

The Definitive Guide to Lobbying the European Institutions

Based on a survey of the European Parliament,
the Council and the European Commission
Spring 2005



Background and methodology	4
Executive summary	5
What makes a decision-maker sit up and listen?	6
Interconnected and interdependent institutions	8
The definitive tips for effective lobbying	9
Industry scores higher than NGOs for effective lobbying sector by sector	10
Lobby the advisors - not just the decision-maker	12
The most effective ways to communicate messages	14
National newspapers are nearly as important as the Financial Times	16
Appendix: Survey and sample details	18
About Burson-Marsteller and BKSH	22

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of this survey was to improve understanding of what constitutes an effective approach by industry and NGOs to communicating and lobbying on European Union policy issues with decision-makers in the EU institutions: the European Commission, Council of Ministers and Members of the European Parliament.

Burson-Marsteller/BKSH commissioned the survey from Harris Interactive (HI), a global independent company specialising in research on strategic communications. In 2001 and 2003 respectively, Wirthlin – which has since merged with Harris - carried out similar surveys on perceptions of lobbying among MEPs and the European Commission's senior officials.

The survey findings reported here result from HI Europe's EU Omnibus study, conducted between 12 April-11 May 2005.

This survey was conducted via telephone interviews with 150 senior representatives from the key institutions involved in EU decision making:

- European Commission officials - Heads of Sector and above, from relevant Directorates-General (DGs) and the personal offices of the Commissioners (cabinets)
- Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), broadly representative in terms of the composition of Parliament's political groups and nationality
- Member states' permanent representations to the EU - senior level staff.

The survey was offered in the three main EU languages - English, French and German. The sample included a mix of respondents by country, DGs, Committee, political group and Council formations.

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Industry and NGOs are equally effective lobbyists

Within the European Union’s Council, Parliament and Commission the general view is that industry and NGOs are equally effective lobbyists. On a scale of 1 – 10, each secured a rating of 5.6. However, when comparing the effectiveness of industry and NGO lobbying across eleven sectors, industry comes out ahead in all but one of the sectors.

The most common mistakes made by industry lobbyists are coming to a debate too early or too late in the process, using inappropriate briefing materials, and basing their position on an excessively national position.

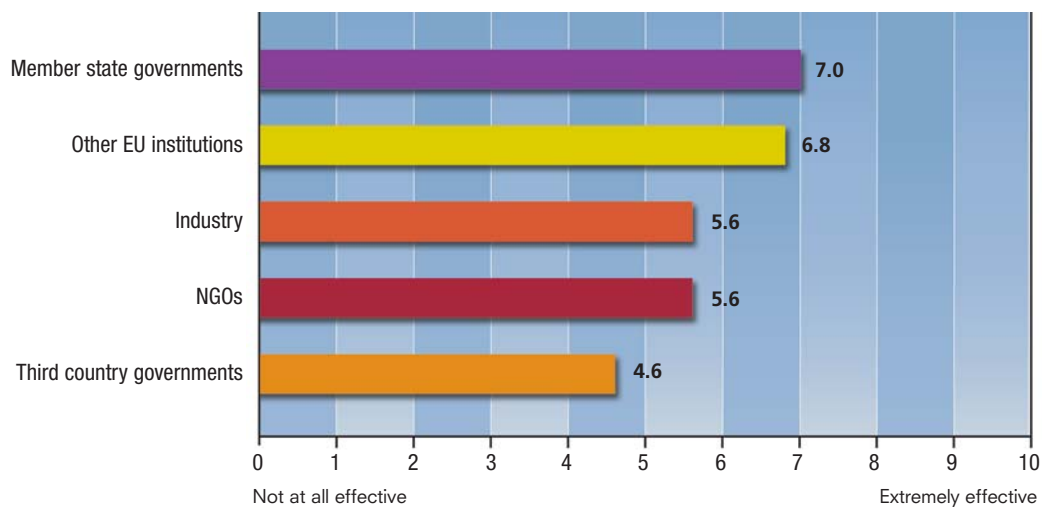
By far the greatest error made by NGOs is using emotion rather than facts to advance their case.

Meetings and written information score much higher among the sample group as conduits for substantive input than do dinner and lunch briefings or exhibitions and evening receptions.

While the Financial Times is rated as the best source of information on industry by the Commission and Council, MEPs opt first for their own national newspaper, followed by the Financial Times. Agence Europe continues to be perceived as important (except in Parliament).

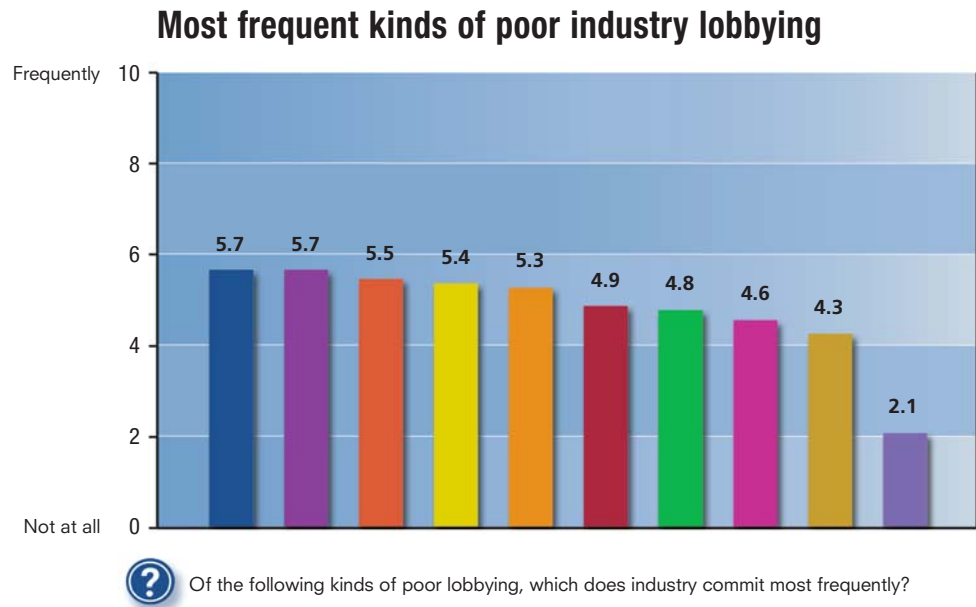
English is the favoured second language of 85 per cent of respondents.

Effectiveness of Lobbying



How would you rate the effectiveness of lobbying of the following organisations?

WHAT MAKES A DECISION-MAKER SIT UP AND LISTEN?



Lobbying in Brussels is important because this is where significant political power has shifted in 21st century Europe.

The survey aimed to gain a better understanding of the most effective ways to communicate with the EU institutions and, crucially, to identify key aspects of good and bad lobbying.

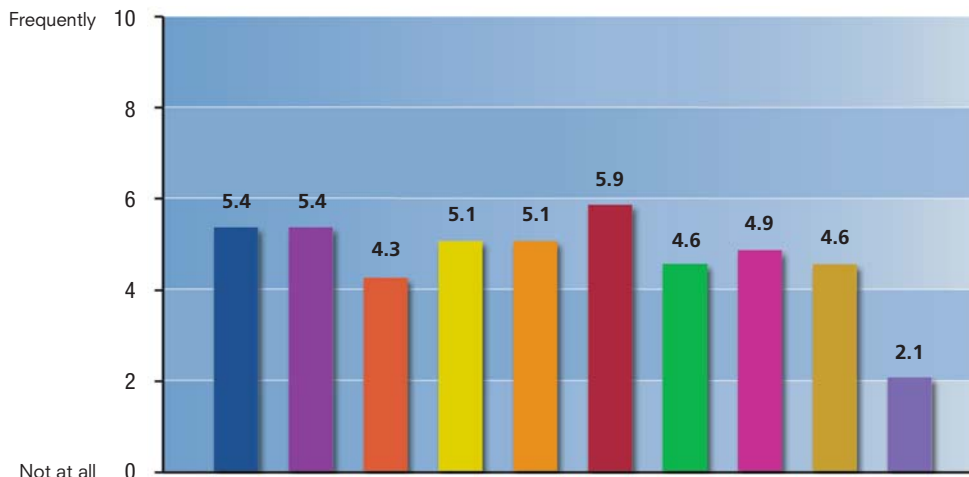
A key finding is that industry and NGOs are regarded as being equally competent at lobbying. There are, however, some small differences of opinion between the institutions on the comparative effectiveness of industry and NGO lobbying. While the Parliament and Commission rate NGO lobbying marginally more effective than industry's, Council officials believe industry is slightly more effective.

