



PRESS RELEASE

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Vigeo to rate corporate lobbying practices

As from 1 July 2010, **Vigeo will include «the transparency and integrity of influence strategies and practices» in its reference for rating companies' social responsibility.** Using this new criterion, Vigeo will measure how companies publicly report on the commitments they have undertaken and on the measures and resources they marshal, whether in-house or by reaching out to specialists organisations (think-tanks, lobbyists, trade associations), to partake in knowledge-sharing and in the legislative and regulatory processes that are likely to have an impact upon their interests.

Against a backdrop of increasingly powerful professional lobbying, but also of some recorded controversial practices, and in the absence of a standardised international regulatory framework, the risks of allegations are not insignificant for companies lacking the relevant transparency.

Conversely, those companies that opt to provide information on the positions they uphold and on the organisational and budgetary resources allocated to their relationships with governmental decision-makers are better placed to protect their reputation, improve their legal security, raise confidence, and thus their attractiveness to investors, as well as their license to operate and, more generally, the social acceptability of their brand.

This criterion has been developed by Vigeo with the support of the French section of Transparency International within the framework of a partnership agreement signed between the two organisations in July 2009.

Both organisations consider that the coming together of lobbyists is part and parcel of the processes for consultation and the preparation of democratic debate during the course of which governmental decision-makers need to gather together the diverse points of view.

In this regard, and because companies have knowledge and information that can contribute to a better understanding of the complex issues at stake, it is both in the general interest and part of their social responsibility to report on the extent to which they incorporate social, environmental, human-rights and governance-related factors into legitimate dialogue with their political and institutional stakeholders.

Fouad Benseddik, Vigeo's Director of Methodology, indicated *«Evaluating lobbying practices will allow us to offer an even more elaborate analysis of the ability of companies to stay one step ahead of their risks. This emerging subject is, at one and the same time, potentially fraught with controversies for top management and the bearer of opportunities for positive differentiation for those able to incorporate it into their social responsibility practices».*

Anne-Marie Ducroux, Member of the Boards of Directors of Transparence International (France) and of Vigeo, declared « *The integration of this subject into Vigeo's reference model is a welcome step forward..*

For TI France, this new criterion should help us to discern companies' best practices so as to encourage other private-sector players to go down this path. It creates a framework that can promote their innovations in the field of governance..

As we expressly recommended, the new criterion will also make it possible to provide information on existing practices in a more objective fashion than is currently the case. To be better able to debate the issue, what we need are more facts and fewer preconceptions... !

This cooperation between two unbiased and neutral players should help matters..

Ultimately, the transparency and integrity of company lobbying should contribute to restore the eroded confidence of citizens in companies and institutions alike, that has been observed in numerous studies ».

For further information, please contact:

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About Vigeo

Vigeo is the leading European expert in responsible performance. Founded in 2002 and headed by Nicole Notat, Vigeo measures the performances and risks of companies with regard to six areas of corporate social responsibility: environment, human rights, human resources, community involvement, business behaviour and corporate governance.

Vigeo offers two kinds of services through two business brands:

- *Vigeo rating –the way to responsible investment-* offers a broad range of products and services to investors seeking a sustainable and responsible performance of their investments;
- *Vigeo enterprise –the way to responsible management-* conducts global CSR audits as well as thematic audits such as diversity and purchasing audits. Vigeo enterprise also develops services to assist organisations in the implementation of their CSR strategy.

The Vigeo team comprises 86 employees of 14 different nationalities, based in 4 locations : Paris, Brussels, Milan, Casablanca.

www.vigeo.com

About Transparence-International (France)

The main aim of Transparence-International (France) is to contribute to significantly improving public and private governance in terms of transparency, integrity and responsibility.

The association operates within the framework of the strategy of the Transparency International network that seeks in particular to tackle corruption through the activity of more than 100 affiliated sections spread throughout the world.

www.transparence-france.org / www.transparency.org

TI France et le lobbying : http://www.transparence-france.org/ewb_pages/div/Encadrement_du_lobbying.php