

How Corporate Lobbyists Dominate Meetings with UK and EU Brexit Negotiators

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The far-reaching Brexit agreement that will govern the UK's exit from the European Union is not only being shaped at the negotiating table, but also by the lobbyists who are trying to influence each side's position papers and red lines.

New analysis of official statistics on lobby meetings with ministers from the UK's Department for Exiting the EU (DExEU) and members of the EU's Brexit Task Force reveals a common willingness to privilege the representatives of corporate interests above all others:

- Between October 2016 and March 2017, DExEU staff had six meetings with big business representatives for every one meeting with an NGO, a trade union or a think tank. This figure may even just be the tip of the iceberg, as Brexit lobby meetings are also likely to take place with DExEU officials not required to disclose meetings.
- The team of Chief EU Brexit Negotiator Michel Barnier had ten meetings with corporate lobbyists for every one NGO they met between October 2016 and May 2017.

The full list of meetings highlights just how rarely citizens and smaller businesses have been heard by the negotiators, despite the fact that the Brexit deal will directly affect the everyday lives of all UK residents and the country's many small and medium-sized businesses.

The research also highlights that both the UK and EU negotiators withhold participant lists, agendas, minutes and all other documents from their lobby meetings, making it impossible to know who exactly is in the room or which specific policy options are discussed.

The corporate bias in the lobby meetings of DExEU mirrors the pattern of lobbying seen at the UK Department for International Trade. The ministers developing the UK's post-Brexit trade relationships with the rest of the world have been holding 90 per cent of their lobby meetings with representatives of business interests, [previous research](#) showed.

This research is co-published by Corporate Europe Observatory and Global Justice Now.

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