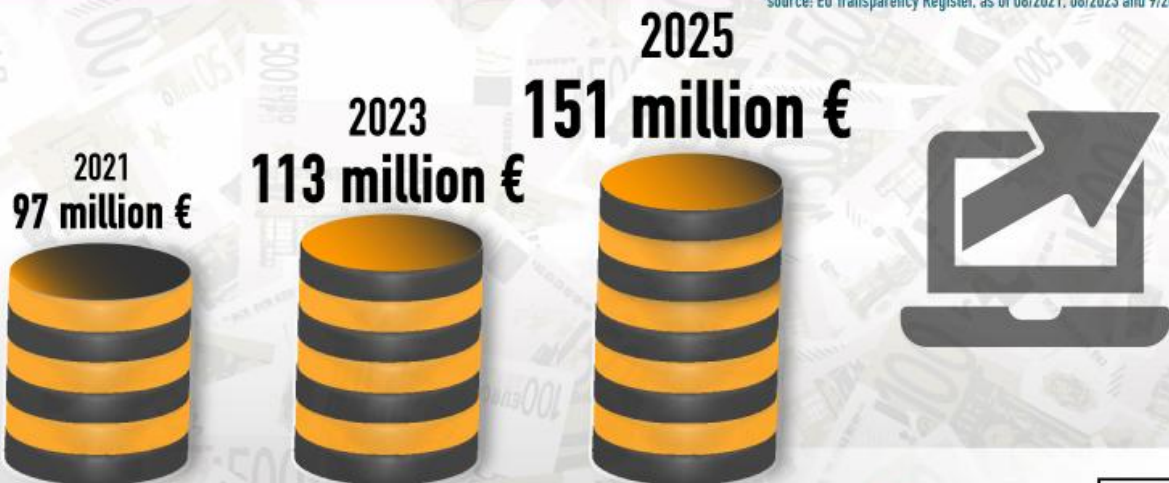


Digital industry lobby spending in Brussels

source: EU Transparency Register, as of 08/2021, 08/2023 and 9/2025



Corporate Europe Observatory

LOBBY CONTROL



Big Tech lobby budgets hit record levels

29.10.2025

TECH

The EU's digital rulebook is under unprecedented pressure from the Trump administration and a homegrown deregulation wave. Now, new analysis by Corporate Europe Observatory and LobbyControl based on the EU Transparency Register, shows that the tech industry is adding even more firepower to its armoury, boosting its lobbying expenditure to record levels.

The digital industry's lobby spending has grown from a 2023 spend of €113 million to €151 million annually today – an increase of 33.6 per cent in just two years. This increase is even more pronounced when compared with 2021, when Corporate Europe Observatory and LobbyControl first mapped the tech industry's firepower, showing a 55.6 per cent increase in just four years. *

Big Tech's lobby power only further entrenches its hold over key aspects of society, from the information people consume to the digital infrastructure on which we depend.



The digital industry's lobby spending has increased 33.6 per cent in just two years

Over the past year, tech industry lobby groups have used their lavish budgets to aggressively push for the deregulation of the EU's digital rulebook. The intensity of this policy battle is also reflected in the fact that Big Tech companies have on average more than one lobby meeting per day with EU Commission officials. *

This lobbying offensive appears to be paying off. Recently, a string of policy-makers have called for a pause of the Artificial Intelligence Act, and there is also a concerted push to weaken people's data protection rights under the GDPR. Moreover, the EU's Digital Markets Act (DMA) and Digital Services Act (DSA) are being constantly challenged by Big Tech, including via the Trump administration.

A decade of digital rights progress could be undone with key rules on the line. This is the political opportunity that Big Tech has been waiting and preparing for.

Find the full database [here](#).

