

# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE COALITION OF INFLUENCERS

THE ISSUE AT HAND:  
INFLUENCE AS ONE OF THE MOST PRESSING ISSUES OF OUR TIME

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS WITH INFLUENCE?

Influence – not only lobbying – is a reality and a part of our democracies. It is linked to the right to petition, the right to political participation and the right to freedom of expression.

However, when this influence is exerted by a very small group of powerful interests who prevail in the results of public policies and the way public policies are shaped, societies suffer. Influence can happen through voting, traditional lobbying and citizen engagement platforms. However, there are other ways, such as funding experts and research, funding think tanks, astroturfing, smoke screens etc. In many cases, this influence shaping the policy-making process goes against the public interest and is only representative of the narrow interest of a few.

## WHAT IS THE COALITION OF INFLUENCERS?

The Coalition of Influencers is an **inclusive, constructive, collaborative and neutral platform**. It is an informal group of organisations or persons working on or interested in the issue of influence in the process of policy-making, looking at the different challenges, risks and problems of influence, but also the opportunities: **how can we have more equitable influence?**

The Coalition's rationale is to look at this puzzle with many pieces of the different ways in which influence is taking place in the policy-making process and approach the issue in a **holistic** way. It will avoid falling in the corruption trap (i.e. only looking at influence by corruption, such as providing a bribe to influence public policy) and look at the **grey areas of influence** such as practices that are not legally defined as corruption but are perhaps considered as "undue".

The Coalition is also "**non-subject matter**": its aim is not to discuss policies or the issues in a particular policy, but the influence processes and procedural aspects around a policy, as well as the solutions that we can propose to ensure a more equitable access to the policy-making process.

## WHO CAN JOIN THE COALITION?

The Coalition is open to government representatives, businesses and civil society in a broad sense (NGOs, academics, media organisations), interested in or working on this issue.

## WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE COALITION?

One of the objectives of this Coalition is to **raise awareness** about the issue at hand. If we pick any topic that is of particular concern for citizens or debated about in the media (e.g. climate change, food quality, social inequalities, gender inequality, etc.), behind it there is often an issue of influence, and many times, this influence is an obstacle to progress in these areas. However, there is currently little awareness about it. The Coalition has the intention of **collecting the work** that has already been done, bring it up to discussion and amplify it.

- **Raise awareness** of the **impact** of lobbying and other influence practices on people's lives
- **Identify influence practices** that damage public interest
- Discuss the **purpose** and **format** of the Coalition, and the way forward

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## SESSION 1: BETTER INFLUENCE FOR BETTER LIVES

- Julio Bacio Terracino, Deputy Head of Public Sector Integrity Division, OECD
- Delia Matilde Ferreira Rubio, Chair of Transparency International
- Harry Rich, Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists UK
- Patrik Westander, CEO of Westander

Speakers and participants examined the practices that seem to damage public interest the most, discussed the issues that should be a priority and how the Coalition can address them. Participants agreed on the need to closely examine the increasing role of think tanks, the links between organised crime and campaign finance, and the influence of technology firms. The value of codes of conduct for lobbyists and more deliberative forms of engagement with citizens was also highlighted.

## SESSION 2: IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH: EQUITABLE INFLUENCE OF HEALTH POLICIES

- Michele Cecchini, Principal Administrator, Public Health, OECD
- David Clarke, Team Leader, UHC and Health Systems Law, WHO
- Margarita Dobrynina, Head of the Strategic Analysis Division, Special Investigation Service, Lithuania
- Stéphane Horel, Investigative Journalist at Le Monde
- Mariana Prats, Public Sector Integrity Division, OECD
- Laurent Scheer, Public Affairs Director at Pernod Richard, Vice Chair of the Business at OECD Health Committee

The second session drew from specific examples in the health sector to translate discussions on equitable influence into concrete practices and solutions. The OECD secretariat presented findings from the Database on Vested Interest in the Health Sector, which compiles 100+ academic articles, international organisation reports, etc. The members shared their perspectives on the role and influence of vested interest in health policies touching on issues such as public procurement, data privacy and conflict of interest in scientific studies.

## CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

The meeting helped to identify many areas of work. There is a common consensus that they deserve special attention. In the future, the OECD will **calibrate the tone and format** of the Coalition, in order to have a more targeted approach in terms of **sectors** and **actors**:

- The **membership** of the Coalition will be formalized and interested participants will be able to register online
- Collect information through **surveys**
- Continue to gather evidence through populating the **database on influence case studies**
- Continue to **gather responsible influence practices** related to integrity in decision-making process to develop guidelines and principles for responsible lobbying
- Develop a **Framework for Integrity in Decision-Making** that includes input from the Coalition members and joint discussion outputs will be developed

The meeting concluded with the members' opinion on the following questions. These inputs will be carefully reviewed and help guide the direction of the Coalition.

