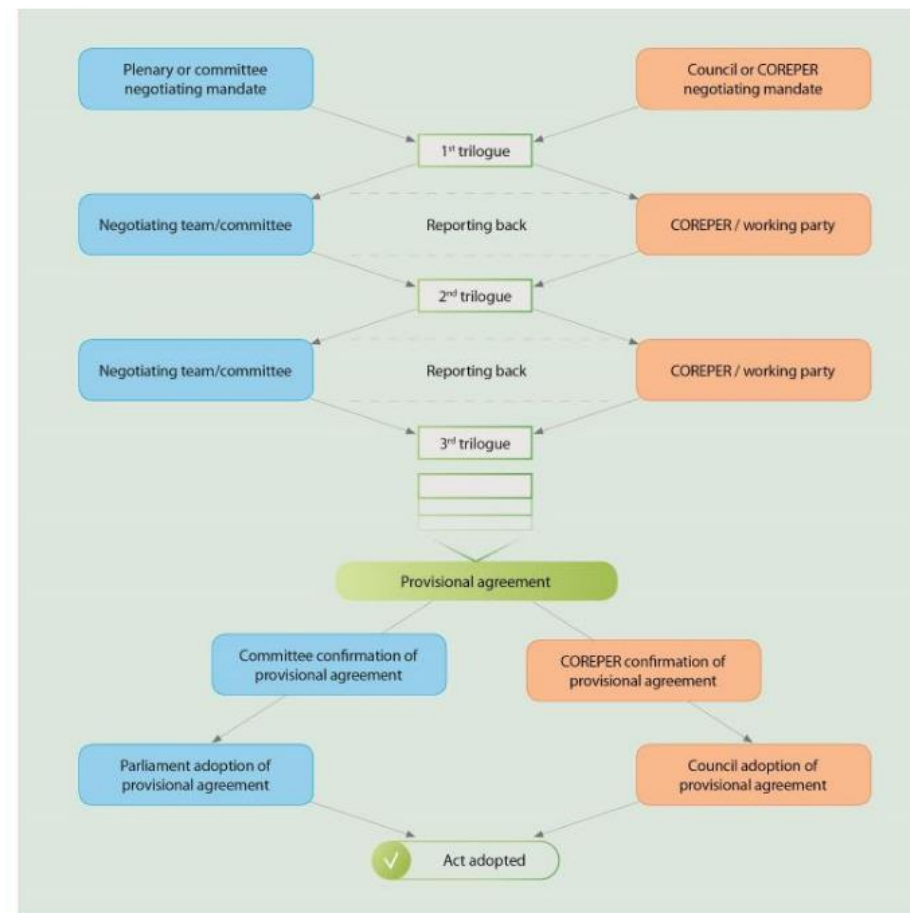
Figure 10: Ordinary Legislative Procedure (first and second readings)



EU decision making



EU decision making Trilogues



Steps in the negotiation process

A qualified majority is reached if two conditions are simultaneously met:

- **55% of member states** vote in favour - in practice this means 15 out of 27
- the proposal is supported by member states representing at least **65% of the total EU population**

This procedure is also known as the 'double majority rule'.

55%

of the EU member states

65%

of the EU population

EU decision making
Qualified majority voting:

EU decision making: opportunities for influence European Commission

- President and 27 Commissioners (each with their own cabinet)
- DG's
- [6 priorities](#)
- Connected to these: work programmes, action plans, strategies etc.
- Talk to when new proposal is still being drafted, you want to put something on agenda, or you want to influence more generally the policy plans/ strategies of EU
- Engagement through formal consultations and informally

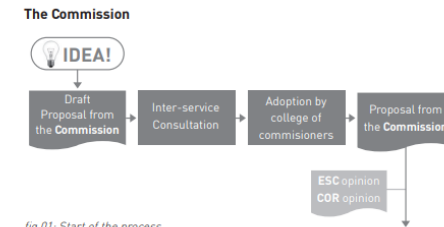


fig 01: Start of the process

[Link: EDRI activist guide](#)