Overall though, both industry and NGOs are rated by the Commission, Parliament and Council as equally effective – each on 5.6 – in our survey.

This is important because it challenges the assumption among many NGOs and some politicians that it is difficult for NGOs to counter-balance industry lobbying; and it challenges the view in some industry sectors that NGO lobbying is always more effective than their own.

Despite this, the EU's decision-makers find unappealing some of the approaches that are made to them.

Most frequent kinds of poor NGO lobbying



Of the following kinds of poor lobbying, which do NGOs commit most frequently?

- Being too early or too late in the process
- Inappropriate briefing materials
- Basing a position on an excessively national position
- Failing to understand EU process & procedure
- Approaching the wrong person
- Basing a position on emotion rather than facts
- Not sufficiently transparent
- Lobbying by press release
- Being too aggressive
- Offering unethical inducements

And to a great extent, industry and NGOs are making the same mistakes in their lobbying. Both industry and NGOs:

- provide inappropriate briefing materials
- are too early or too late with their lobbying
- fail to understand EU processes and procedures
- approach the wrong person.

While industry is also criticised for basing its arguments on positions

that are too national, the highest score for an example of bad lobbying tactics (5.9) goes to NGOs' tendency to base their positions on emotion rather than facts.

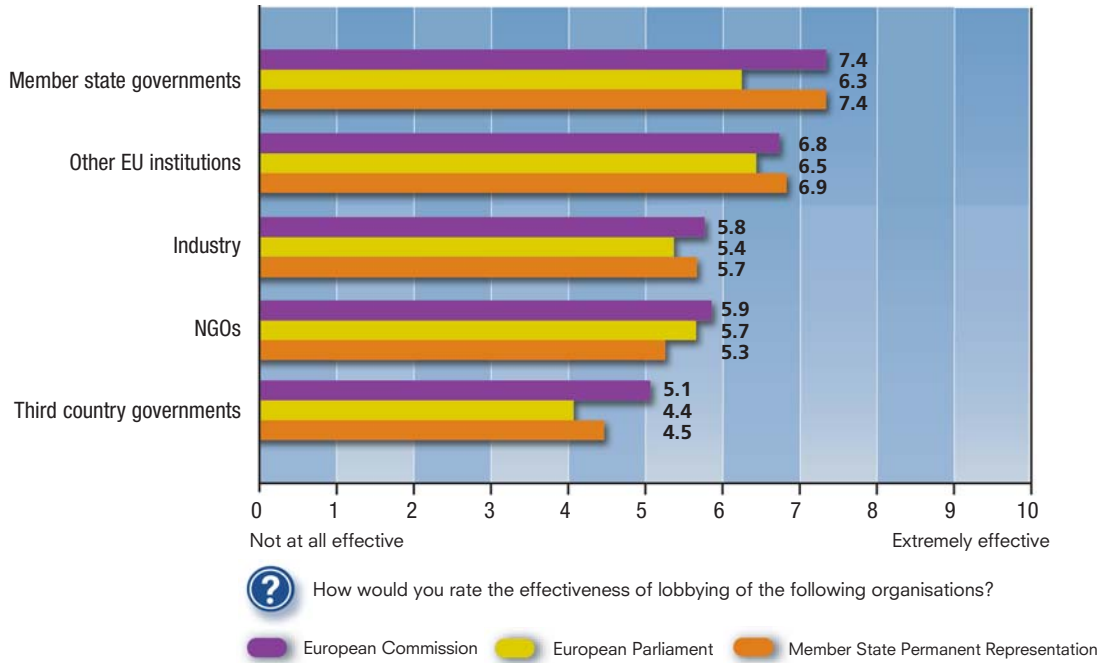
The finding that NGOs too often base a position on emotion is by no means a blanket criticism. The data shows that MEPs, no doubt because they are political campaigners with an instinctive sympathy for the value of clear messages, have a greater liking for the NGOs' approach.

While the Commission gives NGOs a score of 6.6 for this approach the corresponding figure given by MEPs is 5.6.

Being too aggressive or being insufficiently transparent score lower in terms of frequency of occurrence for both industry and NGO lobbyists.

Offering unethical inducements is the least common example of poor lobbying among industry and NGOs.

Effectiveness of Lobbying – Breakdown by EU Institution



In national capitals the interaction between political institutions is an important aspect of government.

Similarly in Brussels, the interconnections between different EU institutions are important for understanding how decisions are made, and how they can be influenced.

Our study confirms that member state governments and EU institutions themselves have a crucial impact on decision-makers in other EU institutions. For all three institutions member state governments and other EU institutions score more highly for effective lobbying than industry and NGOs – but with Parliament slightly

more immune from influence by these sources. This confirms again that most of the time the institutions will have to be handled together, simultaneously, and not sequentially or separately. And this is certainly the case with advocacy on the vast majority of legislative proposals.

The lowest effectiveness of lobbying is achieved by third country governments. This is an important finding: governments outside the EU cannot be relied upon to articulate a case effectively.

The 12 Definitive Tips for Effective Lobbying:

★ **Be part of the thinking process:**

As well as getting to the decision-maker when an issue is first appearing, establish processes to identify which issues will arise in future which might require decision-makers to act.

★ **Strategise - and move with history:**

Some battles in the EU are un-winnable head-on. Identify the direction of change and when necessary adapt to change, and influence its direction, rather than trying to stop it.

★ **Think politically:**

Identify the focus of political argument, the values and interests involved, and the potential basis for consensus.

★ **In Brussels, Europeanising the message is important, and frequently, it needs politicising too:**

Defending purely national issues in Brussels is difficult if not often counter-productive – although a national argument may be appropriate with some MEPs or a permanent representation.

★ **Recognise – and utilise – the imperfect communications which are endemic between and within EU institutions.**

★ **Be transparent:**

Today's political orthodoxy requires all interests to have the right to be heard – so don't be afraid to be totally open about who you represent, or surprised about others being heard too. The EU institutions are more transparent than most national administrations.

★ **Allies, partners and coalitions:**

Search for allies, and build coalitions whenever possible. Ad hoc and temporary issue specific coalitions can be just as influential as long standing partnerships.

★ **Recognise that “sound science”, on its own, is a poor lobbying message:**

Support it with reference to the social and political choices that decision-makers must necessarily make.

★ **Understand the policy - process - strategy interconnection:**

In Brussels institutions and processes make a difference. Understand the relationship between process and policy outcome. And timing is always crucial, as is targeting the right people in the right way with appropriate briefing materials for the different type of audience (official or politician).

★ **Empower Brussels' advocates:**

Get beyond “fly in fly out” lobbying. The speed and constancy of EU decision making, and the compromises necessary, make it impossible for outsiders to influence effectively EU decision making. Be there on the ground.

