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Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences  
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## SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS

*Advocate Tactics Regarding Public Policy in Romania*  
*How Advocacy and Public Affairs Work in a New Europe Country*

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## Abstract

Researching the way advocates for various entities interact with the legislative process, gives us an understanding about more than just the profession itself. It also reveals valuable data and insights about the political systems which provide the legislative context for all advocacy activities. This understanding is particularly significant for New Europe countries such as Romania, which have recently transitioned from communist dictatorships to liberal democracies. To map the public affairs landscape in Romania, we conducted interviews with 50 advocates responsible for advocacy activities across various Romanian entities. The findings showed major similarities between advocate behavior within Romania's legislative process and the activities of advocates working in developed Western democracies. It also showed that advocate behavior is directly influenced by the setup of the legislative process. Advocates choose certain legislative procedures, such as public consultation or Parliament committee hearings as their preferred intervention points, based on openness and capability to take their contributions into account, while avoiding others because of

low influence and poor design. Argumentation strategies align with Western practices, though “common-goals” arguments are less frequently used due to cultural and political factors. Lobbying tactics in Romania focus heavily on face-to-face meetings and position papers, with drafting of legislation being rare. Public communication relies on media communications and PR, whereas grassroots movements are less popular as in the West, due to local political resistance to extensive public mobilization. While lobbying takes up the majority of advocacy activities, use of public communication is increasing. These similarities between advocacy practices in Romania and Western democracies points towards a continued integration of the Romanian political system with those of other developed democracies, particularly within the EU.

**Keywords:** Lobbying, Advocacy, New Europe, Romania, Interest Groups

## Objectives

Advancing our understanding of how the public affairs process works is absolutely key to addressing more complex issues in policymaking, such as increasing lawmakers’ responsiveness and accountability, better measuring the success of public affairs campaigns, and understanding how messages from advocates and officials reach the public.

This is why our paper has two immediate, main research objectives:

- A. Mapping the public affairs landscape in Romania:** Providing a comprehensive picture of public affairs in Romania by examining advocate types, tactics, communication targets, arguments used, coalition building and other relevant factors, such as the way these phenomena compare to advocacy in Western polities.
- B. Analyzing the impact on Romanian policymaking:** Assessing how the public affairs landscape interacts with and impacts policymaking within Romania’s political system.

This study is among the first large-scale investigations of public affairs in Romania and Central and Eastern Europe. Based on 50 in-depth interviews with advocates active on various issues in Romania (48 of which were conducted in Bucharest), this paper seeks to reveal and explain how advocates work and interact with the policymaking process.

# 1. Methodology

This study builds on previous research by utilizing as a model two pivotal studies, by American authors, which are the most recent ones to come up with in-depth research regarding public affairs in the US and the EU. These authors are:

1. **Kati Tusinski Berg (2009)** - Her research investigated the convergence of lobbying, public relations, and advocacy by examining how lobbying practitioners in Oregon describe their activities. This study's insights into organizational settings and definitions of advocacy offer a framework potentially applicable to the Romanian context.
2. **Christine Mahoney (2008)** - In "Brussels Versus the Beltway," Mahoney provides a comparative analysis of public affairs strategies in the US and the EU. The study's emphasis on advocacy tactics and the way they interface with the legislative process provides a comparative backdrop against which Romanian practices can be analyzed.

The insights derived from these studies were instrumental in crafting a research approach suited to the Romanian context. Tusinski Berg's focus on organizational settings and definitions of advocacy offers a lens through which to explore the diversity and roles within Romania's public affairs sector. Meanwhile, Mahoney's analysis provides a comparative backdrop that is essential for understanding how Romanian practices align with or diverge from broader European trends.

