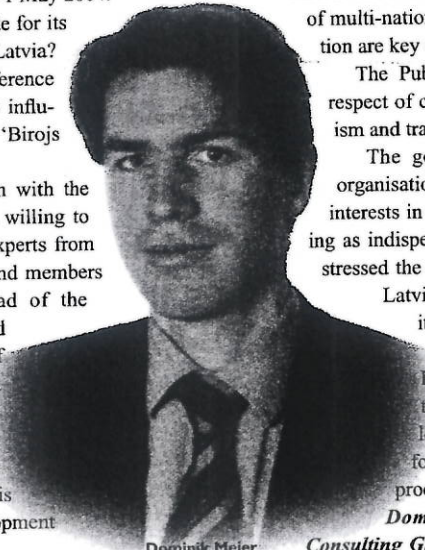


Public discussion on lobbying – a view from Latvia

Latvia will become a member of the European Union on 1 May 2004. What should Latvia take into account in order to compete for its interests? And how are the EU interests lobbied in Latvia? These and other issues were on the agenda of the conference 'Lobbying or why companies and associations have to influence decisions in the EU' organised by the agency 'Birojs 2000' on 26 February 2004 in Riga, Latvia.

The conference was prepared in close co-operation with the Latvian government and joined about 140 participants willing to share their experience and to discuss the opinions of experts from the European Commission, Public Affairs specialists and members of the Latvian government. Andrew Rasbash, Head of the European Commission Delegation in Latvia represented the EU. Valdis Birkavs, Director of the Institute of Political Analysis and Dominik Meier of the European Affairs Consulting Group, Brussels were invited as Public Affairs specialists. The Latvian government was represented by Deputy Prime Minister Ainars Slesers and by the Minister of Justice Aivars Aksenoks. Juris Kanels represented the Latvian Investment and Development Agency.

The representative of the EU stressed the importance of EU lobbying to



Dominik Meier

enforce the country's interests in Brussels. In this context, the formation of multi-national groups and a sound understanding of the EU legislation are key elements to gain influence on the EU decision process.

The Public Affairs specialists put particular emphasis on the respect of codes of conduct to guarantee high quality, professionalism and transparency of Public Affairs.

The government representatives urged public and private organisations to join their efforts for maintaining the country's interests in the EU. They recognised lobbying and external consulting as indispensable instruments for Latvian politics. Moreover, they stressed the importance of setting a clear legal basis for lobbying in Latvia to improve its public image and to clearly distinguish it from corruption.

Particularly the negative public image of lobbying in Latvia shows that lobbying and Public Affairs are still in their infancy. The conference gave a general insight into lobbying affairs and thus facilitated the public awareness for lobbying and for its importance for the democratic process.

Dominik Meier is a Partner of the European Affairs Consulting Group (eacon) and President of the German Association of Political Consultants (degepol)

Special Supplement of PA Newsletter on Public Affairs in EU Accession States

A Special Supplement on Public Affairs in new EU Accession States will appear in the next issue of PA Newsletter. Please submit editorial material and any advertising copy to steveatack@aol.com by 10 April.



What do we do?

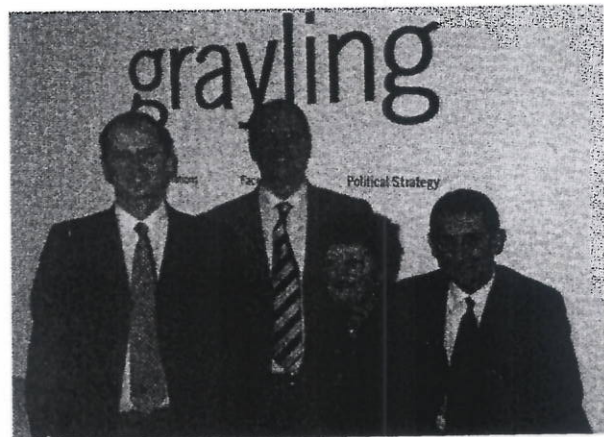


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