



Comparing the Evolution of Lobbying Legislation in Lithuania and Ireland, Whither Regulatory Robustness?

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Abstract

This paper examines the evolution of the laws regulating lobbying in Lithuania and Ireland using the Centre for Public Integrity's (CPI) "Hired Guns" quantitative index for assessing/evaluating the robustness of lobbying legislation. This index, measuring transparency, accountability and enforcement, is a scoring system developed in 2003 to assess lobbying disclosure laws in United States (US) states that has since been applied in many other countries and jurisdictions. Employing the CPI's index enables the findings here to be compared with those of other countries, states and territories that possess lobbying regulations. The paper shows that, first, Lithuanian legislation initially scores higher on the CPI index than Irish legislation; second, Lithuania's CPI score declines longitudinally, whereas Ireland's remains unchanged; and third, amendments introduce additional rules, sanctions and close loopholes – representing incremental improvements to lobbying regulations – often too subtle for the CPI index to capture.

Keywords

lobbying, regulation, comparative, index, Lithuania, Ireland

1 Introduction

The practice of lobbying is viewed as a crucial element in shaping public policy by policymakers, lobbyists, academics and advocates of more democratic processes (Ihlen et al., 2020). Professional lobbyists, interest groups, charities, private firms, experts and academics can offer insights on policy issues that decision-makers may not be able to address themselves.

Nonetheless, lobbying, and the behaviour of lobbyists, has occasionally been linked to corruption and unethical practices (Kollmannová & Matušková, 2014). Intermittent revelations of lobbyist misconduct contribute to the perception that lobbying is trading in influence, where self-serving groups wield substantial control over policy (Hogan & Bitonti, 2024).

To create a more equitable environment for policymaking, and mitigate the risk of corruption, several democracies introduced lobbying regulations (Bitonti & Mariotti, 2023). Lobbying regulations are viewed as part of a broader framework of transparency measures, alongside ethics policies and freedom of information laws, to enhance the public's trust in

politics through promoting accountability (Fenster, 2017). Such regulations acknowledge lobbying as a legitimate component in the policymaking process (Laboutková et al., 2020).

The paper investigates how the laws regulating lobbying in Lithuania and Ireland have evolved, as measured by the Centre for Public Integrity's "Hired Guns" index for assessing the robustness of lobbying legislation. These two European countries possess experience in both the enactment and subsequent amendment of lobbying legislation. The findings are considered within the broader landscape of global lobbying regulations and in terms of how the CPI index itself reacts to the legislative changes in both countries. The 2001 Law on Lobbying Activities (LLA) was Lithuania's first attempt to regulate lobbying and was revised in 2001, 2003, 2017 and 2021. The Regulation of Lobbying Act was passed in Ireland in 2015 and amended in 2023. Has the robustness of lobbying legislation in both countries grown stronger over time, as Chari et al. (2010) found at the American and Canadian federal levels?

The paper initially discusses the literature on lobbying regulation and transparency. The reasons for case selection are then presented. It then sets out the methodology, traces the development of the lobbying laws in Lithuania and Ireland and examines those laws using the CPI's index, comparing their strengths and weaknesses. The conclusion situates the findings within the broader context of global lobbying regulations, discusses how the CPI index responds to the legislative changes examined, and highlights the paper's significance and limitations.

2 What is lobbying regulation?

According to Lane (1964), regulation involves managing, directing, or adjusting a private or semi-private activity to serve a public benefit. Lobbying regulation consists of rules, standards, and practical frameworks aimed at governing how lobbying is conducted, regulating the interactions of those engaged in lobbying with those being lobbied (McGrath, 2008). Defining what lobbying is has been difficult (Anastasiadis et al., 2018), making it problematic to create clear legislative definitions. At the US federal level, the Regulation of Lobbying Act (1946) failed to encompass a variety of forms of lobbying, resulting in many Washington lobbyists operating unnoticed by the 1990s (Chari et al., 2010).

For Baumgartner and Leech (1998) lobbying constitutes an attempt to influence the policy making process. According to Chari et al. (2019), lobbying is a self-serving effort by interests to sway political decisions in their favour. More comprehensive definitions have made it challenging to create exclusionary descriptions that allow for effective legislation, while also safeguarding the individual's rights to petition (Greenwood & Thomas, 1998). A clear legal definition of lobbying is crucial for lobbying regulation, as it specifies who is obligated to register and provide disclosure (Korkea-aho, 2021). Lobbying regulations cover a broad array of topics and areas, including public access to registers of lobbyists and stakeholders; revolving door provisions between the public and private sectors; conflicts of interest; political financing; public procurement; anti-corruption measures; disclosure of meetings between public officials and interest group representatives; transparency and openness in policymaking processes; and the accountability of policymakers.