EU decision making: opportunities for influence European Commission



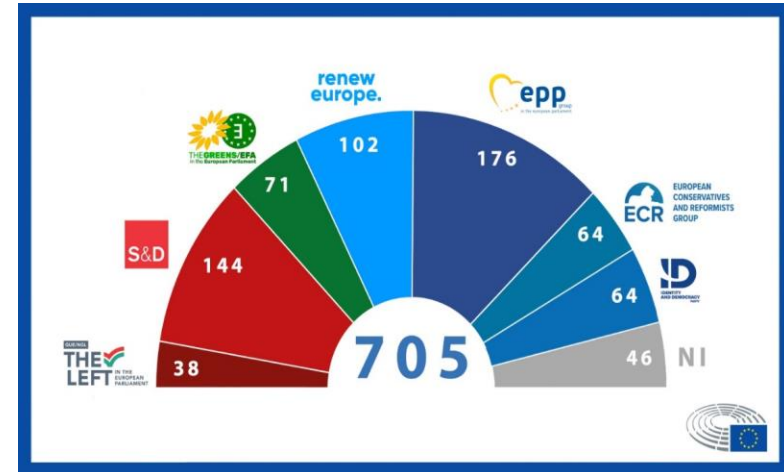
EU decision making: opportunities for influence: European Parliament

LIBE COORDINATORS (9th Legislature)

POLITICAL GROUP	COORDINATOR
EPP	Jeroen LENAERS
	<i>Vice coordinator:</i> Lena DÚPONT
S&D	Birgit SIPPEL
Renew	Sophie IN 'T VELD
	<i>Vice Coordinator:</i> Fabienne KELLER
Greens/EFA	Tineke STRIK
	<i>Vice Coordinator:</i> Saskia BRICMONT
ID	Annalisa TARDINO
ECR	Patryk JAKI
The Left	Cornelia ERNST

o libe-secretariat@ep.europa.eu

- Meets in plenary and in working groups
- Works through rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs
- **Legislative train** website useful to follow proposals
- Also adopts non-legislative policy files



<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/eu-affairs/20190612STO54311/parliament-s-seven-political-groups>

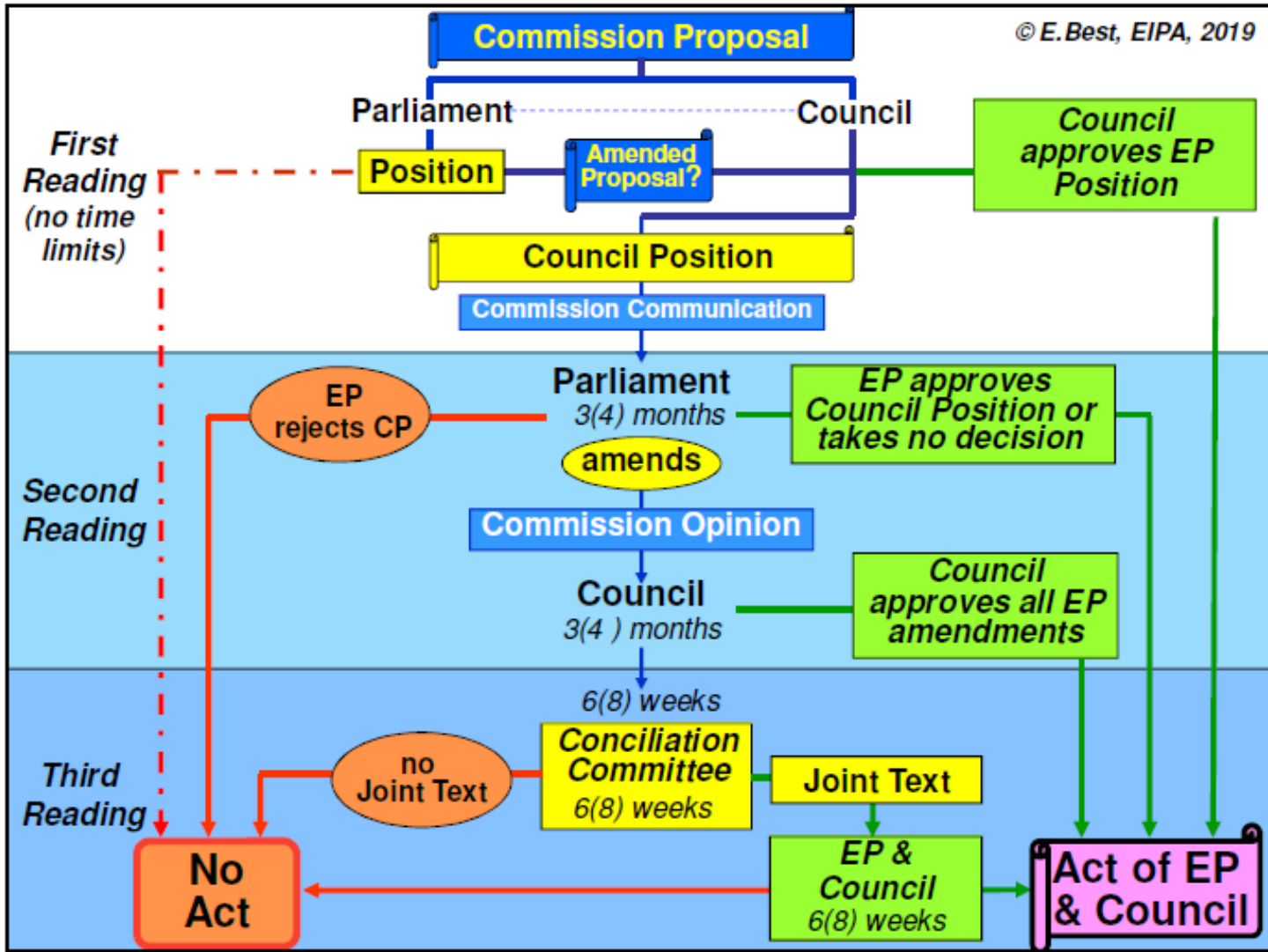
EU decision making:
opportunities for
influence:
Council of the European
Union

