



European Citizenship Awards

The Good Lobby

Description of the nominee:

The Good Lobby is a skill-based volunteering network making skilled Europeans (academics, professionals and students) available on a pro bono basis to non-profit organizations working on the most important social and political issues in Europe.

It brings together academics, professionals and students and sees them working directly for NGOs operating in the EU policy field. The students are supported by a range of experienced and highly respected academics and practitioners who work with The Good Lobby on a pro bono basis to advance the goals of the client NGOs.

Students are given the opportunity to play an active and important role in on-going policy processes and advocacy campaigns concerning some of the most pressing issues facing the EU, its 28 Member States and its 500 million inhabitants. In so doing, students help NGOs give voice to the often-underrepresented public interest in the complex supra-national EU policy process.

The Good Lobby is the first organisation devoted to experimenting with the various channels of participatory democracy existing within the EU. Through lobbying, advocacy, and policy research The Good Lobby promotes democratic, transparent and accountable EU institutions.

The Good Lobby relies on a simple equation: talented students and young professionals (the Talent) + a network of senior academics and professionals (the Wisdom) + driven non-profit organizations working to make the EU better (the Passion) = social and economic value (the Impact). Talent + Wisdom + Passion = Impact.

We have a very limited budget as we are an organisation made of volunteers. We aim at rapidly transforming ourselves into a fully-fledged social company and employ full-time some of our most proactive young volunteers regardless of their background, gender, race and educational development.

We rely on a growing networks made of academics, professionals and students, but do not receive any sponsorship at the moment.

Impact achieved:

The Good Lobby has initiated – together with its volunteers coming from all over Europe – more than 10 high impact projects in 2015 and 2016 to serve leading non-profit organisations as well as smaller ones.

PROJECTS

In 2015, The Good Lobby and its volunteers drafted a directive on whistleblowing protection for Transparency International Europe in order to protect those citizens who – like Antoine Deltour or Edward Snowden – disclose information in the public sector.

They prepared an advocacy report for WWF Europe advocating the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, lodged a complaint to the EU Ombudsman on behalf of Amnesty International Europe against the EU Commission for lack of transparency in its handling of the pre-infringement proceedings against Italy in relation to Roma rights.

In 2015, they prepared a report for Wikimedia on “freedom of panorama” in Europe, to permit citizens to take photographs and video footage and creating other images (such as paintings) of buildings and sometimes sculptures and other art works which are permanently located in a public place, without infringing on any copyright, across Europe.

They helped the European Consumer Organisation to advocate the prohibition of airline “no-show” clauses, and lodged a complaint - on behalf of Access Info Europe - before the European Ombudsman, who decided to open an investigation into the transparency in judicial appointments.

MOOC

Moreover, to scale its impact and enable any European citizen to enforce his/her rights and to start campaigning for those rights, the founder of The Good Lobby developed a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) entitled Understanding Europe : Why it Matters and What it Can Offer You, available for free on Coursera, that has reached more than 100.000 participants.

Job opportunities

Thanks to our projects, we sensitise many young Europeans to the possibility to contribute to the European project outside of the conventional professional avenues. Many of them have joined non-profit organisations or have developed pro bono activities within the framework of their new jobs, be they lawyers, marketing, management consultants or IT.

We are promoting a new form of engagement to European values: bottom-up, skill-based and empowering both the individual and society."

What makes the initiative innovative?

Europe is facing a civic empowerment gap. The EU takes important decisions with an impact on daily lives, but citizens feel disempowered in having their voices heard. The final perception is unequal distribution of power. Well-organised corporate groups dominate the decision-making process, while poorly-resourced civil society organizations feel they can't defend the public interest.

To address this problem, The Good Lobby intends to mobilize ordinary citizens, such as students, academics and professionals, and use their skills to help non-profits to successfully achieve their public interest mission. While supporting NGOs, students have the chance to gain professional experience whereas academics and professionals turn their talents to the benefit of society.

As a result, The Good Lobby will not only create economic value – through the provision of valuable services to NGOs – but will also develop important social values such as European citizens' engagement, participation and democracy. For example, a group of law and communication students could help – under the supervision of young academics and professionals – an NGO promote better environmental protection.

Ordinary Europeans, with different talents and specializations, will work in project-teams to provide one-stop-shop consultancy services to NGOs. The Good Lobby strongly believes that the collaboration between ordinary citizens and the non-profit sector can open the way for more democratic and sustainable way to grow.

The Good Lobby wants to democratize lobbying by enabling anyone to tap into his/her own talent and make this available to societal causes.

Contribution to European values:

Democracy

Equality through a more balanced representation of interests

The rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities (Amnesty project), pluralism (Wikimedia project), non-discrimination (Amnesty Project), tolerance, justice (Transparency International project), solidarity

Website or promotional materials:

www.thegoodlobby.eu