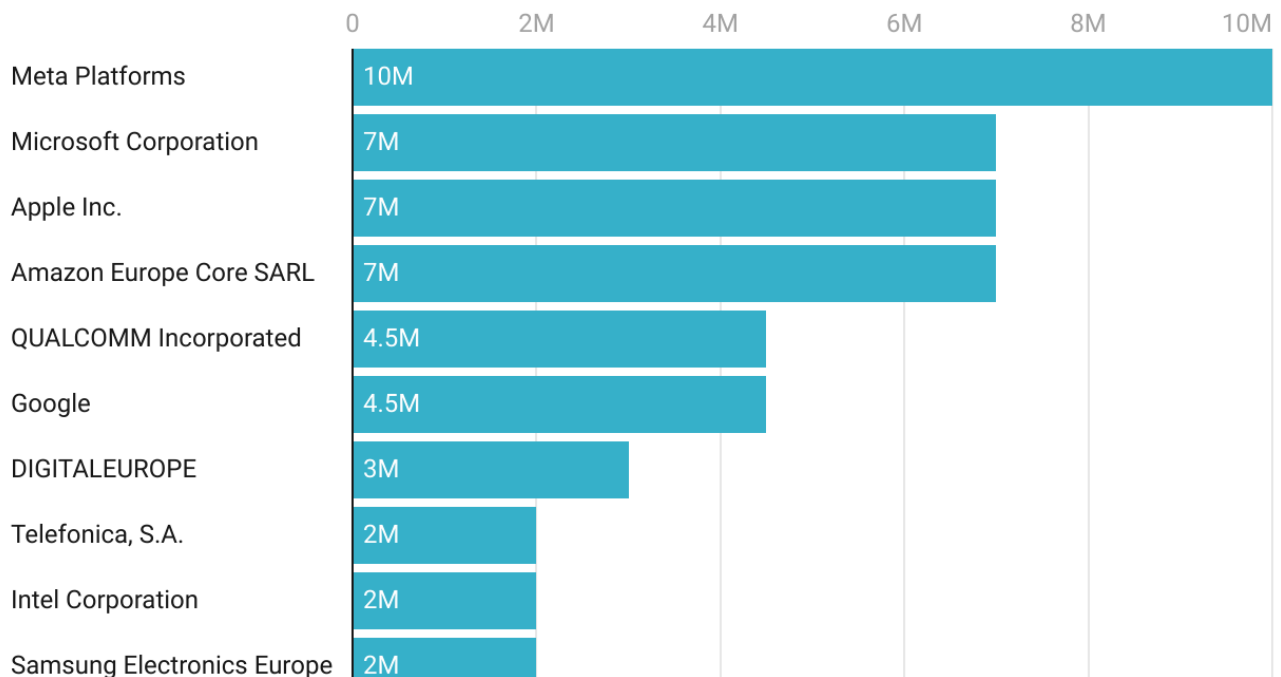
Top spenders are spending even more

The numbers collected and analysed by Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) and LobbyControl reveal two notable trends compared with the previous study two years ago.

Firstly, spending is concentrated among the largest tech companies, which have increased their expenditure even further. Just ten companies are responsible for €49 million in spending – compared with €40 million two years ago – which itself accounts for a third of the total tech industry's lobbying spending. As in previous years, US Big Tech is leading on lobby spending in Europe.

Top 10 digital industry lobbyists

Digital lobby actors ranked by how much they spend lobbying the EU Institutions.



Companies which have noticeably increased their budgets are Amazon (+ €4,275,000), Microsoft, and Meta (both + €2,000,000), and the business lobby group DIGITALEUROPE (+ €1,250,000), which has many of the same major tech companies as members.

Secondly, a large number of newcomers have arrived in Brussels, having only started lobbying the institutions since 2023. While 565 digital companies and associations influenced EU decision-makers two years ago, this number has now increased to 733 lobby actors from the digital industry. This increase can partly be explained due to a stronger presence of the AI industry, with companies such as Mistral AI and Aleph Alpha starting to lobby Brussels. The General-Purpose AI Code of Practice has also led to a fierce lobbying battle with hundreds of companies participating in the drafting process. Furthermore, a further strengthening of EU transparency rules in December 2024, requiring companies to now also register if they want to meet with mid-level Commission officials, has presumably also led to more companies registering to the EU lobby register.

