

# Public Affairs in 21st Century

The precise definition of the term “public affairs” or “government relations” is still largely unknown among most of the companies in Slovakia. Besides a few multinational companies that know what public affairs is about from their operations at home most of the Slovak companies still feel that it about having good relations with the decision makers mostly political elites.

However, professional public affairs involve much more than this. What do public affairs consultancies do? Broadly speaking it is assistance to clients in many types of public affairs programs such as helping the set up of a government relations organization from scratch, risk assessment and risk management projects, regulatory reviews, and advice on how to manage specific issues of importance to the firm through building coalitions.

The two largest areas of interest to public affairs industry are competition and consumer policy. In the area of competition policy, the public affairs services involve working closely with the companies, their lawyers and economic advisers on the Public Policy aspects of mergers, acquisitions, state aid and other anti-trust cases. The important aspect of all these cases is the EU dimension. That means that it is not only EU institutions in Brussels which deal with these issues but also national authorities have say into particular cases. Therefore, the necessity to able to advise companies every day on how best to engage with government or regulatory bodies on specific policy issues that concern them virtually in any country in Europe, and centrally at the EU level in Brussels is much present nowadays than ever before.

The area of consumer policy is getting on the top of the agenda of European Commission but also national governments. The EU and National regulatory authorities use the consumer protection argument for regulating selected areas of industries. The past attempts to regulate roaming charges, recent Telecommunication package or

energy packages at national level are just few of the examples.

It is expected that the Commission will be more active in fighting monopolies and investigating companies in particular sectors concerning anti-competitive behavior. Only a few companies in Slovakia experienced the investigations that the Commission may decide to carry out in economic sectors that do not seem to be working as well as they should or when there are indications of anti-competitive practices. The information obtained is used to understand how the market works and why it works that way. Based on the inquiry, the Commission may open company-specific investigations to ensure that Community rules on restrictive agreements and abuse of dominant position are respected.

For companies to be able to respond to new challenges rooting

from membership in the EU and globalization processes it is more much important than ever to work with public affairs professionals that can bring together such senior teams across the EU in a closely coordinated way which can address such a wide range of regulatory and political needs and interests.

The range of professional public affairs services include:

- Identifying and following public policy issues of concern to you.
- Developing the overall strategic public affairs plans and timelines to engage on those issues.
- Identifying key political, regulatory, official audiences and competitors or third parties concerned with your issues.
- Establishing the views held on your issues by key audiences and third parties.

- Developing your public affairs messages and then drafting and distributing correspondence & briefing material, or advocating those messages.

- Tactical support and implementation, including arranging meetings with key political audiences and contacts with relevant third parties.

- Providing of intelligence and feedback – “eyes and ears”.

- Identification of potential further issues along the way – avoiding surprises.

- Co-ordination of media messages consistent with your public affairs.

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## FIPRA

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– Finsbury International Policy & Regulatory Advisers – a leading European network active in public policy and regulatory affairs with a special focus on strategic government relations. The merger with the FIPRA brand is the result of the ten-year successful activities in the area of strategic consulting and lobbying services, which created room for further strengthening of the consulting portfolio and territorial expansion of services. FIPRA Group has the most senior team in comparison with all other competitor networks in the following sectors: energy, transport, trade, innovations, intellectual property, industry and consumer policy, public procurement and finance. FIPRA Slovakia is a member of strategic holding company JENEWEIN GROUP.

**PATRIK ZOLTVÁNY** is a Co-Founder and Senior Partner of FIPRA Slovakia and a member of Governing Board of JENEWEIN GROUP. In the long term he engages in management and implementation of international projects in the area of public and regulatory issues with specific focus on EU Government Affairs, competition policy, state aid, capacity building and institutions and strategic consulting for EU programs and policies. He was a member of the team that participated in separation of complex consulting solutions in the area of Public Affairs & Government Relations, that thanks to the company FIPRA Slovakia become a part of the leading European group operating in the area of public and regulatory policies with special focus on strategic government relations; it has its own EU representation in Brussels that coordinates representation of clients and enforcement of their interests in front of the European institutions. He is vice-chairman of the Governing Board of EPPP – European Public Policy Partnership, a private think-tank organization operating in Bratislava and Brussels. On the EU level, he is a member of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), and he engages mainly in the area of external relations. Within the EESC he is a member of Western Balkans Contact Group through which he assists to these countries to prepare for the membership in the EU.



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