## 1.1 Participants: advocate types

The types of advocates included in our sample were selected based on their relevance and active involvement in advocacy across various sectors:

- **Trade and business associations and federations**
- **Social associations and federations**
- **Companies**
- **Non-governmental organizations (NGOs).**
- **Public affairs consultancies**

## 1.2 Advocate sample, staff sizes

Before getting into the analysis regarding advocacy activities it is important to look at the final advocate sample presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Advocate categories**

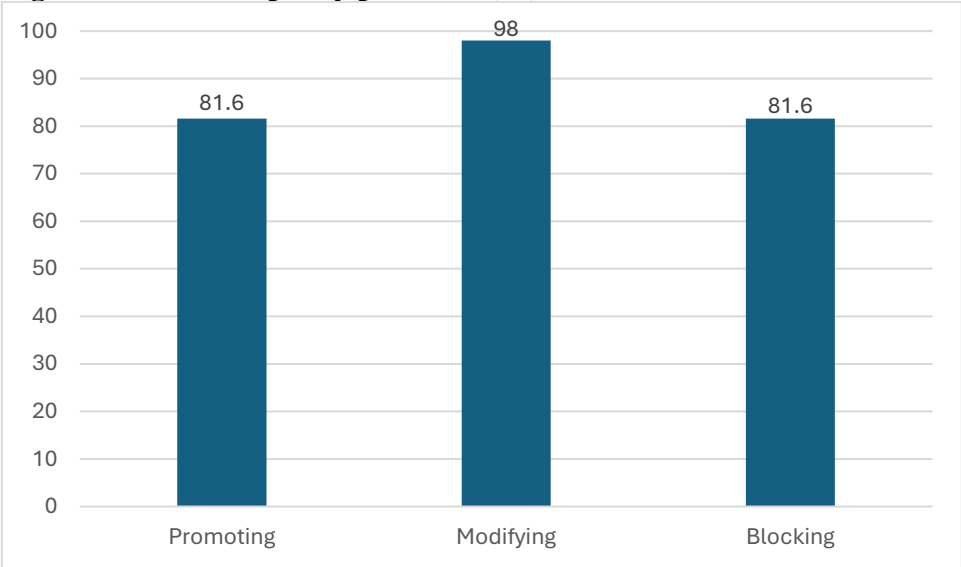
Categories	Frequency (%)
Trade and business associations and federations	12 (24%)
Social associations and federations	5 (10%)
Companies	15 (30%)
NGOs	8 (16%)
Public affairs consultancies	10 (20%)
Total	50 (100%)

It covers all the advocate categories that we consider to be relevant and representative in the case of Romania. As we can observe, while over half of the advocates are in one way or another representing the private sector, 26% are NGOs, civil society organizations or organizations that have a social-oriented mission. Public affairs consultancies which make 20% out of the total are what we consider the “neutral element” in the sample, since they can represent and work both for private sector interest groups, but also do advocacy for social causes.

## 1.3 Advocate policy positions

. When covering the subject of policy positions, we asked each advocate to take into account all the advocacy initiatives they handled in the last 12 months and estimate which percentage of those initiatives were promoting, modifying, or blocking a legislative proposal.

**Figure 1. Advocate policy positions (%)**



As reported in Figure 5, a large number of advocates have taken all three policy positions, which suggests a high degree of complexity and sophistication in the advocacy process. Advocates do not exist only to intervene now and then in the process - a great majority of them, over 80%, actively take all three policy position types.

It should however be noted that the advocacy position most taken is that of modifying. Almost unanimously, advocates have chosen at least once in the period previous to our interview to try to modify a piece of legislation or policy.

**Table 2. Policy Positions by Types of Advocates**

Advocate type	Promoting	Modifying	Blocking
Trade and business associations and federations	64%	91%	100%
Social associations and federations	60%	100%	100%
Companies	93%	100%	67%
NGOs	88%	100%	71%
Public affairs consultancies	90%	100%	80%
Total	82%	98%	82%

While the previous table gives us a general idea of the types of advocacy positions used, it is important to look more in-depth at the types of percentages reported by advocates when positioning themselves in relation to a policy or legislative proposal.

## 1.4 Advocate positions by sectoral impact

While one of the main components of any advocacy activity or campaign is the position it is based on, another very important piece is sectoral impact. Basically, any initiative has a certain impact, which can have a reduced scope, or a larger scope. In principle, the sectoral impact of an initiative can be:

- Organization-level impact — strictly affects that organization, and not the sector as a whole
- Sector-level impact — affects the entire sector in which the respective organization operates
- System-level impact — affects several sectors or the system the organization operates in.

Again, we started by asking advocates to consider all the advocacy initiatives they handled during the past 12 months and estimate which percentage of those initiatives had an organization-level impact, affected the whole sector, and how many initiatives had a system-wide impact.