Tech tops other corporate lobbies

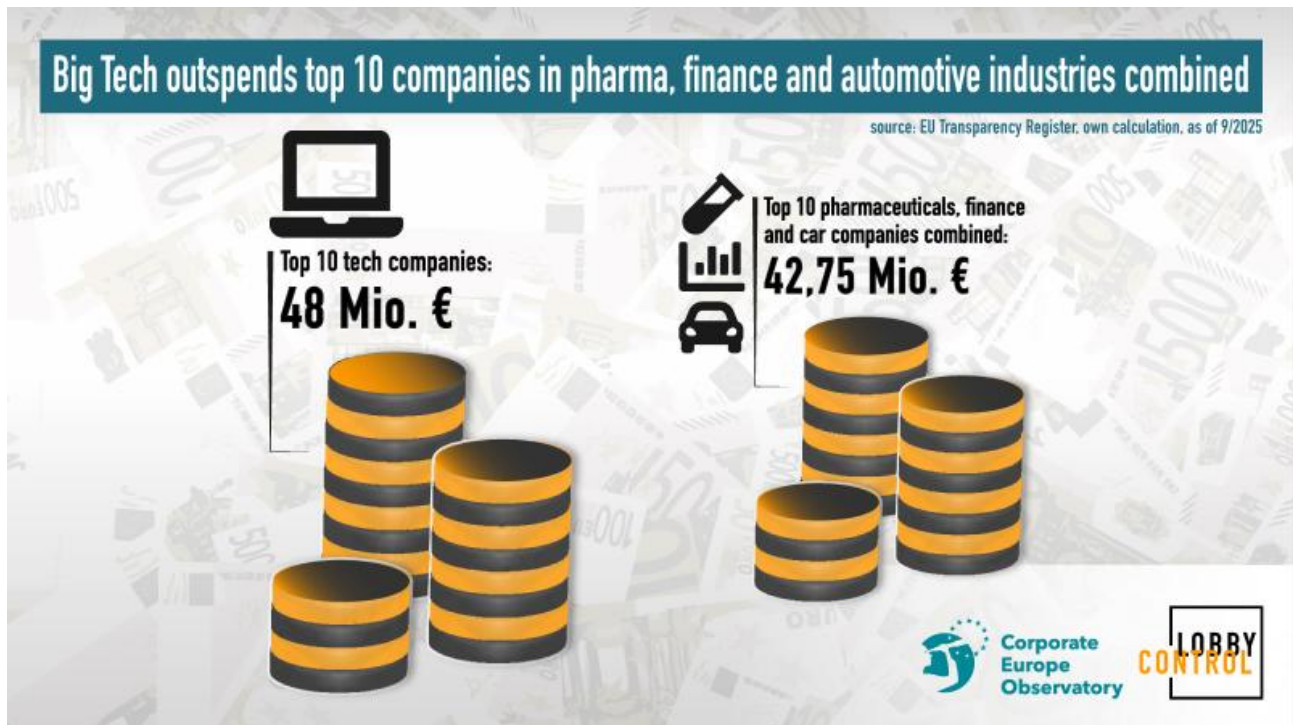
The financial clout of Big Tech firms when it comes to investing in political access is unparalleled, with its lobby firepower dwarfing that of any other industry. With €10,000,000 Meta is the largest lobby spender in the EU for a single company. Notably, five of the top six companies who spend most on lobbying in Europe are tech companies.



With €10,000,000 Meta is the largest lobby spender in the EU for a

single company

The trend is very clear: the tech industry is outspending other corporate sectors known for their lobbying power and influence over the EU's political agenda. For example the top 10 digital companies are spending three times as much as the top 10 spenders in the pharmaceutical, financial, and automotive industries, and twice as much as the energy sector.



Earlier this year, Corporate Europe Observatory and LobbyControl also published numbers (using a different methodology) which also confirmed that the tech industry is spending more on lobbying than any other industry. *

An army of tech lobbyists

The increase in spending also translates into an increase in the number of lobbyists. While the digital sector employed an 699 lobbyists (Full Time Equivalent - FTEs) in 2023, this number has now increased to 890 FTEs. There are now more full-time lobbyists influencing the EU's digital policies, than there are MEPs in the European Parliament. Of these lobbyists, 437 have badges granting them almost unlimited access to the European Parliament. However, following a string of high-level corruption scandals that were partly or fully linked to the tech industry, the European Parliament has recently started to impose some rules over the use of these accreditations.

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There are now more full-time tech lobbyists influencing the EU's

digital policies, than there are MEPs in the European Parliament

In terms of sheer muscle power, DIGITALEUROPE (27 lobby passes), Google (16), Microsoft (11), and the telecom lobby association GSMA Europe (10) stand out for the number of lobbyists with parliamentary access passes.

More than a meeting a day

Aside from the considerable political pressure and weight that the Trump administration's threats are bringing to bear on the EU's approach to Big Tech, the continent is itself currently in a frenzy of deregulation where corporate priorities are increasingly dominating the agenda.

