

IS BIG TECH LOBBYING YOU?

TIPS AND TRICKS HOW TO DETECT BIG TECH INTERFERENCE

Over the last years, Big Tech companies have built a wide third-party network to amplify their message. This intricate web includes trade associations, lobby firms, think tanks and consultancies of every stripe. With the start of a new parliamentary mandate, there is a high chance that you as an MEP or parliamentary assistant will be approached at an early stage by Big Tech companies and their allies. How do you recognize when you're being lobbied by a Big Tech firm and what to do about it?

1. Big Tech's massive firepower

As the economic power of big digital companies has grown, so has their political power. In a matter of years, Big Tech companies have become the largest companies in terms of lobby spending in the EU. Together Google, Amazon, Microsoft, Meta and Apple are now spending 33 Mio on lobbying in Brussels alone. The top 10 of largest lobby spenders for a single company is now dominated by Big Tech.

These huge lobbying budgets have a significant impact on EU policy-makers. There are 82 full-time lobbyists working for the largest ten digital firms. The top 10 digital companies had a total of 659 meetings with high-level EU officials of the von der Leyen Commission – one meeting for every two working days since December 2019.

Big Tech also lobbies heavily on the member state level. This allows them to influence all three EU institutions at the same time.

2. Collaboration with think tanks

Big Tech has affiliations to a large number of Brussels think tanks either via membership or via funding relationships. These relationships are not always transparent. Therefore, be aware that both events organised by think tanks as well as their reports may be influenced by Big Tech interests.




Here is an overview on Big Tech's think tank funding:

→ <https://www.lobbycontrol.de/macht-der-digitalkonzerne/>

Big Tech's affiliations with think tanks

think tanks	Google	Amazon	Meta	Apple	Microsoft
CERRE	+	+	+	+	+
CDITIF	+	+	+	-	-
EPC	+	+	+	+	-
CEPS	+	+	+	+	+
CER	+	+	+	+	-
Bruegel	+	+	+	+	+
Lisbon Council	+	+	+	+	-
Center for Democracy and Technology	+	+	+	-	-
Transatlantic Policy Network (TPN)	+	+	+	+	+
Friends of Europe	+	-	-	-	+
ECIPE	+	+	-	-	-
European Youth Forum	+	-	+	-	-
German Marshall Fund	+	+	-	-	+
Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies	+	-	-	-	+
CIPL	+	+	+	-	-

source: EU transparency register

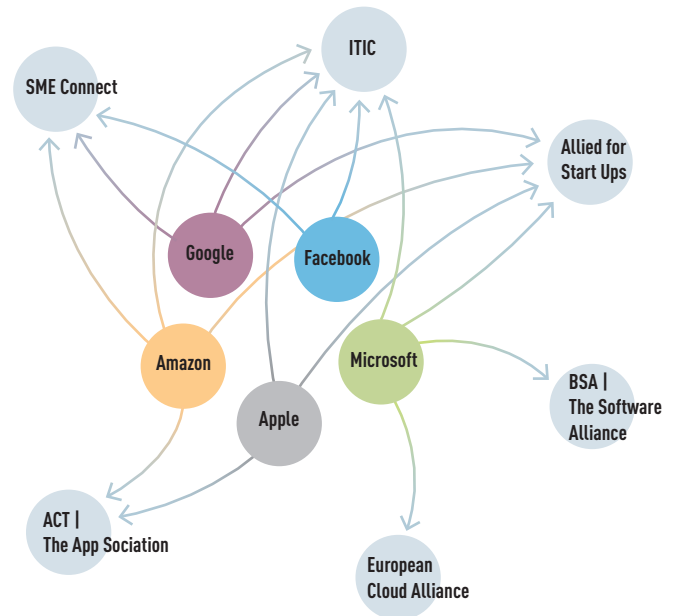




3. Big Tech's astroturfing organisations

There are number of dubious astroturfing initiatives in the Brussels lobby bubble. Among them are associations that pretend to represent small and medium enterprises. In reality, they are funded by Big Tech and also argue for a Big Tech friendly political agenda.

Be aware of the following astroturfing associations:

- SME Connect (US Big Tech in general),
- Allied for Startups (US Big Tech in general),
- ACT | The App Association (Apple and Amazon),
- European Cloud Alliance (Microsoft).



FOUR THINGS YOU CAN DO AGAINST UNDUE BIG TECH LOBBYING:

1. Check out our research on Big Tech lobbying.



2. Interested in following the footsteps of lobbying on the ground?

We are happy to set up a guided walk through the European quarter in Brussels in which we highlight Big Tech's lobby network.

3. If you notice any shady lobbying by Big Tech, let us know via email or confidentially at

→ <https://lobbyleaks.missstaende-melden.de/>

4. Join the group of MEP's that support our initiative against Big Tech's shady lobbying:

→ <https://lobbyleaks.eu/>