**Figure 2. Advocate policy positions by sectoral impact (%)**

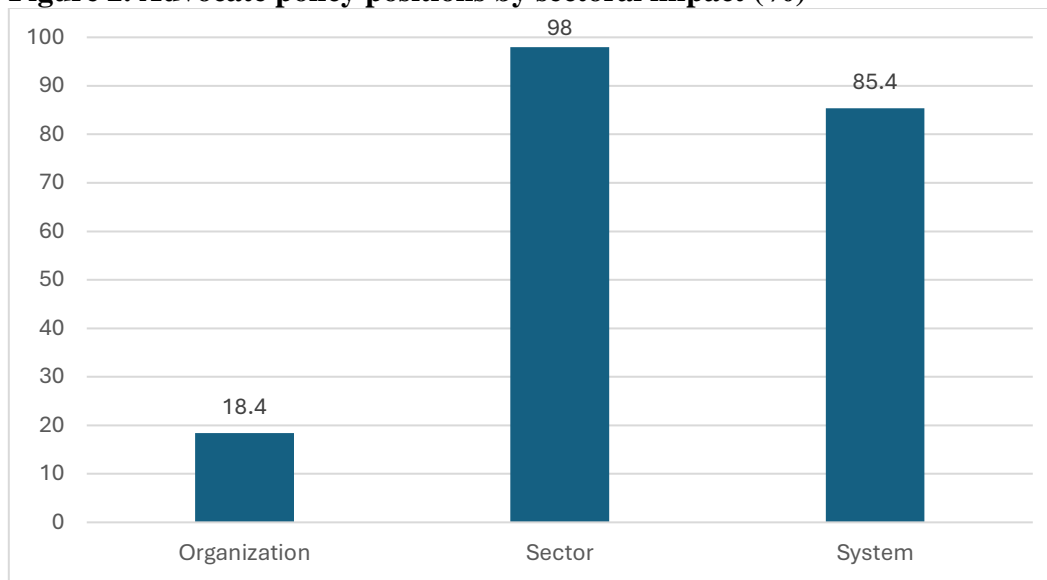


Figure 7 shows the percentage of advocates that took at least one advocacy position with one of the three types of impacts. This translates to a significant finding: 98% of those asked took at least one advocacy positions that had or aimed to have a sector-level impact.



**Table 3. Sectoral impact of advocacy initiatives by type of advocate**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Organization impact (%)</b>	<b>Sector impact (%)</b>	<b>System-level impact (%)</b>
Trade and business associations and federations	9%	100%	100%
Social associations and federations	40%	100%	40%
Companies	20%	100%	93%
NGOs	0%	88%	100%
Public affairs consultancies	30%	100%	70%
Total	18%	98%	85%

When we look at Table 3, which shows the same percentages of sectoral impacts of initiatives, but this time structured alongside the various types of advocates, we can see once again quite clearly, that almost all of them have very high engagement when it comes to sector-level impacts. However, when it comes to system-wide impacts, it is trade associations and non-profits that go unanimously for initiatives that have this type of far reaching, cross-sector impacts.

## **1.5 Advocate positions by legislative procedure**

One of the more sensitive areas of discussion when it comes to advocacy and public affairs is the way advocates actually interact with the legislative process. Without entering into all the ins and outs of Romania's legislative system, during the process of adoption of a legislative measure, any proposal usually goes through the following legislative procedures:

*A. Public consultation*

*B. Approval process (Economic and Social Council-CES, Legislative Council, Social Dialogue Commission and others)*

*C. Standing bureau of the Parliament*

*D. Parliamentary committees.*

*E. Plenary discussions*

*F. Promulgation*

*G. Ministry/Agency*

*H. Other*

Table 4 shows which legislative procedure received most mentions from advocates when it came to advocating for their position in relation to a legislative proposal.

