

(0:09) Hello and welcome back to the Model European Union Strasbourg podcast. (0:13) Today we have a fascinating topic to explore, (0:16) interest representation and lobbying in the European Union. (0:20) I'm your host Elena and joining us is a seasoned interest representative who will (0:23) shed light on this fascinating aspect of EU (0:26) politics.

Let's dive right in. Interest (0:30) representation and lobbying play a significant role in shaping EU policies (0:34) and influencing decision-making processes. (0:36) Today we have Giorgio Corbetta, an experienced interest representative to (0:40) provide us with insights into this intriguing field.

(0:43) Welcome. Hi and thank you for having me. Mr Corbetta, we're delighted to have you (0:49) with us on the podcast today.

To start, do you think you could just (0:53) share a little bit about your background (0:54) and your experiences as an interest representative in the European Union? (1:00) Sure, so I've been in this business for around 11 years now, (1:04) close to 12 years. I've been in Brussels since then actually and I started my (1:12) career actually in Milan, that's where I came from. (1:18) And then from there I was working with a company who had a (1:22) satellite office here in Brussels and there was the opportunity (1:25) to come here and so I say, you know, by chance (1:29) as an opportunity that really came my way (1:33) and as most things in life which are great (1:37) are by chance, right? And so I started working (1:41) and you can say EU affairs as a broader pool of things (1:49) or as a broader kind of profession and from there, you know, I think I fell (1:55) in love with the work, I fell in love with the city too and I was fortunate (2:01) enough to be able to stay.

So I've been there since then and (2:06) since then I think my industry of work has been (2:14) energy as such with a number of overlaps with obviously (2:18) transportation, with clean tech, with environment and (2:25) I worked across different trade associations, (2:29) consultancies and corporates and I now work (2:33) at a place which I would say encapsulates everything (2:37) I've been doing so far which is an association management company which is (2:41) called Kellen and there I have two hats. I worked (2:46) as a manager in the company so I'm (2:50) responsible for the energy and clean tech (2:53) business and then I work on a few clients so I think (2:56) this is great and it helps me or it really allows me looking at (3:03) lobbying and public affairs from a few different perspectives. (3:09) That's fascinating, thank you so much.

Interest representation and lobbying (3:13) can often be perceived as quite controversial, (3:16) sometimes seen as quite an opaque sort of practice. (3:19) Do you think you could shed a bit of light on some of the strategies and (3:22) tactics used by yourself and other interest representatives to influence EU (3:26) policies? Sure, I think you're asking two things (3:30) here, right? One is about how

transparent the process is and how can you work (3:35) towards transparency as an organisation which does effectively (3:39) lob in, right? To your first question, I think it's (3:43) very relevant now because next year we're going to have (3:47) European Parliament elections which is probably the (3:52) the one every four year situation where most people (4:01) realise that there's a European Union and there's European Parliament, (4:05) right? So I think it's a great opportunity to also reflect on how (4:09) transparent the EU policy making process actually is (4:12) and I think the European Union has done (4:18) actually quite a lot of work and it came a long way. If you think about (4:23) it now, you have a transparency register by the European Commission (4:29) where you need to be registered if you want to do lobbying, (4:36) which is very transparent.

You need to also (4:40) get a badge if you want to enter the European Parliament and have (4:46) conversations with EU policymakers, EU parliamentarians (4:51) and on top of that officials traditionally have to (4:55) log in the meetings they have. So I think it's gotten (4:59) very transparent. Of course there's a lot of work that we (5:03) as lobbyists also have to do to sustain that kind of transparency (5:09) and I think it really boils down to how you lead yourself and how the (5:15) company you work with really approaches policy making and (5:20) or influencing the policy making process.

(5:23) And I think once again it's a game (5:30) you need to play by the rules. Of course we all read about (5:39) episodes in recent times that don't really go (5:42) that kind of direction, but I think overall the process is pretty (5:48) transparent and I think you know lobbying essentially (5:52) it's about educating policymakers as to what the issues are from the (5:57) perspective of society and of industry and what are the (6:03) solutions that could be then (6:06) written into law. That's really interesting, thank you, yeah, because I (6:14) think it's definitely something that (6:18) we've come a long way in terms of the (6:20) transparency that's involved with a lot of these (6:23) things.