3 Arguments for and against statutory lobbying regulation

The goal of lobbying regulation is to ensure transparency and establish ethical standards and behaviours lobbyists are expected to follow (Bitonti & Mariotti, 2023). Transparency refers

to how easily the public can track and assess the government's actions and its fulfilment of commitments (Harrison & Sayogo, 2014). Dinan (2021) suggests that lobbying transparency enhances public awareness of politics and facilitates the examination of legislative processes, which strengthens political accountability. Supporters of lobbying regulations contend that they allow the public to see how different viewpoints are incorporated into decisions, which perspectives are considered, and the reasons behind those choices (Šimral & Laboutková, 2021).

Deliberative democratic theory is founded on the notion that political actions are public (Bohman, 1998). “Advocates of deliberative democracy emphasize that deliberations that occur in public increase the quality and the legitimacy of decisions” (Stasavage, 2004, 668), and that these deliberations should be the result of an exchange of reasonable arguments between equal participants (Cooke, 2002). Therefore, a key objective of lobbying regulations is a level playing field (OECD, 2021).

However, many jurisdictions either have no regulations, incomplete regulations, or have allowed the lobbying industry to self-regulate (Hogan & Bitonti, 2024). The absence of regulations may stem from the perception that legislative lobbying regulations act as barriers to entry (Gray & Lowery, 1998). Briffault (2014) suggests that registration requirements could place a significant burden on small groups and organizations. There is also the cost to the state of regulating the industry (Brandt & Svendsen, 2016). Nevertheless, Chari et al. (2010, 129) note “there is no evidence to suggest that any lobbying legislation has inhibited ordinary citizens from going to see their representatives about ordinary issues”.

4 Countries Selected for Examination

“Comparative historical analysis has a long history in the social sciences” (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003, 3). Works in this area have sought to provide temporally grounded accounts on a diverse array of topics. Lieberman (2001) argues that cross-national studies offer the prospect of conceptual breakthroughs in our understanding of policy change. Two countries were chosen for this study to allow for an in-depth qualitative analysis of each in the limited space available. By conducting a comparative study examining the evolution of the laws regulating lobbying in Lithuania and Ireland, using the Centre for Public Integrity's (CPI) “Hired Guns” index, the paper seeks to add to the extant literature on change in lobbying legislation over time.

In this context of comparative analysis, Lithuania and Ireland constitute interesting cases in terms of Gerring's (2007) case selection criteria of similar and different. Both countries are small semi-presidential republics located on opposite sides of the EU periphery (Raunio & Sedelius, 2020). Ireland has been a democracy since 1922 and Lithuania since 1990. Both countries are rated as free by Freedom House (2024). Historically both countries were colonies of larger neighbours, Lithuania by Russia and Ireland by Britain. Whereas Lithuania is ranked 32nd in the world according to Transparency International's (2024) Corruption Perceptions Index, Ireland is ranked 10th.

Lithuania introduced lobbying regulations in 2001 to increase transparency, accountability, and public trust in politics – as part of its efforts to align with European Union (EU) standards in preparation for accession; and Ireland did so in 2015 in response to corruption and cronyism scandals in the previous decades. Since then both countries have updated their lobbying legislation. Thus, these are two European countries that have the experience of introducing and then subsequently amending their lobbying legislation. The countries' similarities ensure “the contexts of analysis are analytically equivalent, at least to a significant degree” (Collier, 1993, 112); whereas their differences provide for contrasting findings.

5 Methodology

The objective here is to compare the robustness of Lithuanian and Irish lobbying legislation over time. The initial legislation in both jurisdictions is examined, along with its subsequent iterations. Several methods have been devised to assess the strengths of lobbying regulations. Opheim (1991), Brinig et al. (1993), and Newmark (2005; 2017) developed indices that focus on regulations at the US state level. Holman and Luneburg (2012) and Transparency International (2015) set out approaches for comparing lobbying regulations in Europe. The CPI (2003) *Hired Guns Method* was created to assess lobbying legislation at the US state level. It has since been applied to legislation across various international jurisdictions, producing what Chari et al. (2019) refer to as CPI scores.

The CPI is a non-partisan, non-profit investigative news organization in Washington, DC, with an emphasis on transparency. Among the various indices mentioned above, Crepaz and Chari (2017) assert that the CPI's most effectively captures the strength of lobbying legislation. It possesses higher content validity, based upon the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD, 2009) five key elements of defining lobbying, disclosure requirements, reporting processes and technology, timeliness and ethics, and enforcement and compliance, than any of the other indices, as it asks many more questions under these key elements (Chari et al., 2019).

The CPI index uses forty-eight questions across eight criteria (areas of disclosure) to code and score legislative texts. These criteria are: definition of lobbyist, individual registration, disclosure of individual spending, disclosure of employer spending, electronic filing, public access to a register, revolving door provisions (cooling-off periods), and enforcement (see *Table 1*). Each element in a text is assigned a numerical value by the index based on the coding (see links in Appendix for full details). The CPI paid particular attention to “how the state defined what a lobbyist is, what requirements it has for registration and spending disclosures, and how it regulates legislators turned lobbyists”, it further “factored in effective oversight, such as electronic reporting, public access to information and enforcement” (Morlino et al., 2014).

