Viability of Lobby Groups in Romania

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What are the lobby groups?

Advocacy groups

Pressure groups

Influence decisions

Interest groups
Lobby groups in the United States

“Lobbying is the practice of trying to persuade legislators to propose, pass, or defeat legislation or to change existing laws. A lobbyist may work for a group, organization, or industry, and presents information on legislative proposals to support his or her clients' interests.”

U.S. Senate definition
- Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995
- Laws adopted in the 110th Congress
  - S. 1
  - H.Res 6
Lobby groups in Europe

- 1970s – 400 lobby groups in Brussels

- Today – more then 15,000 lobbyists from 2,500 organizations in Brussels

  (Alexander Stubb – Finn member of the European Parliament and the rapporteur on lobbying in the EU)

- Lobbying regulated in parliament bills in:
  - Georgia – 1998
  - Lithuania – 2001
  - Poland – 2005
  - Hungary – 2006
Towards a lobby law in Romania

Attempts to influence political decisions already made by
- Non-governmental organizations
- Business associations
  - Foreign Investors Council
  - American Chamber of Commerce
  - Businessmen’s Association of Romania
New electoral law – March 3rd 2008

- 231 votes “for”, 11 “against” and 18 “abstains”

- An uninominal system of election
  - Deputy - 70,000 people
  - Senator - 160,000 people
Public consultations

- Advocacy Academy
- Pro Democracy Association
- Professional Journalists’ Society
Arguments in favor of a lobby law:

- A lobby law would create a clear distinction between lobbying and corruption and would help stopping the later.

- A lobby law would support the active participation of citizens to the political process that would increase their trust in the governance sector and would create a more transparent political system.
Arguments against a lobby law:

- Citizens lack of knowledge of the political mechanisms’ that could be used to influence the decision processes.

- Fear that the only “winners” of a lobby law would be the interest groups that already know the legislative process and the people that influence it and only look for their own interest and not citizens’ one.
Fear that citizens would understand by a lobby law a legalized way of fostering corruption, if we think that the word “lobby” has a negative connotation in many societies.

The existence of two laws that already could be used to regulate the lobbying activity:
- Transparency Law (L52/2003)
Thank you