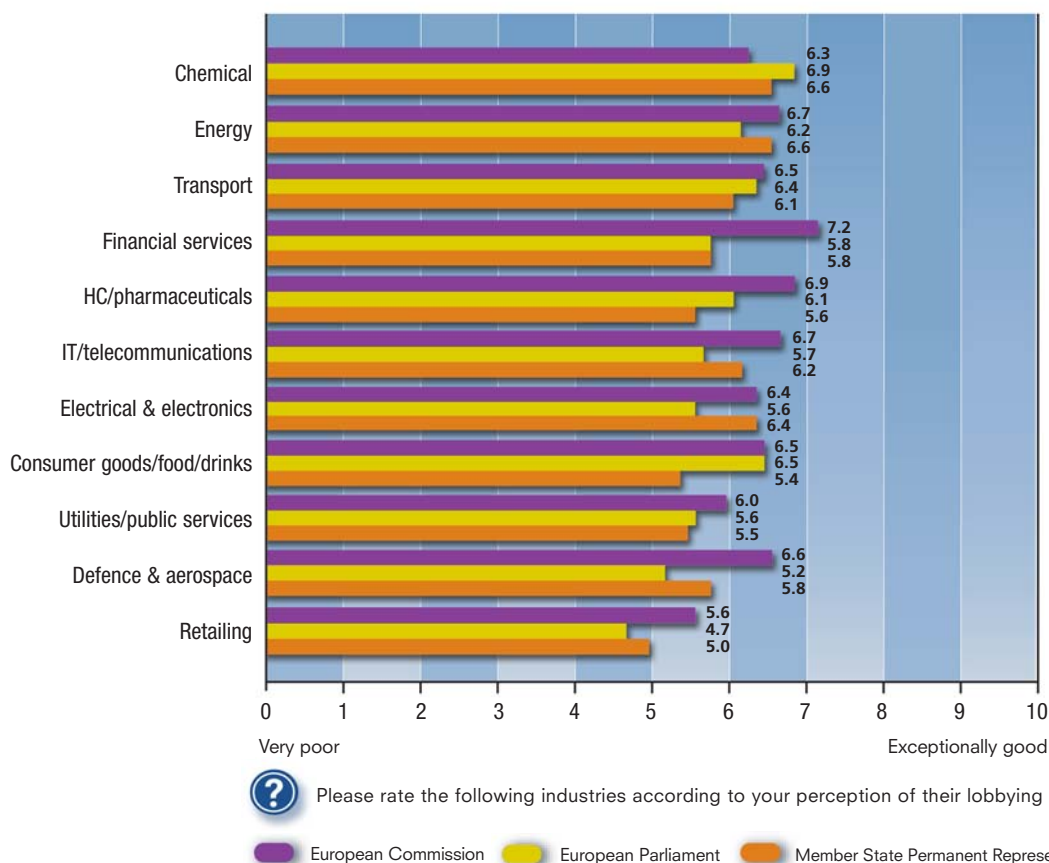
★ **Recognise and respect Europe's diversity in culture, language, and thought and where possible use it to your advantage.**

★ **Be creative:**

S/he who crafts the compromise often wins in Brussels.

INDUSTRY SCORES HIGHER THAN NGOs FOR EFFECTIVE LOBBYING SECTOR BY SECTOR

Effectiveness of Industry Lobbying - Breakdown by EU Institution



While, overall, industry and NGOs are seen as equally effective lobbyists, when it comes to sector by sector comparisons industry comes out ahead.

In every sector – with the exception of consumer goods, food and drinks – industry is seen as being more effective even if by a small margin.

Large investments are made by the chemicals, energy and transport industries in their lobbying activities – and it is reflected in the survey findings. The three sectors gain high ratings for effectiveness of lobbying by industry – and in the case of chemicals and transport by the NGOs that shadow their work too.

Industry has a strong lead over NGOs in effective lobbying in four sectors:

energy (6.5 versus 5.8); financial services (6.2 versus 5.2); electrical and electronics (6.1 versus 5.3); defence and aerospace (5.7 versus 4.7).

Industry enjoys a smaller advantage in healthcare and pharmaceuticals (6.1 versus 5.6) and IT and telecommunications (6.1 versus 5.6).

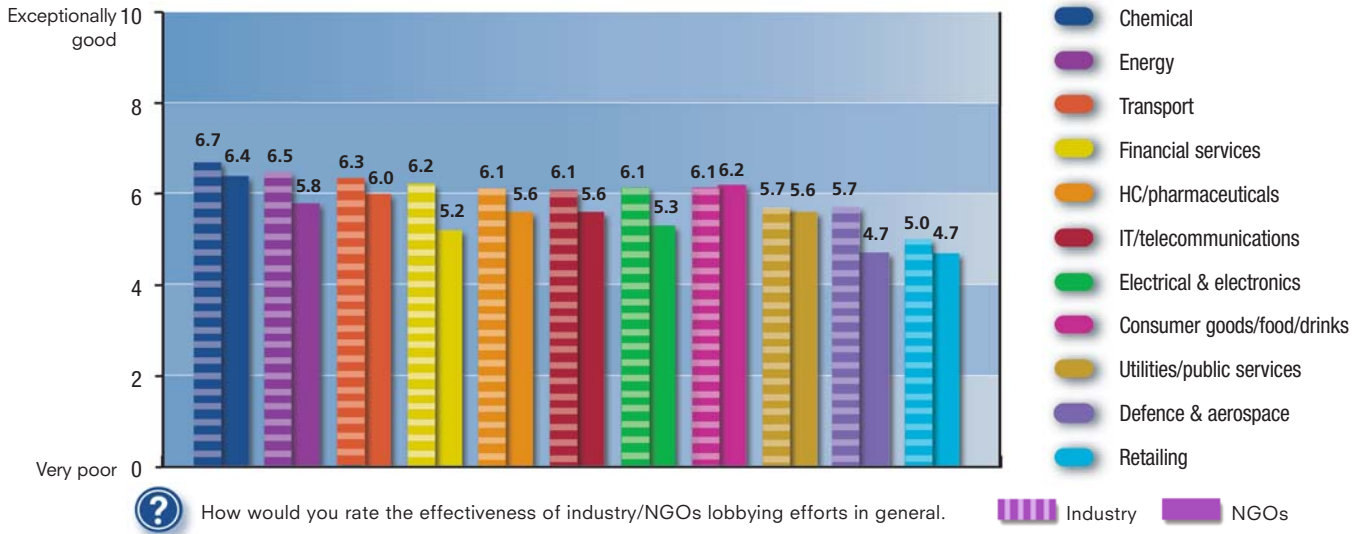
The exception to the pattern is NGO lobbying in the consumer goods, food and drinks sector where it is seen as slightly more effective than industry (6.2 versus 6.1). This seems to reflect the recent debate within the EU over obesity, nutrition and health claims

labelling for food. Industry lobbying in the consumer goods, food and drinks sector was towards the bottom of the list in terms of its effectiveness.

Across the institutions, the financial services and healthcare/pharmaceuticals sectors stand out among Commission officials for effective industry lobbying. In chemicals, industry is just ahead of NGOs in Parliament, while defence and aerospace lobbying appears to be effective towards the Commission but relatively poor vis-à-vis Parliament.

INDUSTRY SCORES HIGHER THAN NGOs FOR EFFECTIVE LOBBYING SECTOR BY SECTOR

Effectiveness of Lobbying: Industry - NGOs



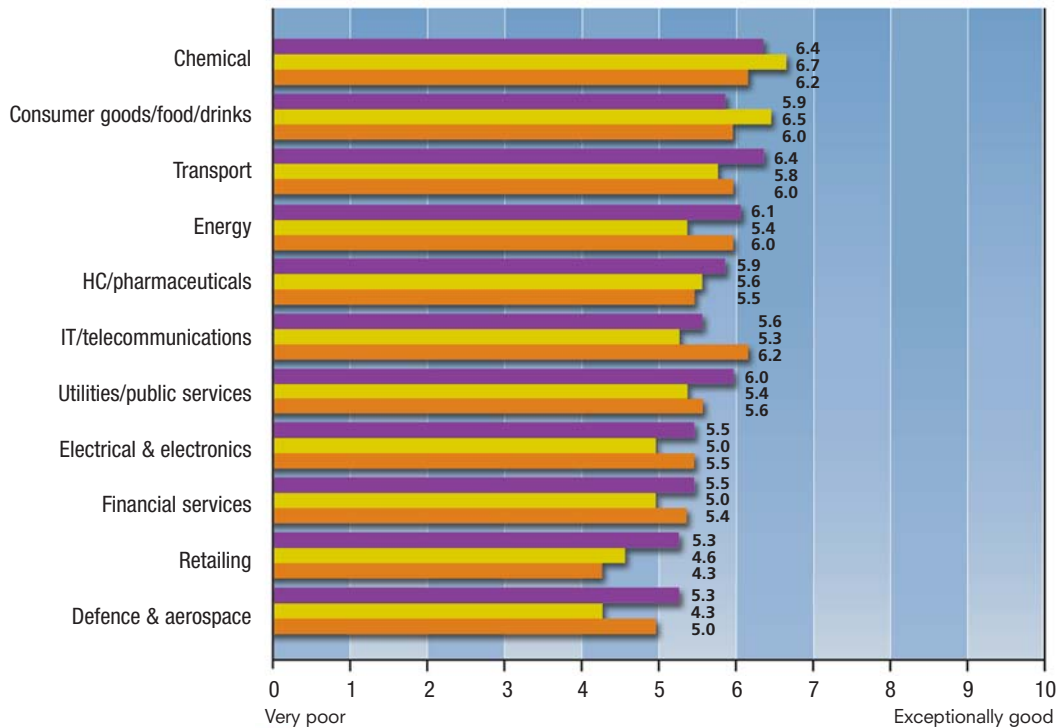
Reflecting the traditional bias within industry for focusing their lobbying efforts on the Commission, industry lobbying in the chemicals sector is the only area in which MEPs score industry higher than do Commission

officials. In all the other sectors MEPs give industry lobbying a lower score than do Commission officials.

