

EU INSIGHTS REVIEW

Advocacy Landscape During the Pandemic

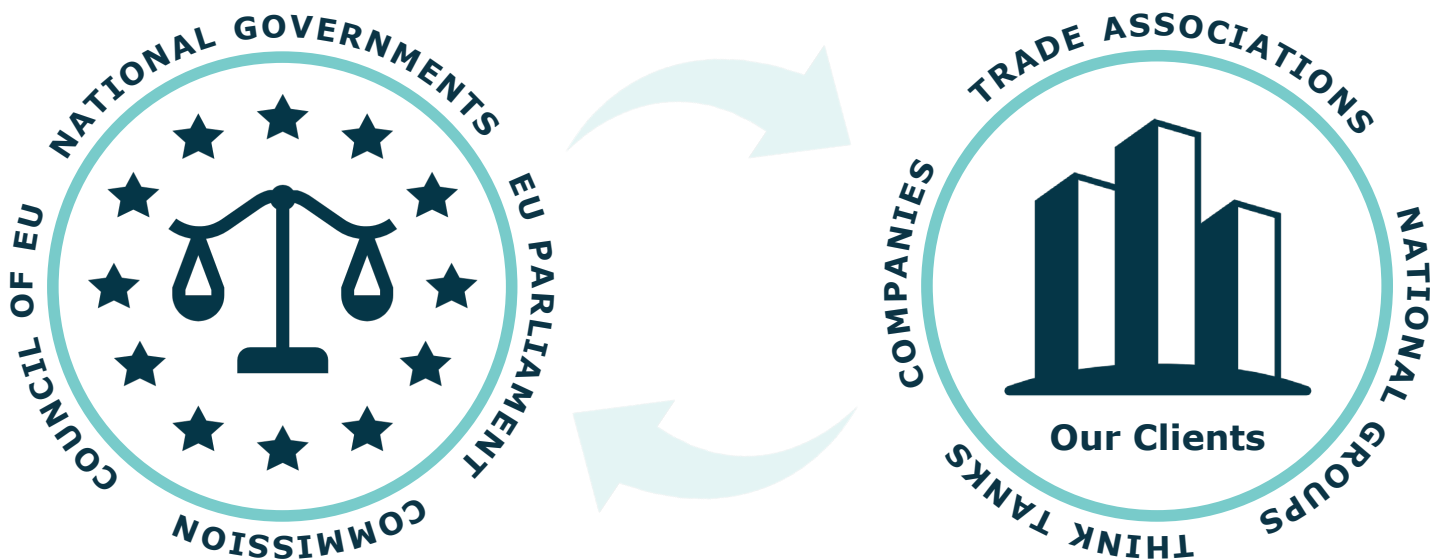
BASED ON 2020 RESEARCH INSIGHTS

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ABOUT BALLAST RESEARCH'S EU INSIGHTS REVIEW

During the spring of 2020, Ballast spoke with policymakers in the EU about their policy priorities and the impact of coronavirus on EU advocacy.

Ballast Research is a research organisation based in the United States that provides feedback from senior policymakers to government relations professionals, helping advocates make better use of policymakers' time.



Our Promise

Confidentiality: All participation in our research is confidential and not for attribution.

Respondents on Why They Participate in Ballast's Research

"I step into politics because I disagree with a lot of things that are happening in this moment, or the last two decades. I try to sell my message to as many people as possible. Because this is our future, so I try to speak with as many people as possible."

-Parliamentary Staff

"It is always good to hear what you and your colleagues are thinking about and it would be good to read about it when it comes out to compare my thinking."

-EU Council Staff

POLICYMAKERS MADE CLEAR THAT EU POLICY MAKING SURROUNDS THREE SIGNIFICANT THEMES

"All the actions are done within the three main axes - green, technology, and economy. Even on the national level, all investments are streamlined into these three major directions."

-Commission Staff



Sustainability

"The EU institutions focus on social impact and environmental impact. For me, I want to see genuine corporate responsibility and not just the green-washing and giving to charity, sending out a press release on this but a genuine change in sustainability."

-MEP

"We want to see draft amendments with data that we can use on how to preserve the world and environment."

-Parliamentary Staffer

"Green New Deal has been the focus pre-COVID and even more so now."

-Commissioner



Economy

"The Economy is always important, but over the last few years, it has become more tied to the wider Sustainable Development Goals agenda."

-Parliamentary Staff

"The big discussion is on building a collaborative economy."

-Commission Staff



Technology

"Generally, the feeling for tech is that they are the most pressing issue. They are controlling the market and not letting new players enter."

-Former Commission Staff

"Tech is always the biggest and most important focus, given their role in the society nowadays."

-Director at EU Council

IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS ON ADVOCACY



Everything is Pushed Virtually . . .

“Now, there are no physical meetings; there are more webinars online, online meetings. Which means more activities ongoing, but not as efficient. For me, it is positive that it reduces some meetings, but they are not as impactful. Because before there are many daily people they come to Brussels for 1-hour meetings, and many times it is possible to do it via video conference, no need to travel long distances for short meetings that we know in advance that bring nothing new.”

