Industry interests in the advisory bodies for EU health policy

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Industry influence over EU expert bodies

- Expert groups (incl. High Level Groups)
- EU agencies: EFSA and EMEA
- European Technology Platforms (ETPs)
- (Direct lobbying (CEFIC lobby on REACH))
- (Impact and risk assessments - 'Better Regulation' agenda)

Expert Groups

- Around 1000 expert groups. According to Commission figures, 35.000 experts of which 7.000 form industry
- Before 2005 complete darkness
  After 2008 membership of most expert groups disclosed
- ALTER-EU found > 100 groups dominated by industry
- *What is an expert??* Not defined

Expert Groups

- DG Internal Market

Financial regulation: around 80% of the non-state members come from banks, insurance, investment fund managers etc.

- DG Enterprise and Industry: one third (37/46) of expert groups balanced in favour of business

Health-related Expert Groups

DG SANCO: *“Someone who […] works for an organisation with a ‘vested interest’ on a particular policy issue […] should simply not be appointed” as an adviser*

Is this rule respected? Not for “Special Advisers”

Commissioner Kuneva:

Pat Cox Special Advisor for Consumer Affairs (lobbyist for APCO - Pfizer, Microsoft..)

Health-related Expert Groups

13 Expert Groups under DG SANCO with industry representation

1. Advisory Group on the Food Chain and Animal and Plant Health
2. Animal health and animal welfare
3. European Alcohol and Health Forum
4. Tobacco Control Stakeholder Consultation Expert Group
5. Export - import of certain dangerous chemicals

High Level Groups

- Competitiveness of the European Chemical industry
- Competitiveness of the Agro-food industry (out of 19 non-govt members 16 industry)
- Pharmaceutical Forum - out of non-state members, 5 industry and 5 “NGO” of which one corporate funded (EPF)
  > *devil in the detail: Information to patient working group*

Source: FoEE's report 'Whose views count? Business Influence and the EC's HLG' (February 2009)

Example by European Beekeeping Coordination: Pesticide risk asessment for bees

Problem: the current assessment of the pesticide risk for bees does not incorporate the impact of systemic insecticides (seed coating)

- EC - including EFSA - does not have any bee-expert available
- DG SanCo asked the EBC to find an expert. Via EPPO (European and Mediterranean plant protection organisation; also no bee expert), they asked an academic organistion ICPBR (International Commission for Plant-Bee Relations)
- ICPBR formed 3 working groups for 3 topics (global assessment scheme, larvae tests, tunnel and field tests). Out of 17 working group members, 6 industry (some in 2 working groups): Roland Becker (BASF), Mike Coulson, Natalie Ruddle and Ed Pillins (Syngenta), Christian Maus (Bayer CropScience), Mark Miles (Dow)
- Result: Draft proposals dramatic
    - a product considered as "low risk" when the larvae lost is below 30% (!)
    - assessment based only on acute toxicity, not systemic exposure through nectar and pollen.