The CPI score, which measures the robustness of a lobbying law, is calculated on a scale of 100 points (see *Table 1*). The higher the score assigned to a piece of legislation, the more robust it is. Crepaz (2016, 5) defines *robustness* as “the level of transparency and accountability that the lobbying regulation can guarantee.” To enhance comparisons between CPI scores, Chari et al. (2019) established a three-tiered classification for lobbying regulatory environments. Regulatory environments scoring above 60 points are classified as “high” robustness, those scoring between 30 and 59 as “medium” robustness, and those scoring below 29 as “low” robustness (Chari et al., 2019).

Table 1. CPI index's eight areas of disclosure and maximum points allowed

Areas of disclosure	Maximum CPI score
Definition of Lobbyist	7
Individual Registration	19
Individual Spending Disclosure	29
Employer Spending Disclosure	5
Electronic Filing	3
Public Access (to a registry of lobbyists)	20
Enforcement	15
Revolving Door Provisions	2
Total score possible	100

Source: <https://www.publicintegrity.org/2003/05/15/5914/methodology>

6 Lobbying legislation in Lithuania and Ireland

6.1 Lithuanian Legislation

Lithuania was one of the first European countries to introduce legislation regulating lobbying. Although regulatory proposals emerged during the 1990s, it was Lithuania's EU Accession Programme in 1999–2000 that explicitly outlined the need for lobbying regulation (Mrazauskaite & Muravjovas, 2015). A Law on Lobbying Activities (LLA) was introduced in early 2001, with minor amendments in May 2001.

The legislation was criticised for how it defined lobbyists. Article 2, Subsection 1 makes clear that lobbying is a professional activity carried out for compensation on behalf of a client (Government of Lithuania, 2001). The focus of the law was commercial consultants and legislative lobbying, ignoring the executive (McGrath, 2008). The legislation's requirement to register could be circumvented by in-house lobbyists and those from associated organisations (Kavoliunaite-Ragauskiene, 2017).

This led to a revised LLA in 2003. Article 2, Subsection 3 stated “‘Lobbying activities’ means actions taken by a natural or legal person for or without compensation ...” (Government of Lithuania, 2003). However, “business associations that act solely as representatives of the interests of their members were still excluded from the definition” (Mrazauskaite & Muravjovas, 2015, 7). Kalninš (2005) estimated there were 200–300 lobbyists/interest groups in Lithuania, but most did not register (Piasecka, 2005). Additionally, due to a loophole in the legislation, legal persons who breached the law could not be sanctioned. Consequently, there were virtually no cases of sanctions for illegal lobbying and the law seemed inoperable (Mrazauskaite & Muravjovas, 2015).

In late 2013 the Justice Ministry established a working group to prepare amendments. A revised LLA became law on 1 September 2017. A reason for this was Lithuania's desire to join the OECD (Ambrasaitė, 2016). The OECD's (2010, 8) lobbying principles state that countries “should provide an adequate degree of transparency to ensure that public officials, citizens and businesses can obtain sufficient information on lobbying activities.”

Article 2, Subsection 2 of the 2017 LLA redefined lobbyist to mean a natural person, removing legal person (Sokur, 2024). Dunčikaitė et al., (2020) criticised this narrow definition. By 2020, Lithuania's lobbying register listed 107 lobbyists, leaving most, such as business associations, and non-profit organisations, off record (Dunčikaitė et al., 2020). Whereas previously legal persons could not be sanctioned, now they operated under the radar.

This situation came to a head in 2020, when bribery and influence peddling scandals arose involving the presidents of the Lithuanian Business Confederation and the Association of Lithuanian Banks. The result was the introduction in 2021 of a new LLA establishing a system of cross declaration that requires lobbyists, and politicians and public servants who have contact with lobbyists, to report their activities. Under Article 2 subsection 2 the definition of lobbyist was widened to again include a legal person. The result has been an increase in the number of registers lobbyists from 122 in December 2020 to 330 by August 2023 and the level of bribery at an all-time low (Rinkevičiūtė & Dunčikaitė, 2023).

6.2 Irish Legislation

The topic of lobbying regulation gained attention in the 2000s following the Mahon, Moriarty, and McCracken tribunals, which found that Irish policymaking was vulnerable to corruption

(Byrne, 2012). Policy decisions on banking were often taken in secret after lobbying by banks (Murphy et al., 2011), something not that surprising in the context of a revolving door of officials moving between banks and regulatory agencies (Chari & Bernhagen, 2011).

The Fine Gael–Labour coalition government (2011–2016), tasked with reviving the economy following the collapse of the Celtic Tiger, also sought to restore trust in politics by pledging to implement lobbying regulations (McGrath, 2011). The Regulation of Lobbying Bill was enacted on 11 March 2015. The Act, in Section 5, makes clear it is concerned with regulating lobbying and not any specific type of lobbyist.

