



In the interests of public health, we need to rethink how we understand corporate power and manage it through policy structures, including adopting whole-government approaches, binding regulation, broadening the definition of ‘lobbying’ and tightening its regulation in relation to addictive industries in Europe and EU member states.

Corporate capture
industry
 transparency
lobbying

As WP12 of ALICE RAP reported, the webs of influence of addictive industries are much broader and more comprehensive and complex than generally imagined (see science finding 30 - channels corporate influence), involving actions to influence or ‘capture’ science, civil society and the media. Collectively, the goal of industry strategy to ‘capture’ all these domains is the end point of policy ‘capture’ and control, with a view to designing more favourable policy architecture. However, policy favouring the interests of corporations is often sorely misaligned with the promotion of public health and the private sector is currently a major driver of harm. There are several implications for those interested in improving public health arising from this understanding:

- Policy to reduce the harm resulting from corporate power needs to focus on the full range of industry networks and actions. This strongly suggests the need to take a *‘whole government’* approach to public health, which is important to ensure that one part of government does not undermine the stated policies of another part.
- Managing private actors requires transparency and skills of conflict resolution and negotiation. There may be circumstances in which the increasingly trending “partnership” with industry is appropriate, but such circumstances will be rare and will depend on a wide variety of factors, including wider policy trajectories. In most cases managing the private sector will require binding regulation
- Measures to enhance transparency must include better information systems for citizens and policy makers on corporate tactics and the range of channels used by corporations to pursue their interests; many of which, such as front groups and *astroturf* (groups falsely presented as grass-roots organizations), depend on secrecy to effectively exert influence.
- But transparency will not be enough. Measures will also need to be taken to create a level playing field, to stop corporate actors engaged in the production of potentially harmful products from gaining privileged access to policy-making and to determinedly resist the phenomenon of corporate capture.
- The current European lobbying register needs to be strengthened in several ways, for example: made obligatory for all lobbying groups to provide full data, gathering data over multiple years, verification of the information supplied.

- A broader definition of lobbying for transparency purposes could include the ‘revolving door’ between industry and political positions, which should be regulated with binding restrictions on post-employment opportunities, cooling off periods between changing positions and measures to minimize conflicts of interests.

In a world where the national/EU boundary is porous and ‘national’ organizations blur with transnational corporations and where some trade associations operate at both national and EU-level, monitoring and management of conflict of interest have become more complex and the interaction between levels has barely been considered. Until it is effectively dealt with, the potentially negative impact of the addictive industries on the development of public health policies will be heightened.

READ MORE

[AR Science Finding 30 – Channels of corporate influence.](#)

ALICE RAP Deliverable Report [D12.1 – Wiki portal on addictions web of influence: A portal documenting the role played by economic actors in supporting and attenuating addictive behaviours.](#) ALICE RAP

Miller D, Harkins C & Schloegl M (in press, 2016) The Impact of Market Forces on Addictive Substances and Behaviours - The Web of Influence of addictive industries. Oxford. Oxford University Press.