Interestingly, our findings on which sectors industry is ranked most and

least effective are almost identical to those in our surveys on lobbying the Parliament and Commission, conducted in 2001 and 2003 respectively. Chemicals lobbying remains most effective and retailing the least effective.

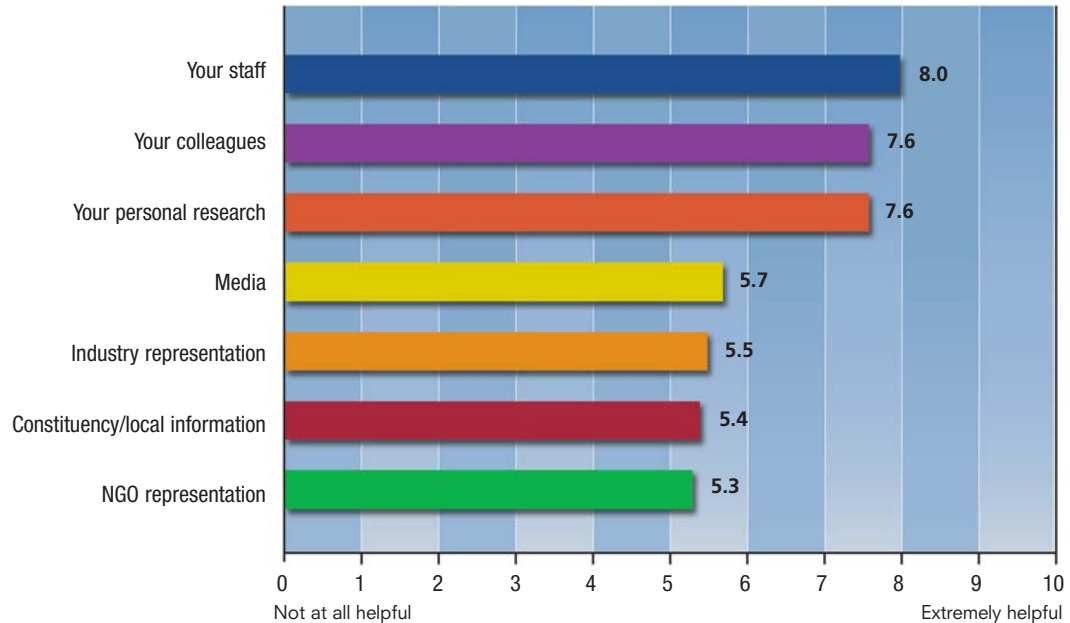
Effectiveness of NGO Lobbying - Breakdown by EU Institution



Please rate the following NGOs according to your perception of their lobbying efforts.

European Commission European Parliament Member State Permanent Representation

Helpfulness of Different Information Sources



Please rate the following sources in terms of how helpful each one is in providing you with what you need to make informed decisions in your work.

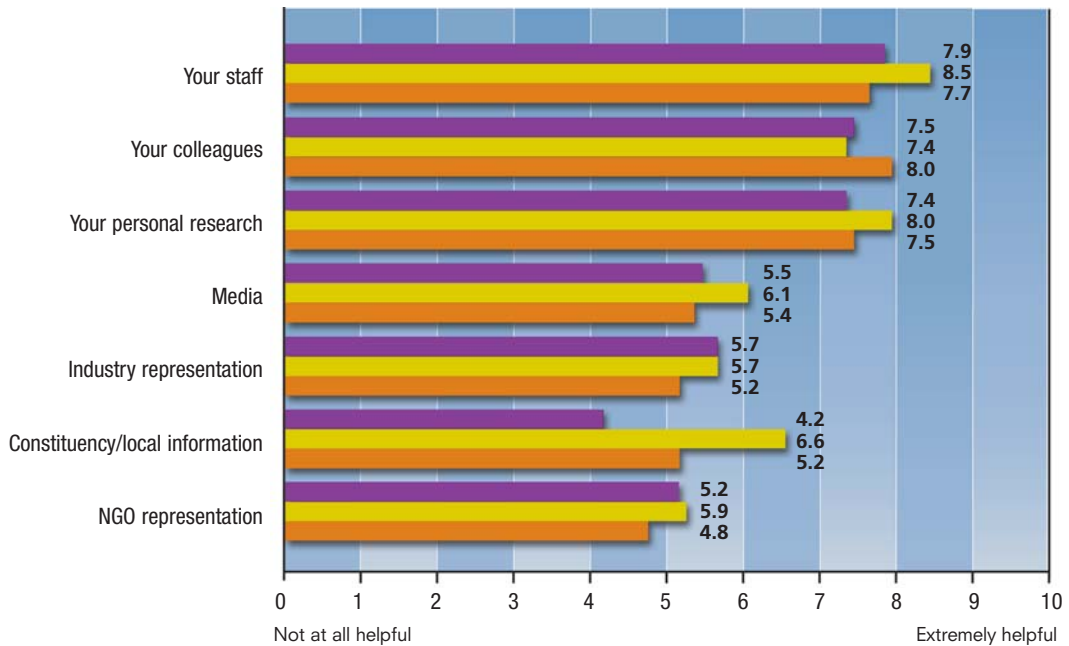
An important lesson for an industry or NGO seeking to lobby the EU is contained in the report’s finding that decision-makers look first to their staff for help – not to the lobbyist who has just left the room.

As seen in the above graph, the helpfulness of advice that a decision-maker receives from staff and colleagues (not to mention his or her own research) dwarfs the potential influence of the media, and the lobbying efforts of industry and NGOs.

The lesson for lobbyists is that it is as important to seek to influence staff and colleagues as it is to lobby the decision-maker.

Campaigns clearly need to aim at wider spheres of influence, not just the spider at the centre of a web. Nowhere is this illustrated more graphically than among MEPs, who give a rating of 8.5 – one of the highest in the survey – to the helpfulness that they attach to their staff in making informed decisions. Parliamentary assistants and officials are therefore key influencers in Brussels.

Helpfulness of Different Information Sources - Breakdown by EU Institution



Please rate the following sources in terms of how helpful each one is in providing you with what you need to make informed decisions in your work.

