

## NECE 2018 Marseille

# Lobbying for Change – Citizens' Advocacy in the European Union

## Workshop, 7 September

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According to the main message of his recent book entitled "[Lobbying for Change: Find Your Voice to Create a Better Society](#)", Alberto Alemanno seeks to demystify and democratise the practice of lobbying by inspiring readers to become 'citizen lobbyists'.

Whether we feel generally unhappy with the way our societies are working, powerless to make a change or simply tired of being a spectator to a show driven by powerful economic actors, Alberto Alemanno inspires us to get involved in the unfashionable machinery of government in order to hold officials accountable. Adopting a deliberately provocative stance, he aims to encourage a new democratic practice of participation capable of addressing the growing mistrust in representative democracy.

Alberto also drew our attention to the fact that referendums and other forms of direct democracy, by presenting voters with one issue at a time, limit our ability to influence the overall range of outcomes. Lobbying, in turn, is one of the most effective yet least-explored ways to shape and influence (public) life. According to the author, three main factors determine how we should tailor our lobbying plan: where society stands on the issue (should we induce a change in the social norm?), the level of government we should target to trigger the change, and finally the role of various interest groups (who wins and who loses from each outcome and their respective influence).

Presenting us with a 10-step citizen lobbying guide, Alberto helps us to devise a successful lobbying strategy. First, we need to pick a battle we feel passionate for. Our research on this issue should then focus on hard facts, figures and data, providing us with the necessary evidence to convince even audiences that may want to make us look foolish. We then need to map our lobbying environment, identifying our targets, allies and opponents. Our lobbying strategy needs to outline the kinds of engagement and influence that we would like to embrace. Once these steps are well-defined, we might consider the pros and cons of coalition-building by being open to unconventional partnerships (e.g. companies or political actors).

Depending on the nature, scope and extent of our planned actions, we need to estimate their costs and organise the funding they require. In terms of communication, we definitely need to include policymakers, the general public and the media, while always remembering the power of face-to-face meetings. Once we may have managed to convince one or more decision-makers, we then need to remain vigilant and continue to support them in advancing our cause. Finally, as



citizens, we can lobby any public official without automatically being subject to the rules governing professional lobbying. The sudden realisation that so much of our physical and social space is the fruit of somebody else's efforts can help us break free by embracing effective engagement.

## References

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The Good Lobby. Copyright 2015 eLabEurope.

<http://www.thegoodlobby.eu>

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