There's a lot of sort of innovations (6:26) that have helped to increase transparency there. So I was (6:30) wondering is what comes next? Is there anything (6:33) further that could be done or that needs to be done in order to ensure (6:37) that that transparency is upheld and maintained (6:41) especially when you're considering sort of public trust in the system? (6:47) I think it's an interesting question, I don't know that I'm best placed to (6:50) answer that question, but from where I look at it there's (6:55) obviously more to do and I think it's very (6:58) fragile and it's very delicate (7:03) as a standard because I think the main problem is that (7:09) the European Union, as I mentioned, is often looked at (7:13) something which is very far away, something that (7:17) you know only has a negative impact on everyday life, right? There's the (7:24) old example about the shape of the banana, (7:29) right? But that's only one example. I think (7:33) if you think it through, obviously the European Union has (7:36) a lot of impact on everyday life.

If you think that (7:40) most of member states legislation is actually coming from (7:45) European Union legislation. But then on the other side (7:51) I always like to recall that (7:58) peace in the European Union depends also (8:02) on the European Union as an institution, right? And as a family of member states (8:07) and I think now, or actually up until now, we probably (8:12) tended to forget that. But I suppose that (8:16) recent wars and recent (8:20) situations that you see near actually far away from the European (8:25) Union are a reminder that actually peace is not a (8:30) given.

Now I'm not actually answering your (8:34) question about what else can be done, but I think the way to (8:39) look at it is this. So I think the perspective I (8:41) use is there's value in the European Union. (8:46) We got to protect that value and there's obviously much more (8:51) to do and that would be very simply what I would say. (8:59) Great, thank you very much. I think you've definitely given our listeners (9:02) a lot to think about there. So as participants (9:06) begin to prepare to take on the role of interest representatives in the (9:10) simulation at Model European Union Strasbourg, (9:12) what sort of advice would you have to give them to effectively advocate for (9:17) their interest groups and to make an impact on the discussions? (9:21) Sure, so unfortunately when I was younger I never participated.

I think when I was (9:28) younger probably the model wasn't even there. (9:32) But I would say from my experience it really boils down to (9:38) understanding the process and trying to understand when to do what. (9:46) And I'm going back to how the European Union works, right? So the legislation (9:51) process, and I think most of you would have started that as cool.

(9:57) Starts with European Commission and then goes to the European Parliament and (10:04) the Member States. I'm obviously oversimplifying there, but I think it's (10:09) important to understand when to talk to whom and what to say. And I think when it (10:18) comes to what to say, what I find is critical is to put yourself in the shoes (10:24) of the people you're talking to.

(10:26) Meaning there's obviously a very different perspective between a European (10:31) Commission official who is drafting the legislation to a Member of the European (10:37) Parliament with their own constituencies, right? And so by understanding what (10:46) your stakeholder or the person you're talking to wants and needs, you can better (10:55) craft what your messages are. And I think in the end the purpose is really (11:01) to get to legislation which better reflects the reality of facts, be it, you (11:09) know, regulating an industry, regulating the protection of the environment. (11:17) And the other thing I would say is, by that I would say it's probably a given, (11:25) knowing your craft.

So knowing about the actual industry or sector or, you know, (11:35) in any case, an issue that you're working in and representing. But then I would say (11:47) knowing is the basic. Then you need to figure how granular you have to be, (11:54) depending on where you are in the legislative process.

But then what really makes the (12:00) difference is how you use that knowledge. So I would say my main advice is really (12:08) have fun and immerse yourself in this fascinating world. (12:17) Absolutely.

Thank you so much. I think that's a great message to our forthcoming (12:21) participants. Well, thank you so much for sharing your valuable expertise with us. It's been a real (12:27) pleasure having you on the podcast today. Thank you so much. Thank you.

Thank you. (12:31) Well, that wraps up our episode on interest representation and lobbying in the European (12:36) Union. We hope you gained some valuable insights into the strategies, the ethical considerations (12:41) and the impact of interest representation.

Until then, stay tuned, stay engaged and get (12:47) ready for Model European Union Strasbourg.