Yet Big Tech wants to augment its level of political influence over digital policy even more. The digital sector not only has the highest lobbying budgets and large contingents of lobbyists, it also has an incredible level of access to the institutions. From January to June 2025, Big Tech has met with high-level European Commission staff 146 times – an average of more than one meeting (1,17) for every working day. Amazon has had the most meetings (43), followed by Microsoft (36), Google (35), Apple (29), and Meta (27).

The issue most lobbied upon by far in the first half of 2025 was Artificial Intelligence, with 58 EU Commission meetings mentioning the topic (40 percent of all meetings). The Code of Practice on General-Purpose AI was a particularly fiercely lobbied file. Other prominent topics were the roll-out of data centres and cloud services which was discussed at 23 meetings, the Digital Services Act (17 meetings), the upcoming Digital Fairness Act (16 meetings), and the Digital Markets Act (16 meetings).

Big Tech firms have also tried to exert their influence on the European Parliament, holding a total of 232 meetings with MEPs during the first six months of 2025 – on average almost two meetings (1.87) per working day. Meta tops the list with 63 meetings followed by Amazon (49), Google (47), Apple (47), and Microsoft (34). (Note these numbers do not include meetings with parliamentary assistants, as they are not subject to the European Parliament's transparency rules, so the final totals are likely to be even higher.)

The MEPs who met with Big Tech lobbyists most frequently during that time were all from the European Peoples Party (EPP): Jörgen Warborn (7 meetings), Aura Salla (6 meetings), and Pablo Arias Echeverría (5 meetings). The many meetings held by Aura Salla with Big Tech are especially noteworthy considering she used to be a Meta lobbyist, and has been criticised for parroting industry positions.

Moreover, it is noteworthy – and disappointing – that MEPs are still meeting with Amazon lobbyists, despite the company's lobby badges being withdrawn in February 2024 after Amazon refused to attend a parliamentary hearing on working conditions at Amazon warehouses.

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A Big Tech bonanza for Brussels' lobby consultants

In recent years, it has become clear that Big Tech firms rely on a vast lobby network to reinforce their messages at EU level. From lobby firms to front groups, think tanks, and economic consultancies, financing and supporting third-parties to echo its messages is a keystone of Big Tech's influence playbook.

With an increase in spending, Big Tech firms have only further reinforced this network to maintain and extend their monopoly power.

Combined spending on consultancies has now reached over €9 million per year – a massive boon for lobby firms, economic consultancies, and PR companies. Amazon spends the most totalling €2.84 million, followed by Apple with €2.3 million, and Meta with €1.5 million.



From lobby firms to front groups, think tanks, and economic consultancies, financing and supporting third-parties to echo its messages is a keystone of Big Tech's influence playbook

Similarly, think tanks play a key role in Big Tech's network of third party organisations in amplifying its narrative and influencing the political agenda.

Unfortunately, while details about the level of Big Tech funding of think tanks is not public, we can still see an increase in the number of think tanks Big Tech is funding compared with 2021. Where previously, Google and Meta stood out for the number of think tanks these companies were sponsoring, this practice has gained traction among other Big Tech firms as well. For instance, Bruegel, Centre for European Reform, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), and Centre on Regulation in Europe (CERRE), are now receiving funding from all five Big Tech firms.

Big Tech Funding of think tanks

think tanks	G Google	a Amazon	∞ Meta	🍏 Apple	🖨 Microsoft
CERRE	+	+	+	+	+
EPC	+	+	+	+	-
CEPS	+	+	+	+	+
CER	+	+	+	+	+
Bruegel	+	+	+	+	+
Friends of Europe	+	-	-	+	+
CDI/ITIF	+	+	+	+	+
Lisbon Council	+	+	+	+	-
ECIPE	+	+	-	-	+
CIPL	+	+	+	+	+
Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies	+	-	-	+	-
Transatlantic Policy Network (TPN)	+	+	+	+	+
German Marshall Fund	+	+	-	+	+
European Internet Forum	+	+	+	+	+
Chamber of Progress	+	+	-	+	-

source: EU Transparency Register/think tank websites, as of 9/2023

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While most of these think tanks claim to produce independent research – certainly their findings are often presented as such – their continuous reliance on tech money raises rather serious questions about their ability to remain impartial. Others, including Center for Data Innovation, International Center for Law and Economics (ICLE), and Chamber of Progress play a more overt role in aggressively amplifying Big Tech narratives by painting EU digital regulations as non-tariff barriers, attacking antitrust policies, and by discrediting alternatives to Big Tech.

