Book Reviews - Effective Lobbying in the European Community

Michaela Platzer

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/globe/vol5/iss1/14
Book Reviews


Reviewed by Michaela Platzer*

The Europe 1992 program has brought a whole new army of workers to Brussels: the lobbyists. Hundreds of legislative measures are winding their way through the European Community's (EC) legislative maze, with bottom line implications for U.S. businesses operating and/or exporting to the lucrative $5 trillion EC market. Once the EC single market program is complete, U.S. manufacturers will have to comply with thousands of European product standards, Europe-wide environmental regulations, explicit labor relations requirements, and hundreds of other measures governing everything from the EC's financial services market to telecommunications. Consequently, lobbying the EC's vast legislative apparatus is imperative for American businesses. The voice of U.S. business must be heard as new legislative proposals are being formulated, not after they have received final EC approval. An estimated 3000 lobbyists work in Brussels. Additionally, several thousand lobbyists operate at the national level within each EC country. Large U.S. law firms, from Jones Day Reavis & Pogue to Squires Sanders and Dempsey, the "big six" accounting firms, public relations groups such as Burson Marsteller and Hill & Knowlton, and representatives of American states from California to Virginia, are all active players in lobbying the legislative institutions of the European Community. Groups need not necessarily be based in Brussels to have their voices heard. Business organizations such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce based in Washington, D.C., with 185,000 members, have made European Community decision-makers aware of their

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*Director, Europe 1992, U.S. Chamber of Commerce.
members’ concerns on emerging EC policy that affect U.S. businesses.

James Gardner’s *Effective Lobbying in the European Community* demystifies the lobbying process in the EC and suggests specific techniques for influencing the European Community policy-making process. This book is required reading for anyone seeking to effectively lobby the Community’s legislative machine.

European-style lobbying presents a challenge for American companies seeking to influence EC legislation. Despite a few superficial similarities, lobbying Brussels is strikingly different from the American-style of lobbying the U.S. Congress and the Executive Branch. These differences can present pitfalls for new U.S. lobbyists.

Mr. Gardner does not dismiss the effectiveness of American-style lobbying. Rather, he notes, it must be tailored to the EC policy-making process. After all, one of the organizations that is most effective on behalf of U.S. multinationals operating in Europe is the EC Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce in Belgium. Mr. Gardner writes, “The EC Committee has been remarkably successful in creating a hybrid form of lobbying which tempers the best features of Washington, D.C. lobbying - clear, unambiguous, fact-based presentations - with the low-key, accommodating style favored by Europeans.”

The book provides an abundance of useful information and tips. It includes an excellent overview of the EC’s legislative process, drawing attention to the uniquely European political environment in which a lobbyist must operate. Not only does Mr. Gardner clearly explain the intricacies of how an EC legislative proposal becomes European Community law, he also examines the various pressure points that are key to an effective EC lobbying strategy. When seeking allies on a specific legislative measure, American lobbyists should consider more than the Eurocrats in the EC Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of Ministers. Major private sector organizations, such as the Union of Industrial and Employers’ Confederations of Europe (UNICE) and
the European Round Table of Industrialists, are often instrumental in shaping legislation.

One of the most valuable tips in Mr. Gardner's book is the six key elements to effective lobbying in the EC: keep it low-key; keep it short and substantive; keep it long term; get in early; use a bottoms-up approach; and, remain vigilant. This is sound advice.

Mr. Gardner's book clearly demonstrates that there are many levers which can be pulled to influence European Community legislation. Above all else, however, the book amply proves that hard work and diligence is required to be an effective European-style lobbyist.