**Table 4. Preferred legislative procedures for advocacy actions**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency (%)</b>
Parliamentary committees	49 (98%)
Public consultation	42 (84%)
Ministry before Parliament	36 (72%)
Ministry after promulgation	35 (70%)
Approval process	22 (44%)
Promulgation	11 (22%)
Plenary discussions	8 (16%)
Constitutionality review	7 (14%)
Standing bureau of the Parliament	5 (10%)
EU infringement procedure	4 (8%)
Litigation	1 (2%)

## **2. Findings – Policy arguments**

Our preferred framework in order to be able to analyze the various argument strategies utilized by advocates in the Romanian system, is the one used by Christine Mahoney in her before-mentioned book *“Brussels versus the Beltway : Advocacy in the United States and the European Union”*. In order to analyze argumentation strategies used by advocates in Brussels and Washington, the author used a classification with 6 types of arguments:

- (a) *Commonly shared goals arguments*
- (b) *Technical Arguments*
- (c) *Cost or economic impact arguments*
- (d) *Feasibility arguments*
- (e) *Discriminatory or unfair nature arguments*
- (f) *Constituency or public opinion arguments*

The first question regarding argumentation for each advocate was about which of the above-mentioned arguments they had used significantly during the prior year. Respondents were allowed to point more than just one type of argument; to cover all the possible argumentation tactics they might use within a year.

**Table 5. Frequency of policy arguments used by advocates**

<b>Policy argument</b>	<b>Frequency (%)</b>
Common goals	41 (82%)
Technical	50 (100%)
Cost	45 (90%)
Feasibility	46 (92%)
Discrimination/fairness	34 (68%)
Constituency/public opinion	10 (20%)

## 2.1 Argumentation differences based on advocate types

While it is definitely important to have an overall understanding of what the argumentation tactics used by advocates are, it is also just as important to understand differences between the way different types of advocates select arguments.

**Table 6. Argumentation differences based on advocate types**

<b>Advocate type</b>	<b>Common goals (%)</b>	<b>Technical (%)</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Feasibility</b>	<b>Discrimination/ Fairness (%)</b>	<b>Constituency/ Public Opinion (%)</b>
<b>Trade and business associations and federations</b>	83.3	100	91.7	100	75	25
<b>Social associations and federations</b>	60	100	100	80	80	40
<b>Companies</b>	93.3	100	93.3	93.3	66.7	13.3
<b>NGOs</b>	87.5	100	62.5	100	37.5	25
<b>Public affairs consultancies</b>	70	100	100	100	80	10

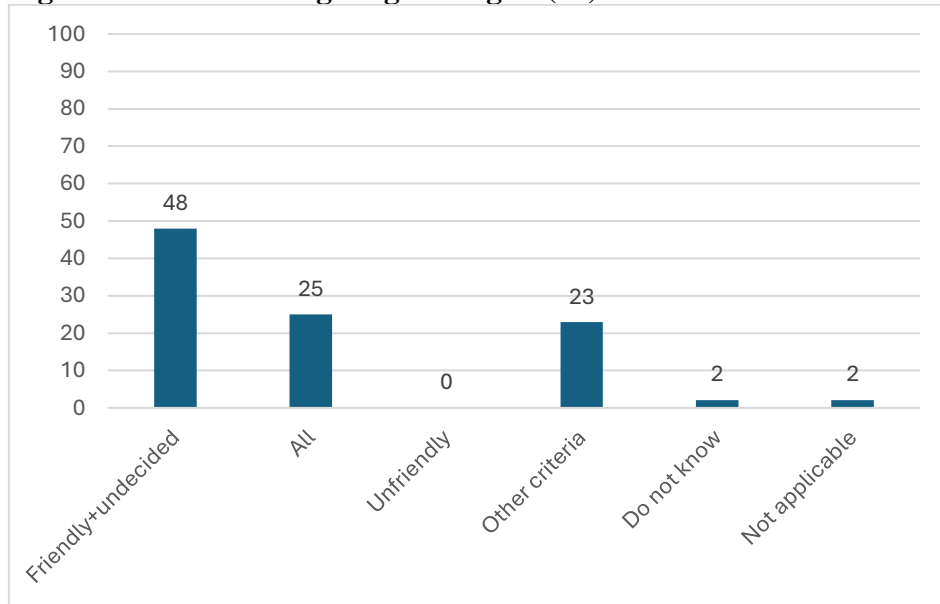
Table 16 aims to delineate exactly this sort of differences, based on answers given by advocates to the question regarding of the above-mentioned arguments they had used significantly

during the prior year. However, the results do not exactly confirm previously held notions about the arguments that different types of advocates employ.

