Lobbying at the Assemblée Nationale: give new data to the public debate

Paris, 17 March 2011

We talk a lot about lobbying, but what do we really know about it? Does pluralism genuinely exist in the arguments heard by the MPs? Under which influences is drawn up the law? Because the aim of lobbying is to influence public decisions, it has to be better documented and analysed. Thus, getting objective data is more than essential to stop preconceived ideas and push forward the public debate on the practice of lobbying in France.

In this aim, Transparence International France and Regards Citoyens publish today an unprecedented survey on the actors which have been heard in the Assemblée Nationale (the equivalent of the House of Representatives) between July 2007 and July 2010. This study takes the form of a report and a website, available here: http://www.regardscitoyens.org/transparence-france/etude-lobbying.

This study comes from an original partnership, created in July 2010, to deliver to the public debate and to French people, a new way of treatment for the information on the official meetings between MPs and public and private actors. If those elements are already public, they are now presented in a way that permits to everyone to understand them. They still have to be refined in a collaborative process, with the welcomed help of every person interested by public institutions.

1174 MPs’ reports have been reviewed thanks to the help of more than 3000 internet users. Between July 2007 and July 2010, 9300 auditions of 16000 people, speaking on behalf of almost 5000 bodies, have been listed.

Among the main learning, we are noticing a lack of legislative footprint (it means the publication of a list of heard persons and organizations) and transparency of the parliamentarian work, a prevalence of public actors within the heard actors, companies which are more heard than NGOs and almost no hearings of professional lobbyers in the collected data.

62% of the studied reports do not give any hearings list. Therefore, the survey only revealed the emerged part of the iceberg of the lobbying work at the Assemblée Nationale. Therefore, the Parliament (the reunion of the Assemblée Nationale and the Sénat) must adopt measures in order to make transparent the meetings and the positions presented to the MPs.

Because the Assemblée Nationale is far from being the only one concerned by lobbying in France, the same work should be done for all other public institutions: Sénat, ministry offices, senior public offices and expertise instances, etc. Transparency International France and Regards Citoyens are calling all these bodies to publish by themselves information concerning the heard actors, to facilitate the understanding, by French citizens, of the functioning of their institutions.