Despite the cooling-off period in Part 5, Section 22 of the Act, in September 2020, junior finance minister Michael D’Arcy resigned from the Seanad to assume the post of chief executive of the Irish Association of Investment Management, the representative body for the funds industry. One week before his resignation D’Arcy had spoken in the Seanad in support of a bill for which funds had been lobbying (Murray, 2022). The concern in such cases is that a former politician might leverage their personal connections and insider knowledge, acquired during public service, to benefit themselves and their employer, at the expense of the public interest (LaPira & Thomas, 2014).

In response, Taoiseach Micheál Martin told the Dáil “any cooling-off period should have the force of law and sanctions and penalties attached to it” (Dáil Éireann, 2020). In September 2022, the government introduced the Regulation of Lobbying (Amendment) Bill, granting the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO) the authority to sanction designated public officials (DPOs) who violate the cooling-off period with fines and lobbying bans. The Regulation of Lobbying and Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) (Amendment) Act was passed in May 2023 and came into force on 1 January 2024.

7 Analysis and comparison of the evolution of Lithuanian and Irish lobbying laws using the CPI Index

The Hired Guns Index’s eight criteria are used to examine and compare the evolution of the robustness of Lithuanian and Irish lobbying laws (see links in Appendix for full details and calculations). Countries often amend lobbying legislation in response to scandals, as seen in Canada in 1995, 2003, and 2008, and the US in 1995 and 2007. In those cases, the amended legislation resulted in higher CPI scores and more robust regulations (Chari et al., 2019).

The Acts examined here are available at <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/documentSearch/lt> and www.irishstatutebook.ie. Furthermore, both countries possess registers of lobbyists that provide extra information, and supplementary notes, to aid understanding of the laws. The registers can be found at: <https://skaidris.vtek.lt/public/home/main> and www.lobbying.ie.

7.1 Definition of Lobbyist

(See questions 1–2 in Data Availability Statement for calculation; Maximum Points 7)

Lithuania

Article 2 of the 2001 LLA regards lobbying as subject to compensation and contract and is carried out by either a person, or organisation, called a lobbyist, but it does not define executive lobbying (Government of Lithuania, 2001) and as a result receives no points for the CPI’s first question. On the second question, the legislation does not set a financial minimum to register. The legislation is assigned a CPI score of 4 points.

The 2003 LLA also scores 4 points, and while it again fails to define executive branch lobbying, Article 2, Subsection 3 expands the definition to recognise that it can be undertaken without compensation (Government of Lithuania, 2003). The 2017 LLA, under Article 2, defines more clearly who lobbied persons are. While identifying state politicians, it does not mention members of the executive (Government of Lithuania, 2017). The 2021 LLA, Article 2 Subsection 1, expands the definition of lobbied persons to include the executive branch (Government of Lithuania, 2021). This results in the CPI score for the 2021 LLA increasing to *7 points*.

Ireland

Although the 2015 legislation does not define a lobbyist, it addresses the CPI's first question concerning executive and legislative lobbyists. It details DPOs government ministers and ministers of state, members of parliament, Irish members of the European Parliament, members of local authorities, special advisors and public servants – that would be targets of lobbying (Government of Ireland, 2015). On the CPI's second question, how much an individual has to make/spend to qualify as a lobbyist, the legislation makes clear it is the act of lobbying that matters. The 2015 Act receives a CPI score of *7 points*.

The amended legislation is also assigned 7 points, despite defining lobbying more comprehensively. There is now recognition that bodies that exist to represent the interest of their members, and have no employees, will still be subject to lobbying regulations where one member would be classified as carrying out lobbying. These include informal businesses, or interest groups, with unremunerated directors (Government of Ireland, 2023).

7.2 Individual Registration

(See questions 3–10 in Data Availability Statement for calculation; Maximum Points 19)

Lithuania

The 2001 LLA is assigned *16 points*. A strength of the legislation is that under Article 8, Subsection 1 lobbyists must register immediately with the Chief Institutional Ethics Commission to get onto the Register of Lobbyists and that the registration agency must be notified of any changes of registration within 10 days. In the subsequent amendments none of the changes made on individual registration impacted the initial CPI score. In the 2021 LLA the targets of lobbying, such as the president, members of parliament, or members of municipal councils, are required, under Article 5, to inform the Chief Official Ethics Commission, within 7 days, of being lobbied. Additionally, under Article 10 of the 2021 LLA lobbyists have to declare their activities by submitting a declaration of transparent legislative processes to the Chief Official Ethics Commission within 7 days of commencing lobbying on a draft act. This creates cross declarations between those engaging in lobbying and those being lobbied. However, these innovations cannot be captured by the CPI Index.

Ireland

The 2015 legislation is assigned *10 points*. The strengths of the legislation include the need for individuals and groups to register if they engage in relevant communication with a DPO (Šimral, 2020). Anyone who engages in lobbying has to register (Government of Ireland, 2015). However, this registration, or a change in registration, does not have to be communicated to the Register of Lobbying as swiftly as in Lithuania, resulting in a lower CPI score.