JAI 310
FREMP 74

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Council Conclusions on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights; The role of the civic space in protecting and promoting fundamental rights in the EU
	– Council conclusions (10 March 2023)

- Working party (EU Presidency and secretariat), COREPER – Committee of the Permanent Representations of the Member States in Brussels and Council Configurations
- National parliaments & COSAC (Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the EU)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs or European Affairs in the Member States
- <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/>



The background features several concentric, hand-drawn red circles of varying radii. A single dashed red line forms a circle that is slightly smaller than the innermost solid circle. A small red downward-pointing triangle is positioned on the left side of this dashed circle.

Questions?

The background features several overlapping, wavy lines in a light red or pinkish hue. A dashed line of the same color starts from the left edge and curves towards the text, ending in a solid red downward-pointing arrowhead.

Coffee Break

How to engage with the EU institutions?

- Why is it important?
- Formal consultations:
 - The annual [Rule of Law Report](#):
 - Annual consultation
 - Country visits
 - Many issues but still a good tool
 - [Example NHC](#)
 - Shadow reporting by Liberties →



<https://www.liberties.eu/en/campaigns/rule-of-law-report-2023/158>

- Other Consultations
 - On new directives/ legislations (Defense for Democracy package, [Directive for cross border associations](#))
 - Evaluation of EU programmes ([CERV](#))
 - Report on the application of the Charter
 - [Have your say portal](#)

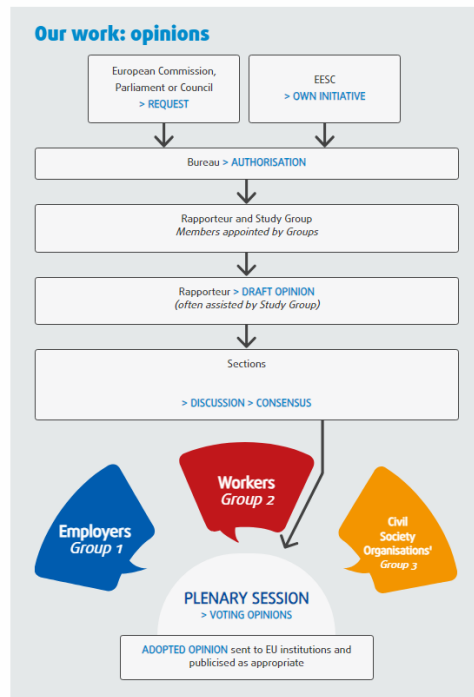
How to engage with the EU institutions?

- European Parliament: agenda setting & amending EC proposals
- More complicated if you are not in Brussels, but there are opportunities:
- Extremely busy, so hard to get through to them but also always searching for input that fits their agenda;
- Reach out to those behind the scenes (secretariats of the committees, assistants, policy advisors);
- Identify who is the rapporteur;
- Timing is key: when amendments are proposed & during process of negotiations with rapporteur and advisors are important moments;
- Clear, concrete messages that are ready to be used (partners in Brussels can help);
- Also organize thematic reports and country visits.

How to engage with the EU institutions?

