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mardi 14 octobre 2008

In October 9, eighteen associations and trade-unions launched a 'citizens call on the the framing and transparency of lobbying activities aiming decision-making public institutions' in a press conference in the Assemblée nationale in Paris.

The increasing influence of industrial and financial interest groups on public decisions gets worrying' declared Yveline NICOLAS secretary of this collective initiative. 'In the context of the financial crisis, it becomes urgent to regulate lobbying practices and re-establish the primacy of general interest over particular interests. A public debate on the issue of lobbying which remain taboo in France is necessary', she said.

In the same time, the dismantlement of a substantial part of what was agreed in the 'Grenelle de l'environnement' shows the importance of the pressure of private economic interests in decisions made in a collective negotiation.

An internal regulation scheme of lobbying is under elaboration in the Assemblée nationale that could be implemented from January 2009. The signatory organisations propose a series of measures among which :

- a mandatory system of registration for all lobbyists having a significant lobbying budget, with publication of activity reports and accurate financial information in an on-line data base
- rules prohibiting in pressure groups to hire Assemblée's personnel or their relatives for lobbying purposes, as well as the use of buildings of public power.

Yiorgos VASSALOS, representative of the European campaign Alter EU, underlined that the 'voluntary register launched by the Commission is a failure : less than 400 organisations have subscribed, when 2600 interest groups have offices in Brussels... A mandatory system is needed with a detailed declaration of the budgets used for lobbying operations'.

Lobbying is not favoring democracy. It reinforces the power of the strong, so the power of money. The game is distorted : material and human means of the different actors are not equal.

Nevertheless, alternatives are possible. Jacques TESTART (Fondation Sciences citoyennes) says 'the state should organise participative regulations that recognise civil society's expertise : pluralist hearings, citizens' conferences, creation of a high authority of expertise (independent, pluralist and transparent) and alert launching.

Frontiers between lobbying, 'interest traffic' [note 'interest' or 'influence traffic' is prohibited by law in France] and corruption is sometimes blurred. According to Séverine TESSIER, president of ANTICOR, 'lobbying circumvents popular sovereignty by exerting influence or even manipulation. We have to sanctify places of decision-making like the Assemblée nationale, refuses the badges system that currently assures free access of the lobbyists. This refusal takes part of a though of 'laïcité' [secularity].'

Signatories of the Call will undertake an activity of awareness raising and information on lobbying aiming to concentrate more civil society actors. Their objective is to form proposals applied to all the levels of public decision. In the short term, they will ask to meet MPs charged with drafting the new lobbying rules for the Assemblée nationale.

P.-S.

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- [*Liste de tous les articles consacrés à ce thème*](#)