The 2023 amendment also receives a CPI score of 10 points. The amended legislation requires applicants provide, in the case of bodies that exist to represent the interest of their

members, but have no employees, the name of every person who is a member of the body; there is also recognition that lobbying might not be for business purposes. However, these changes do not register on the CPI index.

7.3 Individual spending disclosure and Employer spending disclosure

(See questions 11–27 in Data Availability Statement for calculation, Maximum Points 34)

Lithuania

The 2001 LLA in Article 2, Subsections 4,5, and 6, and Article 10, Subsections 4 and 5 requires lobbyists file a spending report, even if they had not spent during a filing period, and that they also report their compensation, addressing questions 11, 13 and 25 in the CPI's index. There were no requirements on employers to disclose spending. The legislation was assigned *6 points*. The 2003 LLA made no changes concerning individual spending disclosures. However, the 2017 LLA, in Articles 2 and 12, removed this requirement, meaning the CPI score was reduced to *0 points*. The 2021 LLA made no changes to this.

Ireland

The 2015 Act and the 2023 Amendment place no requirements on lobbyists, or their employers, to report expenditures, *0 points*. The statutory reviews of the legislation, echoing the policy development stage, argue that requiring financial disclosures would create significant administrative burdens for SIPO (DPER, 2017; 2020).

7.4 Electronic filing

(See questions 28–30 in Data Availability Statement for calculation, Maximum Points 3)

Lithuania

Under Article 12 of the 2001 LLA the Chief Institutional Ethics Commission managed the Register of Lobbyists, and everything was done using hardcopies (Government of Lithuania, 2001). Consequently, the initial legislation is assigned *0 points*. Article 14 of the 2003 LLA provided that the Register of Lobbyists would be available online through the Chief Official Ethics Commission (Government of Lithuania, 2003). Access is readily available and free at <https://skaidris.vtek.lt/public/home/main>. This legislation is assigned *2 points*. The 2017 LLA made no changes to these provisions. Article 12 of the 2021 LLA seeks to ensure that more detailed information on lobbyists, and those they lobby, is collected in the Transparent Legislative Process Information System and published on the website of the Chief Official Ethics Commission (Government of Lithuania, 2021). However, this higher level of transparency has no impact upon the CPI score.

Ireland

The Register of Lobbying, part of SIPO, provides lobbyists with a means of registering online at <https://www.lobbying.ie/>. It is straightforward and free and supported by YouTube videos explaining how to register and file reports.¹ The 2015 Act scored *2 points*, as spending reports are not collected. The amended legislation is also assigned *2 points* – as the changes made to Sections 11 and 12 of the 2015 legislation have no impact on the CPI score. As of mid 2024

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYApbhCLBxLifsZF4Qre8oQ>

there had been 91,303 returns to the Register from 2,538 registrants (SIPO, 2024). This is a significantly higher figure than the 360 Lithuanian registrants.

7.5 Public Access

(See questions 31–38 in Data Availability Statement for calculation, Maximum Points 20)

Lithuania

Under Article 13 of the 2001 LLA information about lobbying activities was to be available to the public. The Register was published quarterly in *Informaciniai pranešimai* (Information Review), a supplement to the State Gazette (Government of Lithuania, 2001). This contained lists of active lobbyists, as well as those reinstated or suspended. The legislation is assigned 3 Points. The 2003 LLA, under Article 14, states that in addition to providing the Register quarterly through the State Gazette, it will also be published on the website of the Chief Official Ethics Commission (Government of Lithuania, 2003). There is no cost for checking registrations, however, while searchable, the material does not appear downloadable. Points are lost due the lack of any spending or compensation reports. The register is kept up to date. As a result of the 2003 LLA 6 more points are assigned to Lithuania legislation, bringing it to 9 points. The, 2017 and 2021 LLAs made no changes.

Ireland

Section 10 of the 2015 Act states “the Register shall be made available for inspection free of charge on a website maintained or used by the Commission [SIPO]” (Government of Ireland, 2015). Registrations, and filed reports, are freely available at Lobbying.ie via a searchable database, and the data can be downloaded as an Excel file. Sample registrations are provided. However, there is no information on lobbyists’ spending, as none is sought. The register is updated almost immediately. *10 points* are assigned to the 2015 Act and the 2023 amendment, as it changed nothing. The facility to download filed reports gives the Irish legislation a 1 point advantage over Lithuanian legislation.

7.6 Enforcement

(See questions 39–47 in Data Availability Statement for calculation, Maximum Points 15)

Lithuania

The 2001 LLA scored *7 points*. The legislation gave the Chief Institutional Ethics Commission the power to monitor lobbying activities and conduct audits. Under Article 9 the Chief Institutional Ethics Commission could impose a suspension of 1 month on lobbyist for failure to present a report on their activities in due time; and a suspension of 5 years where a lobbyist was found to have engaged in illegal actions. Article 14 of the 2001 LLA set out the liabilities for violation of the law. The Chief Institutional Ethics Commission published information about suspensions in the supplement to *Valstybės žinios, Informaciniai pranešimai*. The law required that at least once a year the Chief Institutional Ethics Commission send the Seimas a report on the control of lobbying activities (Government of Lithuania, 2001).