- Influencing the Council of the EU through advocacy towards Member States
- While EP tougher to get foot in the door when not in Brussels, Council can be influence through national advocacy through:
 - Engaging with national MPs in Member States
 - Engaging with your own/ other MS governments
- But lack of transparency is an issue;
- Here again:
 - Monitor Council's agenda (Regular Meetings of the General Affairs Council (GAC), Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHAC) etc.
 - Alliance building key
 - Build relations with the support staff of your parliamentary EU affairs committee and EU/ foreign affairs ministry
 - Check agenda of Council Presidency

How to engage with the EU institutions?



- EU bodies & consultative committees
 - Fundamental Rights Agency
 - Annual report on civic space in the EU
 - They can be a strong ally (fundamental rights platform) and good resources
 - Interesting resources (Charterpedia, reports)
 - European Economic and Social Committee
 - Consultative body of the European Institutions
 - Group on fundamental rights and rule of law
 - Annual civil society week in Brussels

How to engage with the EU institutions?

- **Civil society networks in Brussels**
 - Human Rights and Democracy Network
 - European Civic Forum
 - European Partnership for Democracy
 - European Network Against Racism
 - European Environmental Bureau
 - Climate Action Network

- **Other networks/ alliances that might be relevant**
 - Liberties
 - Recharging Advocacy for Rights in Europe
 - Women Against Violence Europe
 - Fundamental Rights Platform
 - Coalition Against Slaps in Europe

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Lunch 13.00 – 14.00

Case Studies

- Creating an informal coalition to push the Member States to act in defense of the rule of law in the EU
- Influencing the EU directive on Violence Against Women
- Experience Human Rights House Zagreb
- Your stories?

Creating an informal coalition to protect the rule of law in Europe

- Issue: Council is underperforming on rule of law protection and rule of law backsliding was back then not on political agenda of many member states
- What did we do:
 - Find partners and allies
 - Map 'moveable middle' countries
 - Joint advocacy missions (peer to peer learning) to Presidency countries
 - Go beyond usual suspects and across sectors (academia, COSAC)
 - Very strong cooperation with EU Affairs Committee in Dutch Parliament
- Results:
 - More awareness amongst decision makers and CSOs
 - NL government was pushed to take/ maintain very strong position on rule of law protection
 - Commission took action to strengthen rule of law toolbox
 - Working group on rule of law established within COSAC
 - New joint initiatives: RARE, project on Hungary

HUNGARY'S BACKSLIDING PATH



“ The NHC welcomes the national level debate that took place in the Dutch parliament last Wednesday on issues of rule of law and conditionality in the EU. We advocate for other national Parliaments in the EU to also hold debates on these themes and engage with civil society in shaping these debates. We are happy to continue our conversation with parliamentarians on this subject, both in the Netherlands as in other member states through [COSAC](#). We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the Committee for European Affairs of the Dutch Second Chamber after the next elections. – Pepijn Gerrits, Executive Director NHC.

Creating an informal coalition to protect the rule of law in Europe

Creating an informal coalition to protect the rule of law in Europe

- **Lessons learnt:**
 - **Through national advocacy it is possible to influence Brussels debate when you work with others**
 - **Issue based informal coalitions very useful**
 - **Joint advocacy with those who actually are living through what is happening leaves a trace**
 - **Use your allies and go beyond usual suspects (importance of working with those behind the scenes)**
 - **Constant reflection and reconsideration of strategy**

Advocacy on the Directive on Violence Against Women

- **CONTEXT:**

- On February 6th, a significant milestone was achieved as the European Council and the European Parliament reached a political agreement on the Directive to combat violence against women and domestic violence.

- **ACKNOWLEDGING PROGRESS:**

- The Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence is an immense milestone for women's rights in the EU and a major step forward in the right direction: it sets minimum standards to prevent and combat violence against women and ensures that a minimum level of protection will be granted to all victims of violence against women and domestic violence all across the EU +The Directive harmonises the definitions of seven forms of violence against women

Advocacy on the Directive on Violence Against Women

- **ISSUES RAISED/KEY ISSUES:**
- Decision imposed by France and Germany to delete Article 5 on the harmonised definition of rape based on consent as per the standards of the Istanbul Convention.
- A common EU approach to the crime of rape is urgently needed to provide adequate protection to victims no matter where they are in the Union - rape as part of the list of crimes in the directive,
- The Directive must include a consent-based definition of rape: several EU Member States still retain definitions of the offense of rape based on force as the main constituent element of the crime

Advocacy on the Directive on Violence Against Women

- **Activities:**
- - Lobbying next to the MEP, national decision-makers etc
- - Petitions
- - Presence on the media + Press releases
- - Social media - a powerful tool
- - Release of statements/ position papers/ open letter - Call for action
- - Proposals for Revised Victims' Rights Directive
- - Alliance Building - Perhaps the most integral part of any successful advocacy effort is the consolidation of efforts between like-minded movements, organizations, and individuals. The more people involved in strategic advocacy efforts, the louder and more unstoppable the demands for change and reform.

