

Hotline targets Big Tech's 'shady' EU lobbying

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A group of activists and members of the European Parliament on Thursday launched a hotline to gather reports of "shady" lobbying by big tech firms.

The European Union is embroiled in a battle on several fronts with Silicon Valley tech giants over [data privacy](#), anti-competitive behavior and sweetheart tax deals.

A group of MEPs last year accused Amazon, Google and Meta of using supposed grassroots groups to push their interests—a practice known as "astroturfing". The firms denied breaking EU rules.

EU staff and MEPs will now be able to register examples of supposed underhand lobbying on a website called LobbyLeaks.

The Corporate Europe Observatory watchdog launched the hotline, promising to use any reports for research that would help combat such practices.

"LobbyLeaks will increase pressure on EU institutions to hold Big Tech's shady lobbying campaigns to account," the group said in a statement.

Dutch MEP Paul Tang, who helped set up the hotline, said such manipulation was "a threat not only to proper law making, but to our whole democracy".

"That's why we have to turn the spotlight on all these wolves in sheep's clothing and fight against unfaithful lobbying methods," he said in a statement.

The EU's battles with Big Tech have seen the firms slapped with billions of dollars in fines.

A massive data protection law (GDPR) intensified the fight in 2018 with the firms facing constant inquiries and needing to drastically alter their business models.

Two more huge regulations were passed last year—one aimed at stopping the firms from abusing their [market dominance](#), and another that punishes them for allowing [hate speech](#) and disinformation on their platforms.

Tang told Britain's Guardian newspaper that during discussions on those laws, he and other MEPs had been "bombarded" with targeted ads on their [social media](#).

They had also faced huge lobbying efforts by groups claiming to represent [small businesses](#) despite being funded by Big Tech.

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