The 2003 LLA sets out more extensively in Article 13 the investigative, auditing and monitoring powers the Chief Official Ethics Commission would have over lobbyists. The commission would oversee the application of the law and enforcement of its rules, in addition to preparing a Lobbyists Code of Ethics. Additionally, this article specifies that by 15 May annually the Chief Official Ethics Commission had to send the Seimas a report on lobbying

activities. The Chief Official Ethics Commission had to publish quarterly information about lobbyists including information on suspensions in the supplement *Informaciniai pranešimai* to the official gazette *Alstyne's žinios*. While these changes refined how enforcement of regulations was conducted, none was sufficient to change Lithuania's CPI score.

Subsection 4 of Article 13 of the 2017 LLA states that the Chief Official Ethics Commission must now provide lobbyists with methodological support and recommendations related to lobbying activities. Article 14 of the 2021 LLA sets out fines for illegal lobbying activities. These range from €1,000 to €4,500 for failing to declare lobbying activities, or lobbying prior to registering. Article 16 sets out the procedure for investigating violations and the imposition of fines. However, none of the changes introduced in the 3 LLAs in 2003, 2017 and 2021 impacted Lithuania's CPI score.

Ireland

The 2015 legislation scored *6 points* for the statutory power SIPO was granted to conduct audits and compel lobbyists to comply with review requests. Article 19, Subsection 1 of the legislation states “if the Commission reasonably believes that a person may have committed or may be committing a relevant contravention, the Commission may authorise the carrying out of an investigation under this section” (Government of Ireland, 2015). Under Articles 20 and 21 there is a statutory fixed penalty of €200 for incomplete filing of reports and this can be increased to a class C fine, reaching a maximum of €2,500, or up to 2 years in prison on conviction for failing to register, providing false information, or obstructing an investigation.

The amended legislation in Section 22 introduces the novel provisions of minor and major sanctions (Government of Ireland, 2023). Minor sanctions include a reprimand, caution or advice from SIPO. Major sanctions constitute prohibition on DPOs from carrying on lobbying, or being employed by, or providing services to, a person carrying on lobbying for one year after leaving their role. A major sanction can include a financial sanction not exceeding €25,000. There is also the sanction of prohibiting a person from registering for up two years, barring them from lobbying. However, this amendment does not impact the CPI score, as the index cannot take account of these changes. In 2023 a total of 455 fixed payment notices were issued along with 36 notices of potential prosecution (SIPO, 2024).

7.7 Revolving Door Provisions

(See question 48 in Data Availability Statement for calculation, Maximum Points 2)

Lithuania

According to Article 3 of the 2001 LLA there is a cooling off period of one year for former state politicians and public servants, resulting in a CPI score of *2 points*. This 12 month cooling off period goes beyond what is found in many other jurisdictions, such as US federal lobbying regulations. The 2003, 2017 and 2021 LLAs made no changes to this provision.

Ireland

Article 22 of the 2015 Act states

a person who has been a relevant designated public official shall not– (a) carry on lobbying activities in circumstances to which this section applies, or (b) be employed by, or provide services to, a person carrying on lobbying activities in such circumstances for one year. (Government of Ireland, 2015)

These stipulations gave the legislation the maximum 2 *points* in the CPI's index. The amended legislation made no changes to the cooling off period. SIPO may give consent to circumvent this cooling off provision, should a DPO apply for a waiver. There were 3 waiver applications in 2023, all from special advisers (SIPO, 2024). *Table 2* summarizes all of the above findings.

Table 2. Summary of changes to Lithuanian (2001–2021) and Irish (2015–2023) lobbying regulations

	Changes to Lithuanian lobbying regulations	Changes to Irish lobbying regulations
Definition of Lobbyist	Expanded to encompass executive branch lobbyists	More comprehensive in defining lobbying activities
Individual Registration	Remained comprehensive from 2001	Became more comprehensive through amendment
Individual spending disclosure	Removed after 2017 LLA	N/A
Employer spending disclosure	N/A	N/A
Electronic filing	Initially hard copy and then electronic (online) from 2003 LLA	Amendment meant broader range of actors required to register and file electronic (online) returns
Public Access	Initially hard copy and online from 2003	No change – online and downloadable
Enforcement	Rules have gradually become stricter	Minor and major sanctions introduced in 2023
Revolving Door	No change from initial 12 month cooling off period	No change from initial 12 month cooling off period

Source: author's edit.

8 Findings

The Lithuanian LLAs and the Irish Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015, and its 2023 amendment, constitute gradual steps in the process of dealing with undue influence over public policy. This is crucial, given the various corruption and lobbying scandals in both countries over the years and the disenchantment with public life and cynicism for politicians these give rise to (Lasas, 2023; Murphy, 2014). However, as we saw above, particularly with Lithuania, given its longer experience of legislating lobbying regulations, it is sometimes two steps forwards and one backwards.

