

Standards in Public Office Commission Consultation

Code of conduct for persons carrying out lobbying activities

Ibec submission

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Ibec believes that the introduction of a code of conduct for persons carrying out lobbying activity is a positive step in the transformation of how lobbying activity is carried out in Ireland. The draft code for current consultation is a further enhancement of more balanced outcomes in policy making and introduces clearer focus on ethics and transparency. With regard to the draft code Ibec makes the following recommendations:

- The code should enshrine broad principles around responsible and legitimate lobbying as a means of supporting the current regulation of lobbying and shouldn't overlap. These principles should form the basis of a broad set of standards to which all lobbyists can subscribe regardless of who they represent.
- The code should not assume that organisations representing corporations in the collective have the capacity or insight to know the interests (or indeed conflicts of interest) that may be present within its membership.
- The code should complement the obligations set out under the Regulation of Lobbying and ensure that these obligations are understood by lobbyists.
- The code should support the transparency code for elected or appointed public officials, however the responsibility for the behaviour of elected and public officials should not be devolved to the lobbyist. Should a strong working or indeed personal relationship exist between a lobbyist and an elected official, the onus should be on the elected official to avoid a conflict of interest or sense of obligation.
- It is the responsibility of elected and appointed public officials to be familiar with the code of conduct for lobbyists and more widely the details of the Regulation of lobbying.
- The code should not make distinctions between lobbyists or indeed issues – any lobbyist engaging in the development of public policy must be given equal status so long as the issue is legitimate.
- The code should be subject to regular reviews to ensure it continues to be relevant, although it should not become a rules-based initiative.
- The code must not present unreasonable requirements on lobbyists to validate research and evidence around information presented. This could place an unnecessary burden on organizations and present unintended consequences.

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