
TIPTOEING AROUND THE FAR RIGHT

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After the EU elections in May, about 20 percent of members of the European Parliament have far-right agendas. That's a big gain □ up from 10-to-15 percent five years ago. That's also around 150 far-right lawmakers companies can lobby for favourable votes and amendments.

Many people are uncomfortable with that prospect. Far-right parties are rife with misogyny, homophobia and islamophobia; many have members who openly admire Italian and German fascism and Putin's Russia.

Lobbyists who work with these lawmakers risk normalising hate-mongering and anti-democratic values.

Those concerns prompted EU Scream to take an ambitious step for such a young podcast: holding our first event. We had great support from Res Publica Europa, a new group mainly made up of European Union officials, and from Open Forum Europe, the think tank for the open source software community in Brussels.

Our mission was to draw up some preliminary guidelines for lobbyists. We knew that was going to be ambitious. We nevertheless reached areas of consensus thanks to Alberto Alemanno, a law professor at French business school HEC Paris, and thanks to some dazzling panelists:

Maris Hellrand, a journalist and activist from Estonia; Benedikt Herges, the head of the Brussels office for German technology and engineering company Siemens; Heather Grabbe, the director of EU affairs for Open Society Foundations, the philanthropic group founded by George Soros; and Michiel van Hulten, a former member of Parliament and the director of Transparency International EU.

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