### 3. Findings – Targeting strategies

The exact target of an advocate has a big impact on the outcome of the advocacy process. Figure 12 shows the findings regarding preferred advocate targeting strategies for the various advocates in our study.

**Figure 3. Advocate targeting strategies (%)**



From these answers we can discover, first of all, that there are no advocates who go exclusively either to friendly, or undecided, or to unfriendly targets. In other words, there is no “clean” targeting strategy. Each issue will face a specific situation and various factors which means that advocates will come up with the combination of targets best suited to that particular issue. It’s these combinations of targeting strategies that tell us the most about the types of conversations that take place around the various pieces of new legislation or the new policies coming out.

## 4. Findings – Lobbying communication tactics

Since lobbying is essentially a method of communication, albeit the most direct and prominent one, it is important, more than anything, to understand exactly how that communication takes place. After all, deciding on a target and choosing the right arguments are only prerequisites to the act of communicating an advocacy position, which in this case takes the form of lobbying.

Here are some of the most used tactics by advocates to communicate and advocacy position directly to legislative targets or other types thereof:

- (a) *Face-to-face meetings*
- (b) *Position Letters*
- (c) *Comments on legislative proposals*
- (d) *Member of Parliament collaborations*
- (e) *Bill drafting*
- (f) *Testimony in committee hearings*

Table 17 presents the communication tactics advocates reported using extensively within the past year.

**Table 7. Lobbying communication strategies**

<b>Lobbying tactic</b>	<b>Frequency (%)</b>
Face-to-face meetings	49 (98%)
Position letters	49 (98%)
Comments on legislative proposals	48 (96%)
Member of Parliament collaborations	26 (52%)
Bill drafting	11 (22%)
Testimony in committee hearings	43 (86%)

Looking at Table 17 it is quickly becoming apparent that the great majority of lobbying is being done through three methods: face-to-face meetings, position letters, comments on legislative proposals. Testimony in Parliament committee meetings also gets a lot of use.

## 4.1 Lobbying communication strategies by advocate types

Lobbying tactics use among advocates in Romania seems pretty compact: certain tactics seems to enjoy high usage from advocates, while others seem to be similarly overlooked by all involved. This is why it is just as important to understand what are the differences between the ways that various types of advocates use lobbying methods. In Table 18, we can see how lobby tactics selection for each type of advocate.

**Table 8. Lobbying communication tactics by advocate types (%)**

<b>Advocate type</b>	<b>Face-to-face meetings</b>	<b>Position letters</b>	<b>Comments on legislative proposals</b>	<b>Member of Parliament collaborations</b>	<b>Bill drafting</b>	<b>Testimony in committee hearings</b>
Trade and business associations and federations	100	100	92	50	25	92
Social associations and federations	100	100	100	20	20	60
Companies	100	93	100	53	13	80
NGOs	88	100	100	75	25	100
Public affairs consultancies	100	100	90	50	30	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>86</b>

When it comes to the most popular ways to lobby- face-to-face, position letters, comments on proposals, the way advocates lobby is similar, with the small exception of NGOs, which are the only ones to go below 90% in terms of usage.

## 5. Findings – Public communication tactics

While lobbying is an important part of advocacy, as it is focused on direct communication from advocate to policymaker, there are also other ways to communicate in order to implement advocacy positions. One of the most used is public communication, where rather than communicating directly with the lawmaker, the advocate is communicating with the public, in order to indirectly communicate to decision makers, and thus influence policy.

Here are some of the most used public communication tactics by advocates in support of various policy positions, similar classifications can be found in other research such as Christine Mahoney’s study of advocacy (Mahoney, 2008):

- (a) *Grassroots mobilization of organization members*
- (b) *Grassroots mobilization of the general public*
- (c) *Media communication*
- (d) *Media/online advertisements*
- (e) *Public relations campaigns*
- (f) *Rallies.*
- (g) *Opinion articles or editorials*

Table 20 shows which public communication tactics advocates have reported using significantly during the last 12 months. Seeing the levels of usage that each of these tactics is getting should give us a better image of the level of public mobilization that advocates in Romania are attempting in support of their policy positions.