REELS & POSTS



View profile

WHAT LAW PROTECTS YOU
DEPENDING ON THE COUNTRY WHERE
YOU ARE RAPED?

Girls, I know Paris is expensive, but... was it really necessary to rent the most dangerous place in the city?

Who's there?

WeMove MODERNA
Europe DEPIERLO

View more on Instagram

655 likes

europeanwomenlobby

There is no country in the EU where women & girls are completely safe.

There is a way to change that.

The European Parliament and the European Commission have proposed an EU-wide law that would offer protection against many forms of violence against women and ensure that women & girls have the same rights

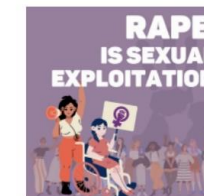
womenlobby.org



Freely given
Reversible
Informed
Enthusiastic
Specific

womenlobby.org

womenlobby.org



[Open Letter on the EU Legal Basis](#)



[Events and public actions](#)



[Op-Eds and articles](#)



[Violence against women in Europe](#)

Advocacy on the Directive on Violence Against Women



Advocacy on the Directive on Violence Against Women

Advocacy on the Directive on Violence Against Women

- **OUTCOME/RESULTS:**

- Outcomes indicate the effectiveness of your lobby and advocacy

- activities in achieving identified goals: the negotiating team of the European Parliament managed to **reinforce the provisions on prevention of violence against women, including a new provision to prevent rape and sexual violence and specific measures to prevent FGM, forced marriage and cybercrimes.**

- **LEASSONS LEARNT:**

- Important to make a distinction between your *scope of concern* and your *scope of influence*: What are the specific objectives that you wish to achieve? Which results can realistically be accomplished by influencing the decision-makers?

- - Always keep in mind that **there are limits to what lobby and advocacy may achieve.**

Advocacy on the Directive on Violence Against Women

- **When evaluating outcomes it is helpful to remind yourself of your starting points:**
- 1) What were your lobby objectives? - Depending on the phase in your campaign this may be a policy change, carrying out a piece of research, mobilisation of partners, etc.
- 2) What was your initial course of action to achieve those objectives?
- 3) Which activities were carried out?
- 4) Was the initial framework for lobby and advocacy in any way affected by unforeseen circumstances?
- 5) What did you manage to achieve through your lobby and advocacy activities?
- 6) Was there cause to readjust your initial objectives?
- 7) What are the lessons learned from the experience?
- 8) What would you say were the strengths of your campaign?
- 9) What were its weaknesses?

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Human Rights House Zagreb

Assignment

- **Assignment: Advocacy Action Plan**
- **Group Formation:**
 - Form groups of 3/4 persons.
- **Topic Selection:**
 - Pick a topic related to human rights that one of you is currently working on or planning to lobby for at the EU level.
- **Issue Mapping:**
 - Discuss whether the issue is already on the EU agenda.
- **Identify Stakeholders:**
 - Determine the two most important stakeholders related to your chosen topic.
- **Answer Three Questions:**
 - For each stakeholder, answer the following questions:
 - *What is the problem?*
 - *Why is this an urgent problem for the stakeholders?*
 - *What should the stakeholder do to solve the problem?*
- **Presentation Preparation:**
 - Choose one person from your group to present your approach (5 min).

Other useful resources?

Lobby/ advocacy guides:

EDRI EU advocacy guide: <https://edri.org/our-work/activist-guide-to-the-brussels-maze-3-0/>

Good Lobby:

<https://www.thegoodlobby.eu/resources/>

Liberties Messaging guides:

On civic space:

https://dq4n3btxmr8c9.cloudfront.net/files/ljfbj0/Protecting_democracy_means_protecting_civic_space.pdf

On addressing smear campaigns:

https://dq4n3btxmr8c9.cloudfront.net/files/SyG95z/Liberties_Civic_Space_Framing_Guide.pdf

ODIHR Game: <https://freedomlab.io/starlight-stadium-episodes/>

Tracking EU legislation:

EULEX: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html?locale=en>

EU Legislative train:

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/>

EU Consultations:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say_nl

MEP Directory

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/home>

How to stay in touch?



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Thank you!