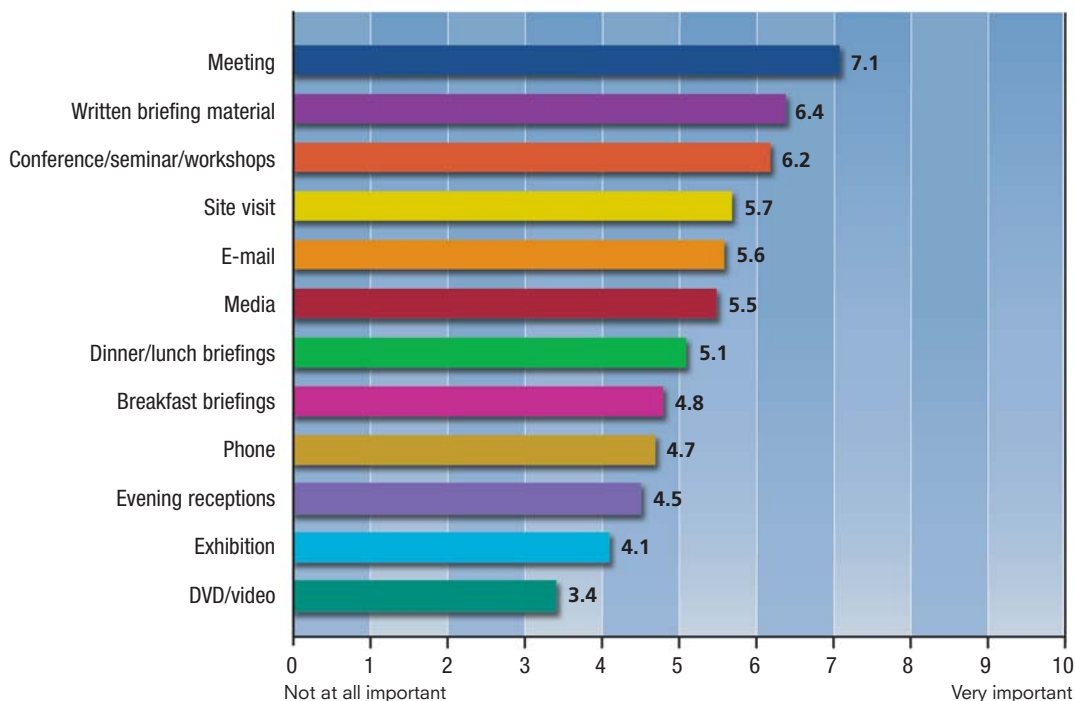
- European Commission
- European Parliament
- Member State Permanent Representation

A sharp reminder of the time that industry needs to invest in influencing advisers can be seen in the finding that Commission decision-makers rate the helpfulness of staff at 7.9 while that of industry is just 5.7 - only just above the influence of the media.

While NGOs score highly with MEPs for helpfulness, they achieve lower ratings with the Commission

and Council – possibly because officials are naturally more interested in fact than emotion. Similarly, the media has a bigger impact on MEPs than with the other groups – no doubt because the media is important in influencing voters’ opinions. Unsurprisingly, constituency and local information has by far the greatest impact on MEPs.

How is information best communicated to you?



Please rate each of the following on their level of importance in receiving information.

Decision-makers in the EU have a very clear view of the role and purpose of each event that is staged for their benefit by industry or NGOs.

For an EU decision-maker, a face-to-face meeting is the most important way in which he or she can receive information. This is demonstrated unequivocally by the top rating of 7.1 decision-makers give it.

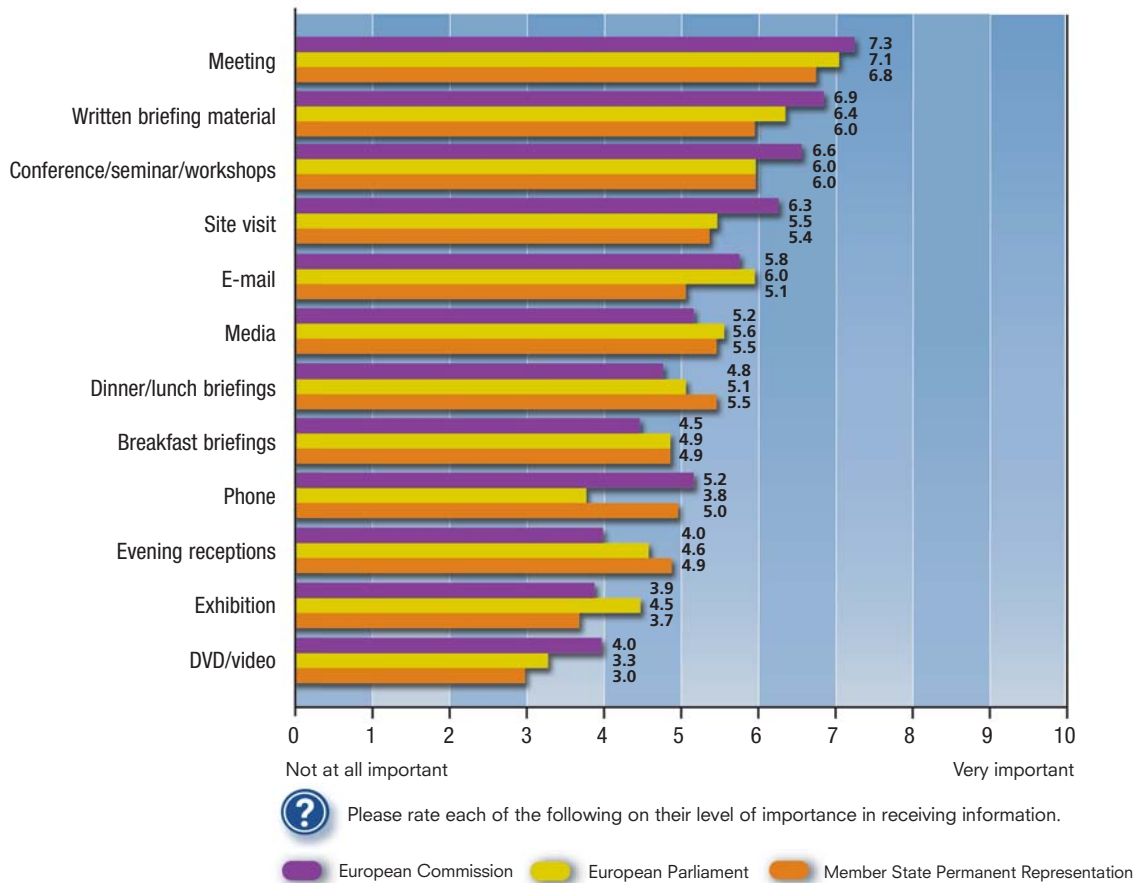
Evening receptions and exhibitions may be important ways to create an awareness of a particular interest or organisation and its headline issues, as well as to initiate relationships, but as ways to communicate information rate at only 4.5 and 4.1 respectively. Only the distribu-

tion of DVDs and videos rates lower for an EU decision-maker, at 3.4.

There are important distinctions between the three categories of decision-maker. For example, a Commission official is the most enthusiastic for a meeting to secure information, followed by an MEP and then a Council official.

While written briefing material is of secondary importance to a meeting for all types of decision-makers, the Commission official is again most enthusiastic for it, fol-

How is information best communicated to you - Breakdown by EU Institution



lowed again by the MEP and Council official.

When it comes to picking up the phone to transmit information, the Commission official will again be happiest to listen (5.2), the Council official next (5.0), and the MEP most disinclined to listen (3.8).