**Table 9. Public communication tactics in public affairs**

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Frequency (%)</b>
Grassroots mobilization of organization members	19 (38%)
Grassroots mobilization of the general public	21 (42%)
Media communication	49 (98%)
Media/online advertisements	6 (12%)
Public relations campaigns	34 (68%)
Rallies	5 (10%)
Opinion articles or editorials	36 (72%)

While all advocates had used some form of public communication in the 12 months preceding the interview, it is quite obvious that among advocates the most used such tactic had something to do with media, especially the press.

## 5.1 Public communication tactics by advocate types

In this case too, while advocates of very different types use some of these public communication tactics in similar ways, they also report very different usage regarding others. Obviously, as we can see in Table 21, all advocates report using media communication significantly, but when it comes to other public communication methods, there are quite a few big differences in terms of usage.

**Table 10. Public communication strategies by advocate types (%)**

Advocate type	Grassroots mobilization (Members)	Grassroots mobilization (Public)	Media comms	Media/online adverts	Public relations campaigns	Rallies	Opinion Articles or Editorials
Trade and business associations and federations	58	25	100	17	50	8	83
Social associations and federations	60	60	100	0	40	40	40
Companies	20	40	100	7	87	0	80
NGOs	50	63	100	13	50	25	75
Public affairs consultancies	20	40	90	20	90	0	60
Total	38	42	98	12	68	10	72

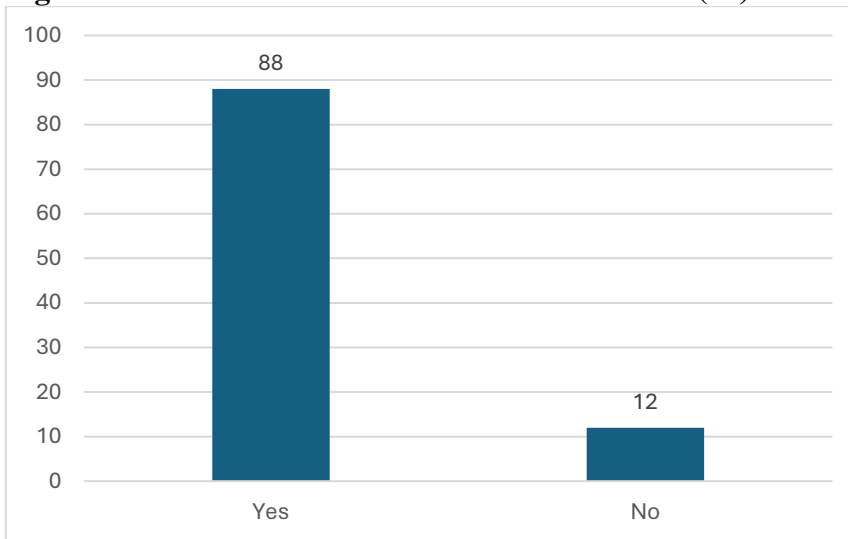
When it comes to grass roots mobilization among organization members, social federations, trade organizations and NGOs reported much higher usage than private actors. This is mainly because these organization have a large number of members, so it is easier to mobilize them, although the pandemic has made it harder.



## 6. Findings – Coalitions

It is quite clear that, besides the level of overall participation in coalitions, another important element to be investigated, is the type of membership diversity in advocacy coalitions that Romanian advocates are a part of. Figure 20 presents the percentage of advocates who are part of at least a coalition's activities.

**Figure 4. Advocates involved in coalition activities (%)**



Participation of advocates in coalitions seem pretty high, at 88% of all respondents. This seems to suggest that there is a high degree of collaboration between the various advocates: moreover, that coalition activity is seen as a good route towards success on legislative issues.

