

KREAB

EU Public Affairs during the COVID-19 crisis: A toolkit

Practical guide for EU Public Affairs Engagement

Rapid responses, rapid decisions, powerful impacts

Introduction

The Importance of EU Public Affairs in exceptional situations

The coronavirus crisis is having a strong impact on companies from all sectors.

EU Institutions are coordinating Member States actions to limit the expansion of the virus and protect the EU economy as much as possible. At the same time, the Commission is preparing concrete proposals to boost the EU economy as the crisis reaches its end point.

Now more than ever, it is essential to ensure a positive and effective relationship between the EU institutions and the private sector in order to try to jointly coordinate a possible path to recovery.

In this context, EU public affairs take on a fundamental role. It is thus essential for companies to continue defending their legitimate interests before the EU institutions, presenting themselves as a key partner to overcome the current crisis and design the implementation of EU policies in the near future.



What to expect?

How will the Covid-19 crisis affect the implementation of EU's agenda?

"We will use all the tools at our disposal to make sure the European economy weathers this storm"

President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen

1

Politicization of the crisis

As with the 2008 global financial crisis, **the COVID-19 pandemic and its management by governments will be deeply political in nature.**

The fallout from the crisis and the initiation of recovery efforts will provoke **intense debate** on decisions taken and their consequences. Governments will have to face the **political bill** of their decisions in the face of different political groups and sections of society and the economy.

2

The EU continues with the implementation of its regulatory agenda

The EU institutions continue working on the announced regulatory files. Therefore, businesses need to monitor and also take a position on possible delays or suspension of regulatory processes.

In light of the crisis, it continues to be important for companies **to engage with EU stakeholders to ensure that their interests are well represented in the near future.**

The effect of the crisis on the EU agenda in each sector will be complicated, and highly variable. Stakeholder engagement should be geared towards providing EU stakeholders with business input on how design efficient, effective EU policies in line with the Better Regulation practices.

3

Implementation of the announced EU political agenda

The EU and its Member States will be wholly focussed on establishing the policies required to initiate recovery from the crisis, with highly variable impacts on existing policy timelines.

However, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, there maybe be changes in the schedule for some legislative and policy processes, including consultations on and implementation of regulation.

The continued progress within several key aspects of the EU working programme, such as **the European Green Deal, the Data Strategy and the new Industrial Strategy** will be essential to exit the ongoing crisis. The recovery will necessitate **further deepening and repair of the Single Market**, alongside an **unprecedented programme of targeted investments.**

4

New policy scenarios to come

Europe's economic recovery plan aiming to allow Member States, companies, workers and citizens to best face the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic will require more sustainable and resilient EU policies.

In this context, the current pandemic opens the window to identify and correct vulnerabilities within the EU framework such as the **acquisition of capabilities to coordinate EU crisis, functioning of national health care systems, the supply chain for essential products such as food, medical and pharmaceutical products as well as the effective use of existing economic tools.**

How to react

Adjust your conduct to the new conditions

Maintain political and regulatory intelligence

We must be fully informed of all measures that are being extraordinarily taken both at EU and national level.

This is fundamental in order to identify those that may affect our business continuity and to make relevant decisions.

Shape your business recovery plans

The consequences of the COVID-19 crisis will be far-reaching and long lasting. We must therefore draw up a long-term recovery plan which foresees maintenance of EU institutional relations and engagement with relevant stakeholders and communities as one of the fundamental axes.

Digitalise your engagement

The COVID-19 crisis has forced most of us to adapt to teleworking and to new innovative ways of doing different activities remotely, outside the traditional office space. Its disruption to so many aspects of our working lives has been immense – but we can still maintain links with stakeholders – thanks to digital technologies.

Social distancing will cause a paradigm shift in the way we interact with each other. The public affairs field and the way companies relate and connect with EU stakeholders may also change. It is time to consider how to better use available digital tools to pursue our public affairs strategies and maintain our presence.

Maintain commitment to transparency

Despite the situation, we must scrupulously comply with the rules on lobbying. It is true that the majority of the institutions do not foresee how interest groups should relate to public stakeholders in this particular crisis situation.

However, this is a clear opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to acting transparently at all times, and showing that we do not intend to make any illegitimate profit.

Continue defending your interests

1

Stay informed about regulatory developments related to your business operations

- Real-time intelligence gathering at all EU and Member State levels.
- Receive tailored monitoring services depending upon your sector.
- Make policy recommendations on ongoing legislative files.
- Actively participate in consultations.

2

Stay connected with your network

- Continue engagement with EU stakeholders to defend your interests with respect to pending legislative files.
- Coordinate responses to the crisis.
- Share lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis.
- Explain to EU policy makers how the crisis impacted the industry you operate in.

3

Review and update your public affairs strategies

- Instil more resilience and adaptability in your public affairs strategies.
- Make preparations to adjust your engagement and communication strategies depending upon the development of the crisis and its fallout;
- Enhance coordination and cooperation with the right stakeholders at the right time.

4

Prepare for next steps

- In light of the extraordinary circumstances at play, the success of any public affairs strategy will depend upon timing.
- All stakeholders will be under pressure, and timeframes will be constantly subject to change. We will need to more proactive than ever to ensure the best possible outcomes.

Let's Keep the Spirit!



Responsibility



Confidence



Service



Future



Together



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