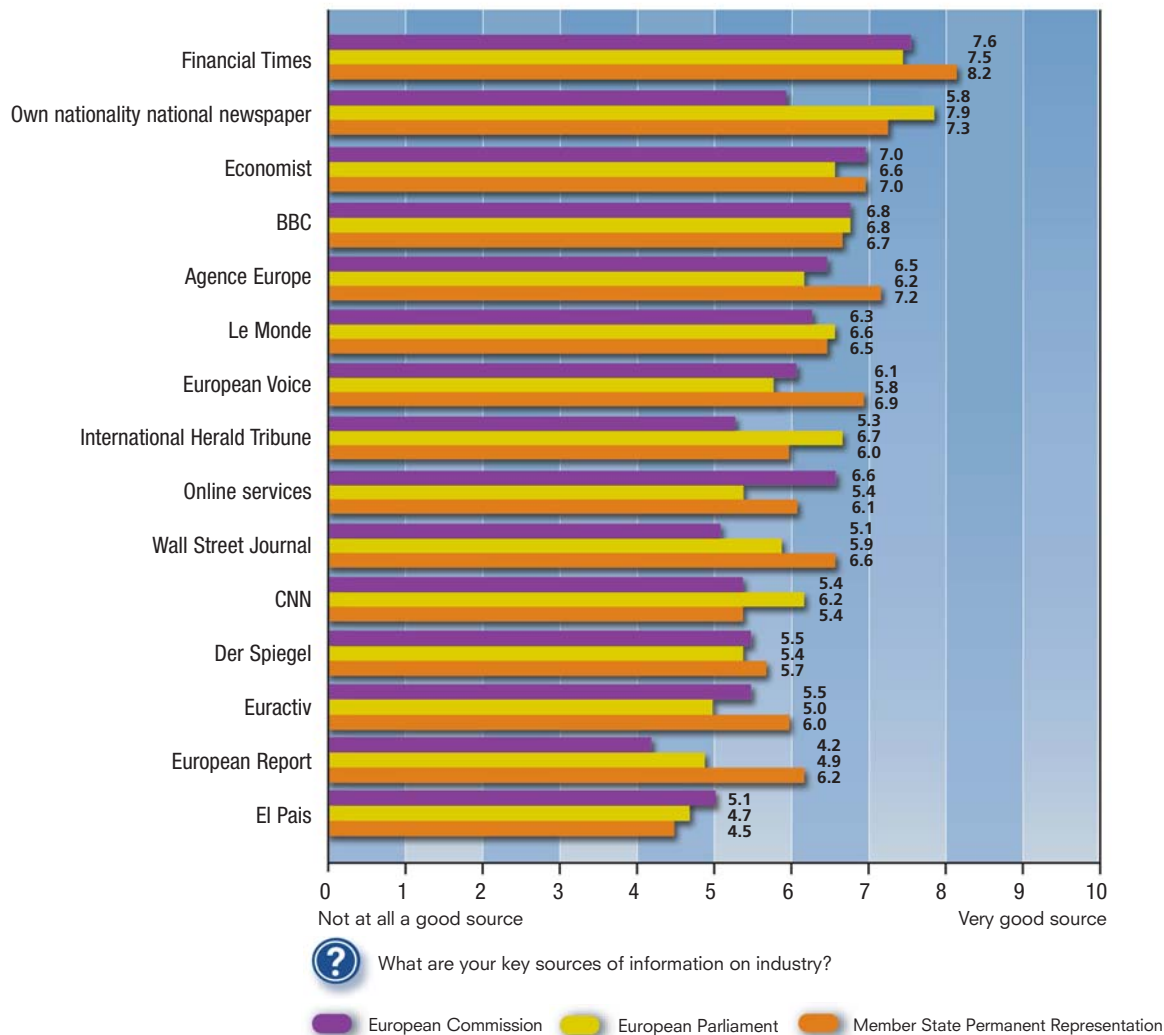
Even that event most treasured by some lobbyists – the dinner or lunch briefing – only rates 5.1 among decision-makers as a vehicle for communicating information. In short, these events are more

than half way down the list of importance.

There is a lesson here for all who seek to influence the EU. In the mind of the EU decision-maker, exhibitions, receptions and other forms of what are sometimes seen as casual lobbying play a different role. Receptions are for social contact and interaction, essential in any polity or community. Meetings, written briefings, conferences, seminars, workshops and site visits are for work – and are all at the top of the ranking.

NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS ARE NEARLY AS IMPORTANT AS THE FINANCIAL TIMES

Key sources of information on industry - Breakdown by EU Institution



While the Financial Times is rated the best source of information on industry for decision-makers in the Commission and Council, MEPs opt first for their own national newspaper.

For MEPs the Financial Times is not far behind their own national newspaper (7.5 and 7.9 respectively). Our findings again underscore how parliamentarians tend to look first to their constituency or national and regional base. Likewise, officials in the Council – ultimately responsible to elected national ministers – rate

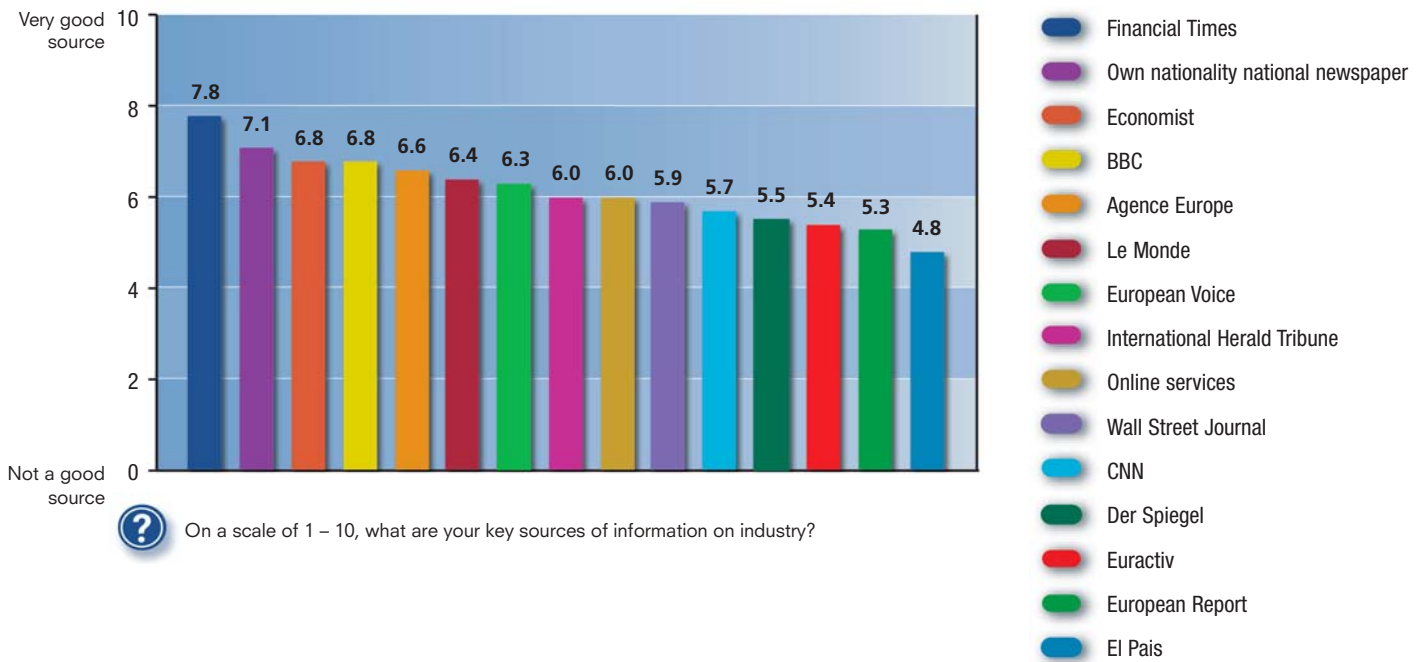
highly their own national newspaper, placing it second to the Financial Times.

For Commission decision-makers, whose role put simply is to think EU-wide, their own national newspaper ranks much lower – 5.8 against 7.6 for the Financial Times.

The BBC scores highly with the Parliament and Commission while Agence Europe, the daily news source for Brussels’ insiders, scores well across the board and in particular with decision-makers in the Council. Brussels’ weekly newspaper European Voice also scores highly.

NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS ARE NEARLY AS IMPORTANT AS THE FINANCIAL TIMES

Key sources of information on industry

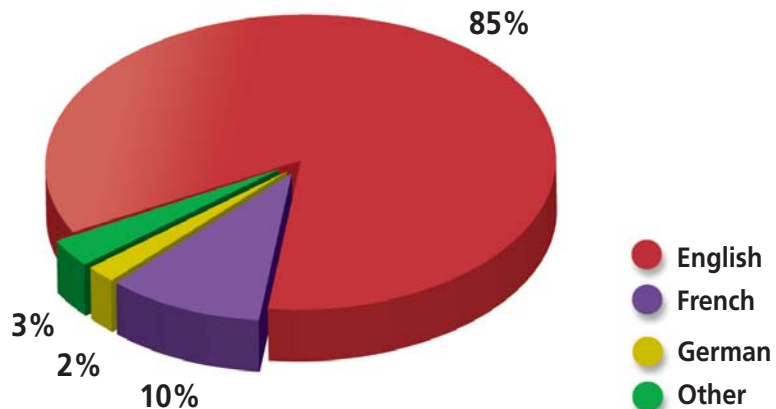


ENGLISH IS THE DOMINANT LANGUAGE IN THE EU

For the vast majority of the men and women at the top of the EU, English is now their second language. No less than 85 per cent of those questioned cited English as their preferred choice if their own language was not available.

