

## Latest developments in regulating lobbying activities in Greece

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Lobbying, as the right to voice concerns and interests and thereby influence public policy, is a fundamental component of democracy. Businesses, civil society organizations and other legal entities can provide decision makers with valuable insights on which to design data-driven public policies through sharing their expertise, legitimate needs and evidence about policy problems and paths to address them. Nevertheless, sometimes undue influence falls into too few hands, public policies may be influenced only by specific interest groups with narrow commercial or private interests or by using false figures, resulting in insufficient interventions and undermining citizens' trust in democratic and open societies.

In Greece, Law 4829/2021 adopted on September 10th, 2021 on "Strengthening Transparency and Accountability of State Institutional Bodies" introduces for the first time an effective regulatory framework that governs the interaction between politicians and public officials with interests' representatives. This is the first attempt of our country to cover the relevant legislative and institutional gap which has been repeatedly highlighted by international and European organizations in the context of various country evaluations.

The Law establishes a Transparency Register that will be held at the National Transparency Authority (NTA) where lobbyists will have the obligation to register and submit their annual declaration on lobbying activities by declaring: i) the policy area, ii) the decision for which they exercised lobbying activities, iii) the name of the person who exercised lobbying activities and the name of the client, iv) the method used and v) the politician/public official targeted. The Law also forbids current members of the legislature and the executive and their spouses to act as lobbyists and at the same time, it restricts former members to engage in lobbying consulting for a period 18 months after leaving office. In addition, NGOs and professional organizations can be registered lobbyists. Both lobbyists and members of the legislature and the executive are required to file a report of their activities on an annual basis, that it is publicly available. Moreover, a common Code of Conduct binds registrants to operate with integrity, transparency and avoid conflicts of interest.

The NTA is responsible for monitoring compliance with the law. More specifically, the NTA has the power to conduct audits and investigate any complaint for potential violation. In case of violation, the NTA has the power to impose sanctions ranging from corrective action notices, to fines from 5,000-20,000 euros or even suspension of the right to exercise lobbying activities and temporary/permanent exclusion from the Registry.

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As the regulation of lobbying activities remains an ongoing challenge for many national legal frameworks, NTA actively seeks to share experiences with peer authorities. To this end, NTA serving as Chair of the Network of Corruption Prevention Authorities of Council of Europe organized a webinar dedicated on «Trends and Challenges in Regulating Lobbying Activities» on March 15th 2022 with the participation of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Quebec (Canada) and of prominent speakers, representing the OECD and national Anti-Corruption Authorities, who had the opportunity to present the international standards on regulating lobbying activities and share good practices and lessons learned. During the webinar, NTA reiterated its commitment to synergies with international partners.

*(Source: NTA of Greece)*



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Greece***

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