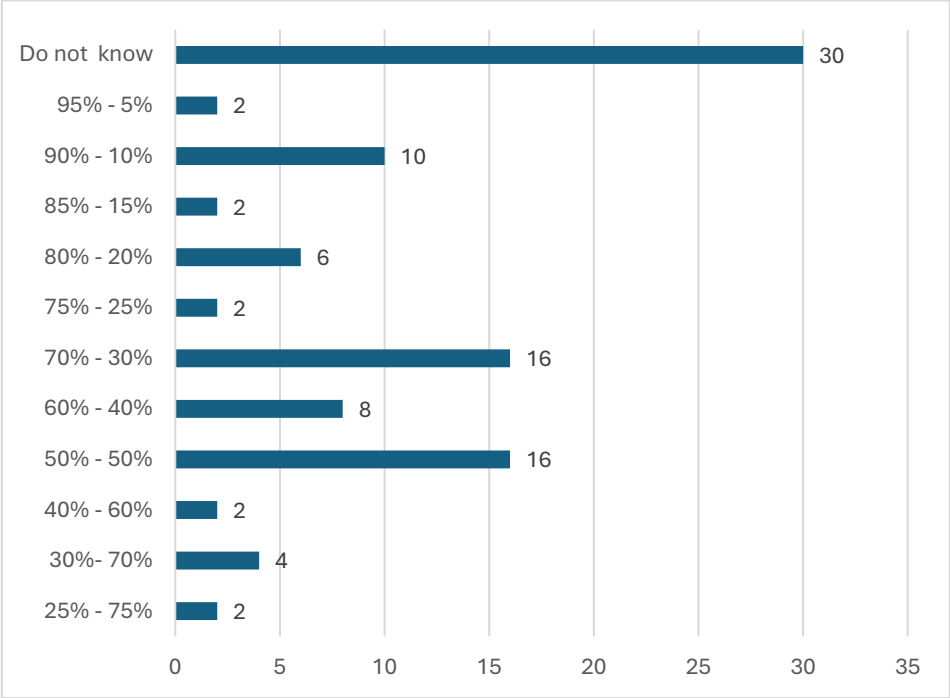
## 7. Lobbying vs Public Communication- Share of Activities

### 7.1. Lobbying and public communication as a share out of total advocacy activities

Thus, we asked each advocate we interviewed to give us an estimate of how much (as a percentage) they used lobbying as a share of total advocacy activities versus use of public

communication methods, during the last 12 months. The image is complete in Figure 24, where we look at the actual percentage pairings indicated by advocates, where lobbying use (as a percentage) is on the left, while public communication use is on the right.

**Figure 5. Lobbying-public communication pairings (%)**



While only a few advocates use public communication more than they do lobbying, it must be noted that 16% use them equally, which may still point to a longer-term trend.

In order to also get a clearer image of advocacy’s long-term evolution, we also asked advocates if advocacy expenditure at the entities where they are working at has increased during the last 5 years.

**Table 11 Has advocacy expenditure increased in the last 5 years?**

Advocacy expenditure	Frequency (%)
Has increased	25 (50%)
Has decreased	11 (22%)
It is the same	11 (22%)
Do not know	3 (6%)

As we can see, 50% of advocates believe that funding for advocacy in their respective entities has increased.

## 8. Research Limits and Perspectives

### 8.1 Research limits

There are plenty of bright spots when it comes to Romanian advocacy, but they need consolidation and propping up. Here are a few measures that could help along those lines:

- (a) *Making RUTI mandatory*
- (b) *Improving the approval process*
- (c) *Stimulating the creation of more diverse-member coalitions*
- (d) *Providing funding for advocates who represent marginalized communities*

Despite some of the challenges identified in the study, these problems also present intriguing research opportunities for the future. The most crucial research in the immediate future should focus on these “pain points” for advocacy practitioners.

Why has it been possible to set up a mandatory EU Transparency Register in Brussels but not in Romania? Why is interest in RUTI slowing down? What do the public servants managing RUTI expect in terms of future growth? Investigating Romania’s attempts to develop a Transparency Register following Brussels’ example, and understanding why it has not fully succeeded, will provide deeper insights into advocacy in Romania.

A similar in-depth investigation should focus on the approval process, centered around certain institutions tasked with social dialogue (Economic and Social Council-CES, Legislative Council, Social Dialogue Commission and others). On paper, this should be a highly valued part of the legislative process for advocates. It is open to the public, and institutions such as CES strive to provide valuable feedback, even if advisory, on various legislative proposals. However, in reality, this process is often overshadowed by other legislative components, diminishing its importance. Researching not just how advocates or the people who run it, but also how other lawmakers view it, should help to better understand how it can more efficiently inhabit the legislative context in Romania.