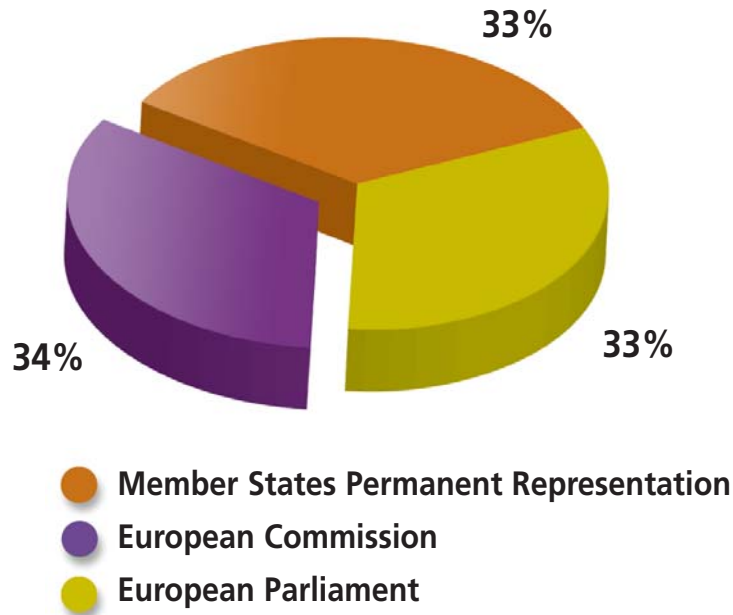
The size of the support for English no doubt follows the enlargement of the EU in 1995. This brought in Sweden, Austria and Finland and, coupled with the accession of the Central and Eastern European countries and Cyprus and Malta in 2004, ensured the dominance of English as the preferred second language.

Preferred second language

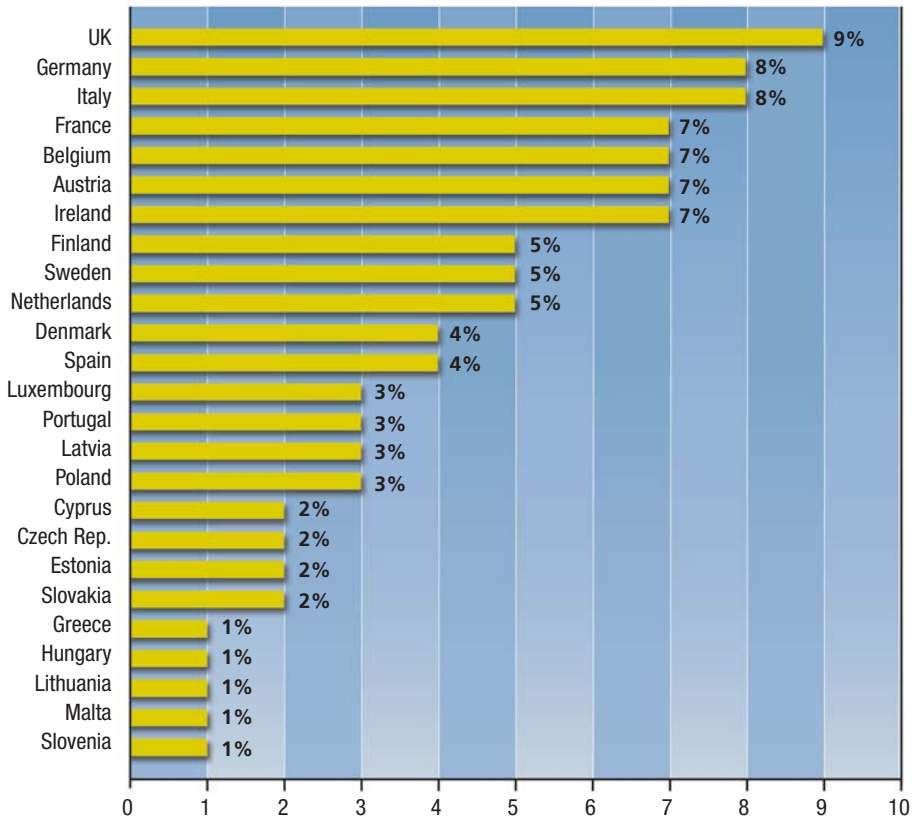


Other than your own language, in which of the following three languages do you prefer to receive information?