EU expert agencies

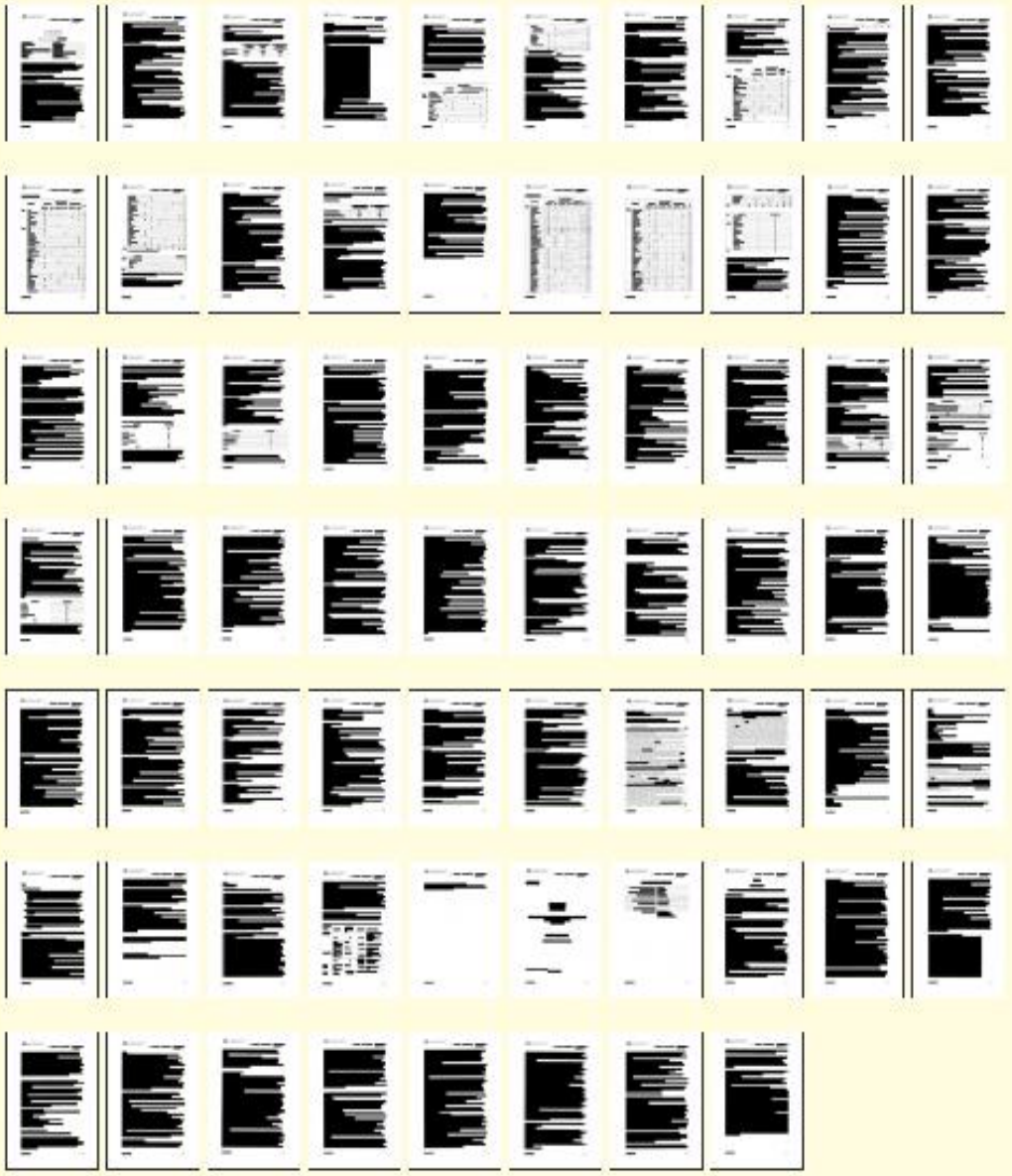
EFSA:

- cases of conflicts of interest in Panels
- Transparency: scientific opinion Amflora potato not online on day approval.

EMEA:

- Industry funded patients organisations in committees and Management Board, ad hoc experts (Roche)
- Transparency: missing documents and conflict of interest declarations (Prescrire example Rimonabant)

Censorship masquerading as "transparency": the EMEA assessment report on rimonabant



European Technology Platforms

Mission:

Improve industry competitiveness by advising on research priorities and funding

36 ETPs, Highly industry-dominated

Direct FP7 funding

Experts from companies can also decide on projects

European Technology Platforms

- ETP for Sustainable Chemistry (SusChem) (board: 16 total, 10 industry)
- Sustainable Nuclear Energy Technology Platform (board: 24 total, 14 industry)
- Plants for the Future (members: 14 total, 10 industry)
- European Biofuels Technology Platform

(125 WG members, 1 NGO active)

CEO Ombudsman complaint

- ETP for Water (WssTP): dropped Millennium Development Goals
- Zero Emissions Platform (promoting CCS; board 40 total, 28 industry)

Call for Action

- European Commission:
  End corporate influence over (health) policy making
  Dissolve industry-dominated bodies
  Put social and environmental concerns first
- MEPs and NGOs: Scrutinise expert groups, agencies and Technology Platforms

Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation (**ALTER-EU)**