-Commission Adviser



. . . and Some Find it Challenging to Work in an Online Environment

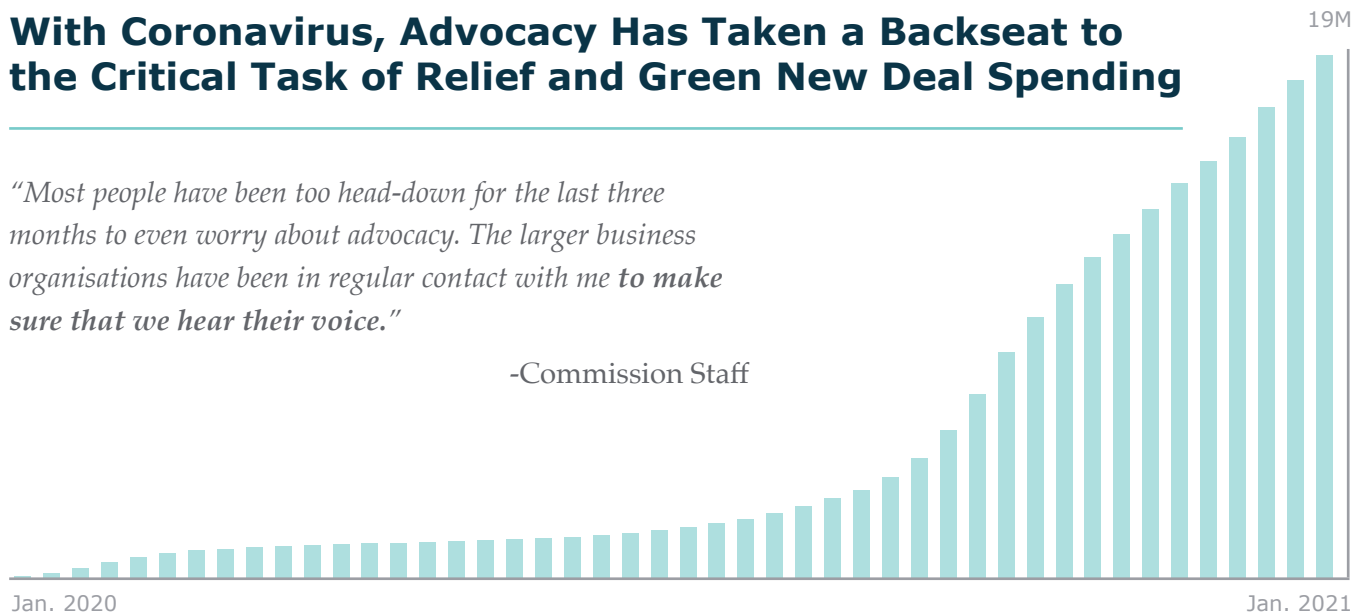
“We are all struggling. Part of our work was meeting lobbyists, having face to face meetings. Now it is impossible. Lobbyists are reaching out through email, phone and they are hosting webinar events, so on and forth. Some policy advisers organise online events where lobbyists can come in to make sure the debate is structured and balanced and transparent. We are still working and have a lot of initiatives and reports going out. It is difficult.”

-Parliamentary Staff

With Coronavirus, Advocacy Has Taken a Backseat to the Critical Task of Relief and Green New Deal Spending

“Most people have been too head-down for the last three months to even worry about advocacy. The larger business organisations have been in regular contact with me to make sure that we hear their voice.”

-Commission Staff



Graph Depicts Weekly Increase in Number of COVID-19 Cases in the European Union as Reported to the ECDC.

POLICYMAKERS WANT TO SEE ADVOCATES STEPPING UP TO HELP OUT SMEs*

To step up and stand out, policymakers suggested four key actions: Demonstrate grassroots support, invest in local communities, support long term partners, and keep promises.

Demonstrate Grassroots Support

"I want to see grassroots support that will bring the attention of everyone. If you already have the community of support, have information from them and show it to us."

-Parliamentary Staff

Support Long Term Partners

"The further corporations take the long view in this crisis, the better. If I were a large corporation, I would be making my payments on time to my suppliers. I would be treating them right. I would be showing flexibility. And to be honest, I've heard rather a lot of very good stories about larger companies doing the right thing."

-Commission Staff

Invest in Local Communities

"Right now you see the big established companies that are doing well, they should also be taking care of their people, and they take care of their families, and they take care of the environment. Because when they provide the help needed, it is a short term expense with a long term win."

-Commission Staff

Keep Promises

"Especially in a post corona world, it is so important for companies to show that they are with the people. When we talk about supply chains and stuff like that, it has more relevance now post corona... For me, not just talking the talk but walking the walk, putting certain limits on how we run our economy or run our supply chains."

-Parliamentary Staff



*Small and Medium-sized enterprises

ADVOCATING BEST PRACTICES

With coronavirus suppressing the already hectic schedules policymakers have, policymakers prefer advocates that adhere to the three essential rules - be straightforward, be collaborative, and engage early.

Be Straightforward

Get to your point by giving policymakers the information they need to make their case.

"Give me the gist of what I need to know. Park the biggest amount of info in the clearest and simplest form, without bullshitting about saving the world."

-Parliamentary Staff

"There is lots of talking going on. Don't hide what your intentions are. Be very straightforward. Especially with what you are here to do."

-French National Assembly Legislator

Be Collaborative

Europe is all about synergy. Find advocates with similar goals, organise and work together.

"I want to see a policy that brings people together. Very much about consensus building. I want to see cross support."

-Parliamentary Staff

"If there is anyone else in a similar position, build a coalition with them. That is what we want to see. Stronger than one voice."

-Former Commission Staff

Engage Early

Don't leave your engagement till the very last moment. Start talking with policymakers early about your concerns of certain policy goals or legislations.

"Know that it is a matter of give and take. I know that if I sit at a table and I want to regulate something, first of all, I am the one calling the shots. But I also know I am not the only one calling the shots, because, in the end, all my proposals are going to be voted, either by member states or by the parliament and the council. So come to me early and let me prepare."

-Commission Staff

"We prefer to be approached before the file is open and not when the file is in the middle. There is a schedule that we have to follow and the lobby has to be done before. If you tell me six months in advance, I can try and have a repertoire with the issue. If you tell me when the file is already open, it is already too late. The timing is crucial."

-MEP



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RESEARCH

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