Deregulation wave strengthens tech monopolies, threatens digital rights

The sharp rise in the tech industry’s lobby spending is a major increase of firepower just at a moment when the EU’s digital rulebook is under intense political pressure from at home and abroad. While the von der Leyen I Commission passed legislation intended to rein in the worst excesses of Big Tech’s toxic business model and curtail its monopoly power, that legacy is now at risk.

Big Tech has successfully weaponised the US Government to aggressively push back against EU digital rules. In January, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg branded the Digital Services Act as “censorship”. At the Munich Security Conference in February, Vice-President JD Vance echoed those statements claiming that “in Europe free speech is in retreat”. In February, the Trump administration passed an executive order threatening to impose tariffs on foreign governments in response to taxes or fines of Big Tech companies. And in August, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, instructed diplomats to undermine the EU’s Digital Services Act.

At the same time, the EU’s homegrown deregulation wave has opened the door to weakening digital regulation. The Commission advisor Mario Draghi has singled out the GDPR on data protection, and the AI Act, by tapping into a false choice between regulation and innovation. This approach heavily relies on industry speaking points and risks further

entrenching Big Tech's monopoly position.

Big Tech companies have quickly caught on to the new deregulatory wind in Brussels. While Apple recently demanded that the Digital Markets Act should be scrapped, Big Tech lobby group Computer and Communications Industry Association (CCIA) has been calling for a pause in the implementation of the AI Act.



The homegrown deregulation wave, aggressive pressure by the Trump administration, and the exponential increase in lobby spending is a toxic brew which threatens years of progress in regulating Big Tech

Later this year, the EU Commission will present its Digital Omnibus Package, a series of amendments to digital laws which are intended to make them more 'innovation-friendly'. Upcoming legislation such as the Digital Fairness Act, which aims to tackle addictive designing of tech platforms and the use of dark patterns, is already under severe lobby pressure to be scrapped entirely, even as the World Health Organisation is warning that online addiction is spiking.

The homegrown deregulation wave in Europe, the aggressive pressure by the Trump administration, and the exponential increase in lobby spending by the tech industry is a toxic brew which threatens years of progress in regulating the internet and reigning in Big Tech's monopoly power. Instead of beating the deregulation drum, the Commission should safeguard the public interest from Big Tech influence and strengthen the enforcement of its existing digital playbook instead.

Note on methodology

Lobbying by the digital sector has increased rapidly over the last two years. To capture these changes, we have updated the data collected in 2023 using the EU Transparency Register and our online data tool LobbyFacts.eu (as of September 2025). Companies that are no longer in the Transparency Register have been removed from our data, except for Huawei, which has been suspended from the Register over corruption charges but is still lobbying the EU. To identify new lobby players, we then repeated the analysis steps from the 2021 report. In the process, we identified over 400 new companies, startups, and business associations.

In total, we identified 733 companies and associations from the digital sector that lobby Brussels. For the calculations, we again used the lower limits of the specified expenditure categories from the transparency register. Except for the lowest category (<€10,000), we calculated the mean value (€5,000) arriving at a conservative

estimate of lobby spending. In reality, tech industry lobby spending is set to be considerably higher.

Most of the data refers to 2024, but as the entries in the Transparency Register are only updated annually and by the companies themselves, they may refer to spending from one or two years ago. Further information on the data can be found in the [2021 study](#).

The full database can be found [here](#).

Number of meetings

Since the beginning of the year, the European Commission has broadened the scope of meetings subject to transparency rules. It is now estimated that 1500 EU officials have to report their meetings, compared to 300 EU officials before 2025. Similarly, the European Parliament broadened transparency requirements regarding lobby meetings to cover all MEPs in 2024, even though there are still [severe loopholes](#).

We examined all meetings held by Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft with EU Commission officials and MEPs between 1 of January 2025 and 30 June 2025, when the new rules were in effect. To calculate the total number of meetings held by Big Tech, we removed any duplicates, for example where multiple Big Tech firms were involved in the same meeting.

Regarding the issues that Big Tech lobbied on, we consulted the minutes made available by the Commission for each of its meeting with Big Tech companies in the period from January to June 2025 and identified the key topics discussed. Where multiple issues were discussed at a meeting, we counted the meeting multiple times.

Think tanks

With regard Big Tech's sponsorship of think tanks, we consulted the websites of the think tanks included in our sample, as well as the EU Transparency Register entries of Big Tech firms.

Where a think tank did not report sponsorship on its website, we have used the Transparency Register as our main source.

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