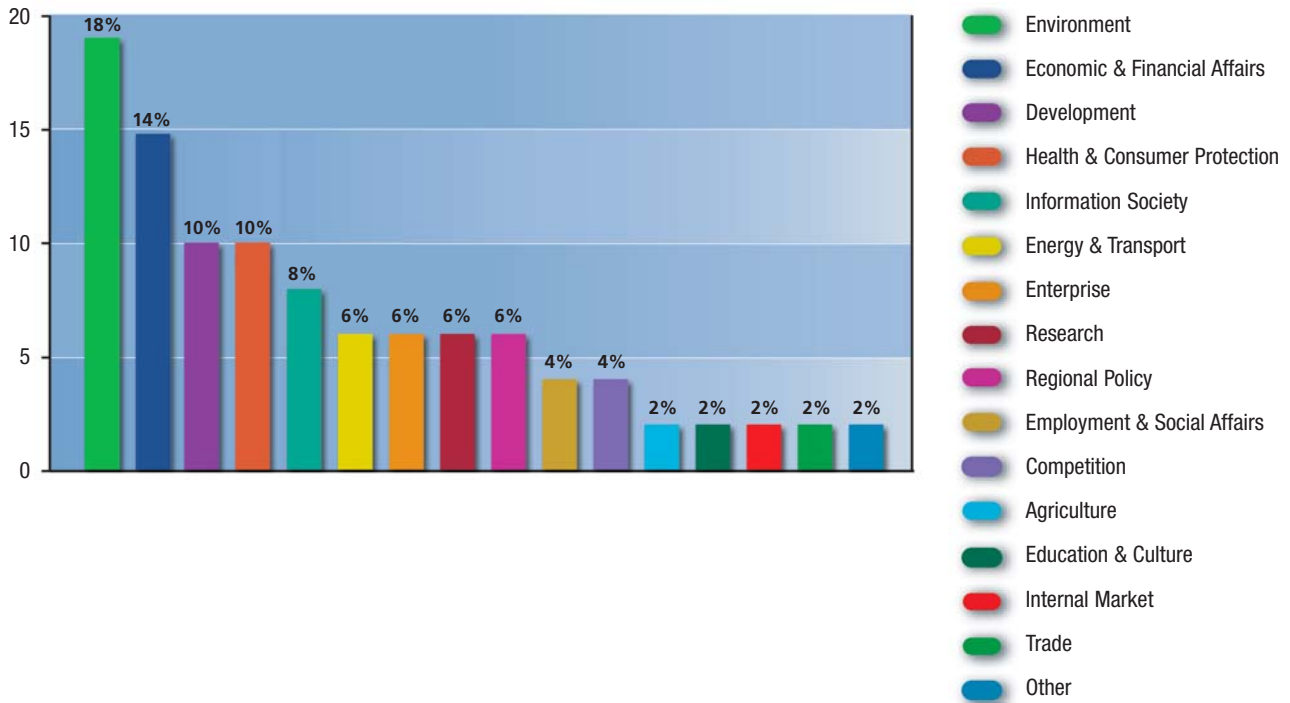
EU Institution Composition



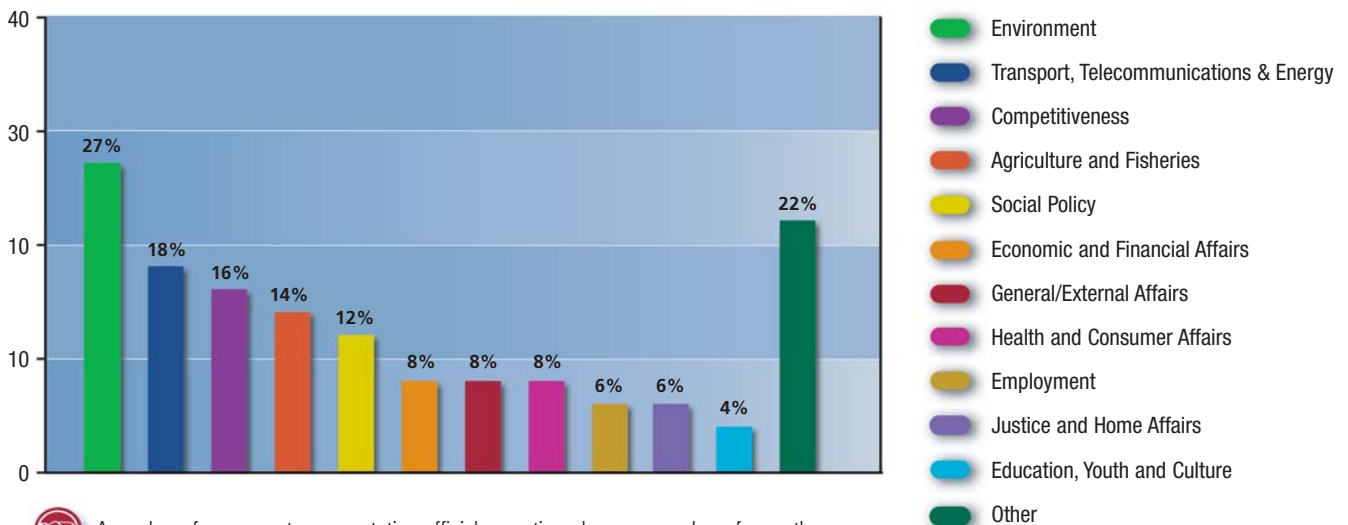
Country Composition



Directorate-General Composition

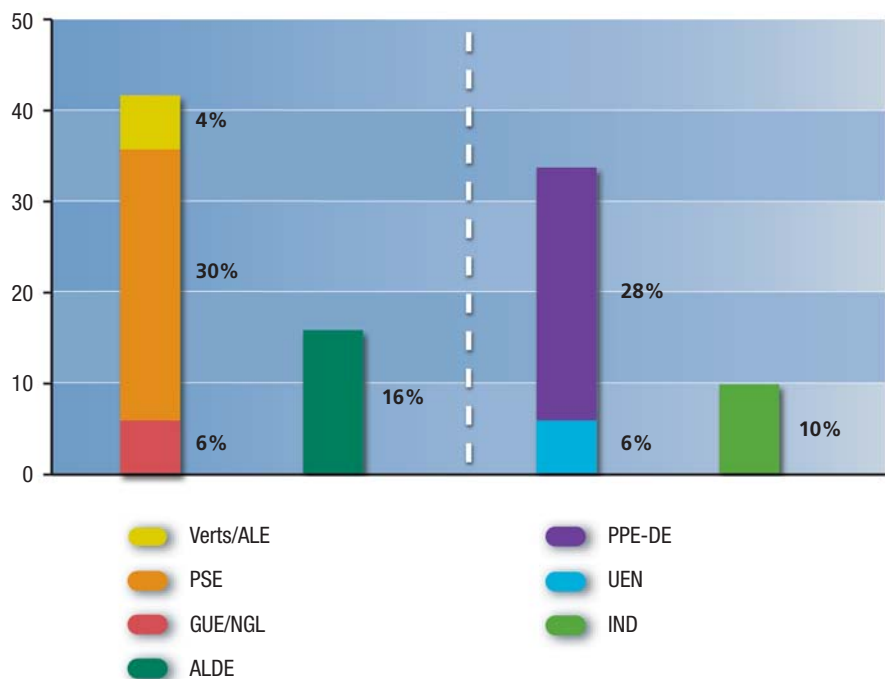


Council Formation Composition

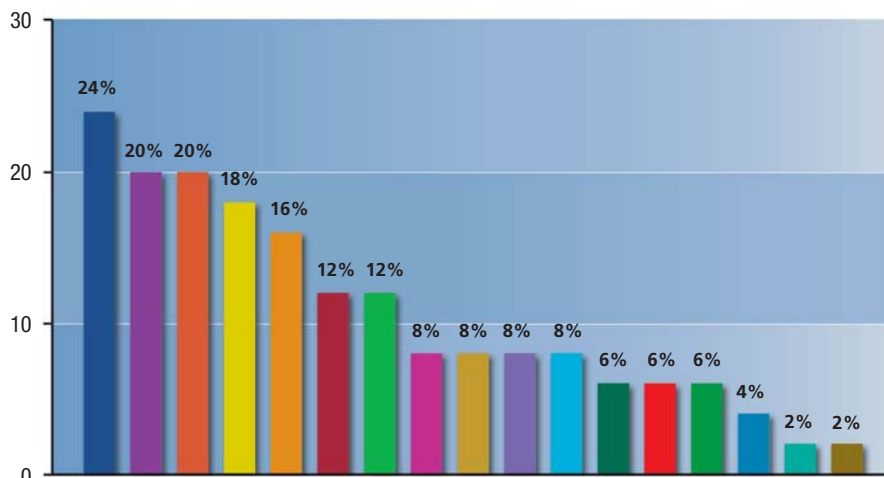


A number of permanent representation officials questioned were a member of more than one working group.

Political Group - Members of Parliament Composition



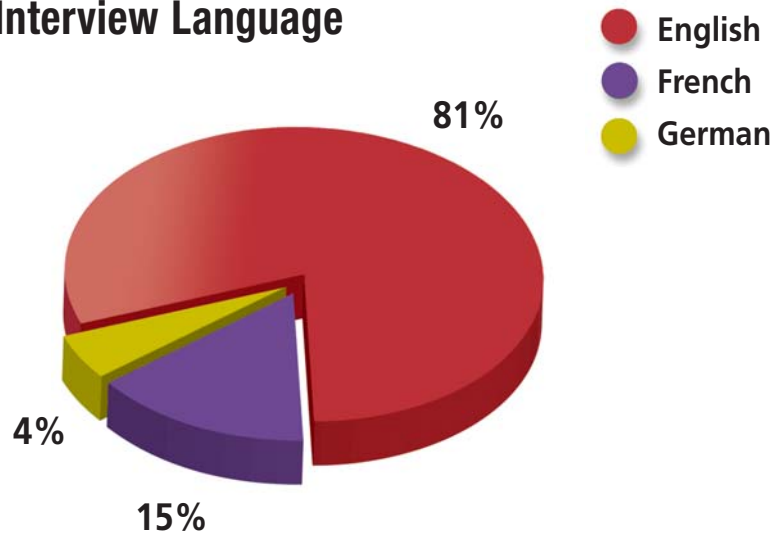
Committee Membership - Members of Parliament Composition



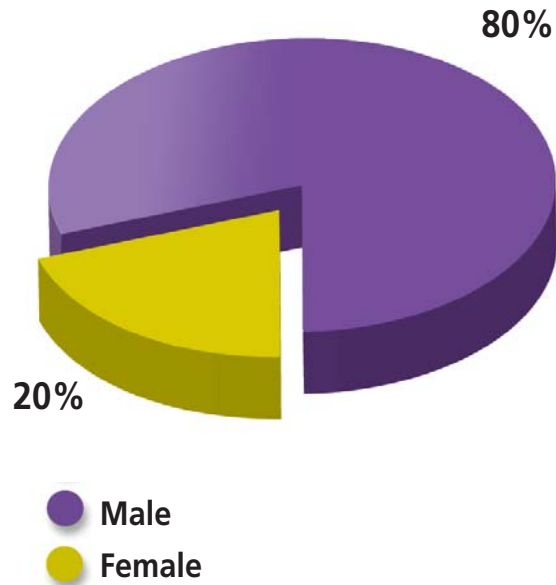
A number of MEPs questioned were a member of more than one committee.

- Regional Policy, Transport & Tourism
- Industry, External Trade, Research & Energy
- Environment, Public Health & Consumer Policy
- Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security & Defence
- Economic & Monetary Affairs
- Employment & Social Affairs
- Constitutional Affairs
- Budgets
- Budgetary Control
- Women's Rights & Equal Opportunities
- Legal Affairs & the Internal Market
- Citizens' Freedoms & Rights, Justice & Home Affairs
- Culture, Youth, Education, Media & Sport
- Development & Co-operation
- Fisheries
- Agriculture & Rural Development
- Other

Interview Language



Sample Composition



Burson-Marsteller and BKSH

Burson-Marsteller is a leading global public relations and public affairs company. Located in the political and media centre of Europe, Burson-Marsteller Brussels specialises in Europe-wide public affairs campaigns. BKSH is the specialist government relations division of Burson-Marsteller.

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