In *Table 3* Lithuania's CPI score goes up and down over the years. From a score of 38 in 2001, it increases to 46 as online filing is introduced, and greater public access to lobbying information results from this, with the passage of the 2003 LLA. Then the CPI score falls back to 40 with the introduction of the 2017 LLA and removal of spending disclosures, before rising again to 43 as the 2021 LLA, for the first time, defines executive branch lobbying. These CPI scores, according to Chari et al. (2019), constitute a medium-robustness system, where medium ranges from 30–59 points. Despite the changing CPI scores, the index did not capture all of the changes to Lithuanian lobbying regulations discussed above.

Overall, most of the changes to Irish lobbying regulations, by the 2023 amendment, failed to register on the CPI index, with the original and amended legislation scoring 37 points. The

CPI index lacks the nuance to reflect more subtle legislative changes, as these were intended to strengthen existing regulations already captured by the index—areas for which the index does not offer criteria to assess such enhancements. For instance, the 2023 amendment is designed to improve compliance with the cooling-off provisions in the 2015 Act, while not extending those provisions. The result is that the amended legislation continues to acquire the 2 available points under the CPI index’s Revolving Door Provisions (see Question 48 in Appendix). While the new sanctions regime, encompassing investigations and civil/administrative sanctions, with penalties of up to €25,000 and prohibitions from lobbying of up to two years, are to be welcomed, these changes are not something the CPI index can capture. Nevertheless, Ireland’s CPI scores, according to Chari et al. (2019), make it a medium-robustness jurisdiction.

Table 3. The legislative scores synopsis for Lithuania and Ireland

Areas of disclosure	Max CPI scores	2001 LLA	2001 LLA (amend)	2003 LLA	2017 LLA	2021 LLA	2015 Irl Act	2023 Irl (amend)
Definition of Lobbyist	7	4	4	4	4	7	7	7
Individual Registration	19	16	16	16	16	16	10	10
Individual Spending Disclosure	29	6	6	6	0	0	0	0
Employer Spending Disclosure	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Electronic Filing	3	0	0	2	2	2	2	2
Public Access (to a registry of lobbyists)	20	3	3	9	9	9	10	10
Enforcement	15	7	7	7	7	7	6	6
Revolving Door Provisions	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
CPI Score	100	38	38	46	40	43	37	37
Regulatory Environment		Medium Robust	Medium Robust	Medium Robust	Medium Robust	Medium Robust	Medium Robust	Medium Robust

Source: CPI scoring template <https://www.publicintegrity.org/2003/05/15/5914/methodology>;
 Calculations available at: <https://figshare.com/s/53ae00c60403731f2e23>;
<https://10.6084/m9.figshare.27011326>

The lack of nuance in the CPI index, despite Chari et al. (2019) finding it to have good content validation compared to other indices, makes clear that when designing an index to capture the essential elements of a lobbying law, there is inevitably a trade-off between parsimony and comprehensiveness to ensure it has sufficient content validity without becoming cumbersome (Adcock & Collier, 2001). For Laboutková et al. (2025, 14) “the main weakness of those existing indices is their narrow scope, which does not provide a more complex picture of the quality of the environment where the lobbying activities occur.” In response they advocate for a much larger tool, incorporating 158 indicators, for assessing lobbying transparency more broadly than just legislation.

Nevertheless, it may be possible, in future, to add more questions to the CPI index. Conservatively, these could capture amendments to original legislation that has already been recorded by the index, for instance, new questions that try to capture, in a graduated manner,

amendments to the length of the cooling off period. Less conservatively, they could also be questions that recognise that although the index was originally developed for application within the US, it is now being applied more broadly. These questions could ask about the number and names of MPs lobbied in a period, or the intended results of the lobbyist's efforts, or provide a graduated scale based upon the severity of statutory penalties applicable for breaches of the law. The iterations of the legislation in Lithuania in 2003, 2017 and 2021 constitute second order policy changes – alterations of the policy instrument – according to Hall (1993); while the amendment to the Irish legislation constitutes a first order policy change – changes to the settings of the policy instrument.

In *Table 4* we can see that in Lithuania different iterations of the LLA met 5 and sometimes 6 of the ideal criteria for a jurisdiction to be considered a medium-robustness system according to Chari et al. (2019). Initially the LLA did not encompass executive lobbying and online registration, with online registration adopted in 2003, executive lobbying in 2021 and individual spending disclosure abandoned in 2017. The Irish legislation in 2015, and as amended in 2023, met 6 of the 7 criteria.

Table 4. Lithuanian and Irish lobbying legislation in the context of the characteristics of medium-robustness systems

Characteristics	2001 LLA	2001 LLA amend	2003 LLA	2017 LLA	2021 LLA	2015 Irl Act	2023 Irl amend
Legislative and executive lobbyists	X	X	X	X	√	√	√
Disclosure of individual spending	√	√	√	X	X	X	X
No employer spending reports	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Online registration	X	X	√	√	√	√	√
Register accessible to all	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Mandatory reviews/audits	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Cooling-off period	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Source: Chari et al. (2019, 180).

