



Workshop: Towards a history of corporate lobbying in the EU

Wednesday 8 December 2021, on Zoom. For access, contact k.j.a.vanzon@uu.nl

In recent years, journalists, NGOs and politicians have sounded the alarm about the alleged 'corporate capture' of the EU. Their warnings about the political influence that corporations exercise on EU decision making echo historical criticisms of the European Coal and Steel Community as a legalised cartel and the European Economic Community as a project dominated by the interests of big business. Yet, while historians have studied the organised representation of business interests in Brussels, the roles of corporate lobbies in EEC policies and politics remain strikingly understudied in EU historiography.

This interdisciplinary workshop raises the question what historians have to contribute to the study of corporate lobbying in the EU and what other disciplines have to teach them. Due to their informal character, corporate lobbies seldom leave a paper trail, which presents historians and other researchers with a source problem. The premise of this workshop is that this lack of a paper trail should not be considered an unsurmountable methodological challenge, but rather a red flag that should raise questions about the influence that corporations have exercised on European integration. Bringing together political scientists, journalists and other experts, the aim of the workshop is to explore different questions, methodological approaches and theoretical perspectives on corporate lobbying which can help them do so.

Two related questions will be central:

- What could historical approaches contribute to the study of lobbying in the EU?
- What do other disciplines have to teach historians about the study of lobbying in the EU?





Programme

Setup: 10-15 minute pitches per participant, followed by discussion

12.45 **Meeting room open**

13.00 – 13.15 **Welcome and introduction**

Koen van Zon

13.15 – 14.15 **Panel 1: Political scientists**

Marcel Hanegraaff

The rise of individual firm lobbying in the EU: exploring underlying causes

Bert Fraussen

Building an institutional field in Brussels? A reflection on the proliferation of organizational forms and channels of corporate influence at the EU level, and their possible implications for corporate influence

14.30 – 15.30

Panel 2: Historians & sociologists

Sabine Pitteloud (online)

Lobbying at the EEC and the EU in historical perspective: the example of Swiss multinationals

Sylvain Laurens (online)

Scientific mediation as a new frontier for lobbying strategies

15.45 – 16.45

Panel 3: Practitioners

Nina Holland (online)

Exposing corporate lobbying in real time: 25 years of activist research with the aim to roll back the corporate capture of EU decision making

Peter Teffer

Journalism methods to investigate lobbying

16.45 – 17.15

Concluding roundtable



Participant CVs

Bert Fraussen is [Assistant Professor](#) at the [Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs at Leiden University](#). His research and teaching focuses on lobbying and interest representation. He studies the internal organization and development of [political organizations](#), such as interest groups and think tanks, and for instance analyze how these organizations [change over time](#), the way in which they [involve their members](#), or how they [determine their policy agenda](#). At the same time, his research also examines the [different ways](#) in which [interest groups](#) and [think tanks](#) engage with policymakers in order to shape public policy at the national and EU level. A key question here is how policymakers can ensure the inclusive and effective engagement of societal stakeholders in public governance.

Marcel Hanegraaff is an Associate Professor in Political Science at the University of Amsterdam. He researches the politics of interest representation in a transnational and EU context. His latest project focusses on the agenda setting power of interest groups in the European Union.

Nina Holland is a researcher at [Corporate Europe Observatory](#), a research and campaign group based in Brussels that aims to expose and challenge the privileged access and influence enjoyed by corporations and their lobby groups in EU policy making. CEO aims to curb the political clout enjoyed by corporations by revealing their tactics, financial firepower, privileged access and connections, exposing revolving door scandals and the common dominance of corporate interests in European Commission advisory groups, and by campaigning for stricter EU lobby regulation and against policies skewed in favour of corporate interests. Her focus is on lobbying by agribusiness and food industries covering issues like pesticides, seeds and GMOs, and research and innovation.

Nina holds a master's degree in Environmental Sciences from Utrecht University with a final thesis on the EU life patents directive and is currently on the advisory board of an EU-funded research project called RECIPES (on the precautionary principle and innovation). She recently co-authored a peer-reviewed paper in [Futures](#), about a form of regulatory capture in Europe based on a strategic use of the image and legitimacy of science.

In the past she was also involved in the alter-globalisation movement, spent time in Argentina and Paraguay to document the expansion of soy monocultures for Europe's factory farms, and worked in organic agriculture in the Netherlands.



Sylvain Laurens is Director of Studies at EHESS Paris. His work focuses on the relationship between lobbyists and administrations. His publications include a book published by Routledge in 2018 entitled "Lobbyists and Bureaucrats in Brussels. Capitalism's brokers". He is particularly interested in how economic interest groups mobilize science to pursue their goals.

Sabine Pitteloud is currently Newcomen Fellow in Business History at Harvard Business School. She earned her a PhD in social and economic history from the University of Geneva, Switzerland and has held visiting positions at the Humboldt Universität Berlin, Germany and at the New School for Social Research, New York. Her research investigates the political and institutional role of Swiss multinationals, their coordination efforts within business interest associations in Switzerland and at the European level, and their ability to deal with political risks in historical perspective.

Peter Teffer is an investigative journalist for the [Follow the Money](#) platform. He spent five years covering the EU for EUobserver and wrote a [book](#) about how lobbying in the EU works in practice, and one on the [Dieselgate](#) scandal.

Koen van Zon is a postdoctoral researcher at Utrecht University on the research project [Consumers on the March: Civic Activism and Political Representation in Europe, 1970s to 1990s](#). He completed his PhD thesis at Radboud University Nijmegen on a study of the building of the representative institutions of the EU. As a historian of European integration, he is interested in questions that concern the intersection between capitalism and democracy – in other words: how has the interaction between EU/EC institutions and societal actors shaped the governance of Europe's economy?