The findings place the current Lithuanian and Irish legislation in the lower half of the list of medium robust jurisdictions (30–59 points). Of the 16 national jurisdictions examined by Chari et al. (2019) and Hogan and Bitonti (2024), a CPI score of 43 places Lithuania between Slovenia and Chile and 37 locates Ireland between Taiwan and the United Kingdom (UK) (see *Table 5*). However, as Chari et al. (2011) argue, a higher CPI score does not necessarily translate into a better regulatory environment, or the reverse. A weakness of the CPI index is, despite its 48 questions, its narrow scope, which fails to capture the broader and more complex dynamics of the lobbying environment (Laboutková et al., 2025).

Table 5. National jurisdictions' CPI scores

Jurisdiction	Score	Jurisdiction	Score
US Federal 2007	62	Ireland (2023)	37
Germany (2024)	51	UK (2014)	33
Canada Federal 2008	50	Australia (2008)	33
Slovenia (2010)	47	Austria (2012)	32
Lithuania (2021)	43	Mexico (2010)	29
Chile (2014)	42	Israel (2008)	28
France (2016)	42	Poland (2005)	27
Taiwan (2007)	38	Netherlands (2022)	24

Source: Chari et al. (2019); Hogan and Bitonti (2024).

In Lithuania and Ireland there is gradual movement in both countries towards more transparent lobbying environments. Utilising the data in Chari et al. (2019), and in Hogan and Bitonti (2024) for more recent changes to some countries' CPI scores, such as Germany in 2024 and the Netherlands in 2022, an average CPI score of 38.625 for the 16 regulated national jurisdictions was determined (see *Table 6*). *Table 6* shows that Lithuania's 2021 legislation is 4.375 points above the mean, and 5.5 points above the median, while Ireland's 2023 legislation is 1.625 points below the mean and 0.5 points below the median.

Table 6. Mean, median and standard deviation for the 16 countries with lobbying regulations in place at the national level

Valid	16
Mean	38.625
Median	37.5
Std. Deviation	10.34
Range	38
Minimum	24
Maximum	62

Source: Chari et al. (2019); Hogan and Bitonti (2024).

9 Conclusion

This study employed the CPI's Hired Guns Index to examine how the laws regulating lobbying in Lithuania and Ireland evolved. In the context of Chari et al.'s (2019) threefold classification of the robustness of regulatory systems, the CPI scores assigned to Lithuanian and Irish lobbying legislation placed them in the category of medium robust systems. The fact that the CPI scores in both jurisdictions did not change dramatically, or not at all for Ireland, concealed some meaningful reforms that have been introduced.

In both jurisdictions the legislation now does a fairly comprehensive job in defining lobbying. But, reaching this point was an iterative process. The regulations in both countries ask for the

subject matter bring lobbied on, the results being sought, the type of lobbying engaged in and the name, position and institution of the target of the lobbying. In both countries there are cooling off periods of 12 months from the time a public office holder leaves office.

The legislation omits the requirement for financial disclosure; however, as Murphy et al. (2011) emphasize, the regulation of lobbying is intended to prevent those with dominant financial power from exerting disproportionate influence within a political system. In both countries the latest iterations of their legislation take harder lines on breaches.

Although the CPI index has the highest content validity of the indices used to measure lobbying regulations and best captures the robustness of lobbying legislation (Chari et al., 2019), it did not capture all of the changes made to Lithuanian and Irish lobbying legislation. Additional questions may need to be added to the index to ensure it can recognise more subtle legislative changes. Nevertheless, in-depth examination of the legislation shows that those changes involved closing off certain loopholes and the recognition of the need to provide more and stronger enforcement capabilities. After two decades in Lithuania and more than a decade in Ireland of regulating their lobbying sectors, both countries are gaining insight into which legislative approaches are effective.

This study is subject to certain limitations. Chief among them is the examination of only two countries, which constrains the generalizability of findings. However, the inclusion of additional cases here would have necessarily limited the depth of analysis achievable within the scope of the present study. A further limitation lies in the exclusive reliance on the CPI index. Future research could address this by undertaking a comparative assessment of the CPI index, alongside alternative indices, in evaluating the robustness of lobbying legislation across a broader range of countries. Such an approach would also elucidate whether, and to what extent, these various indices are sensitive to legislative changes in extant lobbying regulations. This is particularly significant given the paper's finding that the CPI index does not adequately capture the amendments made to the lobbying laws in Lithuania and Ireland.

Data availability statement

CPI Hired Guns Index scoring methodology is available at <https://www.publicintegrity.org/2003/05/15/5914/methodology>

The CPI score calculations for the Lithuanian (2001, 2003, 2017, 2021) and Irish (2015, 2023) legislation are available at <https://figshare.com/s/53ae00c60403731f2e23>

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