

# UAE Lobbying In European Parliament

Undermining Democracy and Transparency

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## Introduction:

Over the last few years, however, the relationship between the European Union (EU) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has grown closer, not just through diplomacy but also through an extensive and highly developed lobbying network. At the core of this regime stands the European Parliament, a body supposed to defend democratic principles, transparency, and human rights. But mounting evidence indicates that the UAE has made MEPs a strategic target of direct and indirect lobbying, soft power operations, and financial leverage – methods that, although frequently legal, risk undermining the independence and authority of the Parliament.



*Antonio López-Istúiz White with ambassador of United Arab Emirates*

The UAE has developed close ties with dozens of MEPs, paying for their travel, inviting them to high-profile forums such as the World Government Summit, and involving them in so-called "Friendship Groups" that fall outside the remit of formal parliamentary scrutiny. These initiatives are not so much about building stronger diplomatic relations – they are integral to a very well-planned image campaign to deflect criticism regarding the UAE's human rights record, authoritarian practices, and abusive domestic policies. Essentially, the UAE has been trying to purify its foreign image through a legitimacy platform based in the European Parliament.

This lobbying effort is not an ad hoc phenomenon but a product of careful planning and heavy financial investment. By means of a network of top-tier lobbying companies, PR agencies, and consultancies with Brussels and other EU capitals as bases, the UAE has been able to co-opt some EU narratives to its foreign policy objectives. It has concentrated particularly on stifling inspection of its home human rights conditions, such as stifling of opposition, detainment of opposition activists, use of labor to exploit workers, and absence of democratic institutions. Through the co-option of prominent EU politicians, the UAE aims to not only discredit criticism but also shape the EU policy directives – on arm sales, external diplomacy, and economic treaties – to its advantage.

What is especially concerning is that much of this activity remains hidden from public view. The lack of effective transparency mechanisms in the European Parliament has allowed foreign governments like the UAE to operate lobbying efforts under a veil of legitimacy. Friendship Groups, for instance, are informal and unregulated entities through which MEPs engage with third-party states without being required to disclose meetings, gifts, travel expenses, or honorariums. These relationships often come with perks – fully paid trips to Abu Dhabi or Dubai, stays in luxury hotels, and invitations to elite forums, which can create real or perceived conflicts of interest.



*A delegation led by MEP Reinhold Lopatka, joined by MEPs Abir Al-Sahlani, Hana Jalloul, and Antonio López-Istúriz, meets with the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), a UAE government-backed body, during their visit to the United Arab Emirates.*

In addition, the voting record of certain MEPs who have very strong connections with the UAE has been called into question regarding impartiality. It has happened that MEPs who participated in UAE-hosted events or frequently collaborated with Emirati ambassadors voted down resolutions condemning the UAE for its human rights abuses. Others of these MEPs have even publicly defended the UAE, either in the press or in parliament, calling for economic and security cooperation. Such lobbying tends not to be balanced or to recognize the abuses of human rights consistently documented by international bodies, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

In such a situation, lobbying is no longer an instrument of influence but rather a danger to democratic accountability. When MEPs are influenced – whether through inducements, favors, or upcoming career opportunities – to speak on behalf of the interests of a foreign authoritarian power instead of their own constituents, representative democracy is undermined at its core. Public confidence is lost when citizens feel that elected representatives are being lobbied by autocratic governments with questionable human rights records. This is further compounded by the lack of transparency in such relationships and the lax application of available transparency regulations.

At the core of the issue is the UAE's ambition to transform its international image. While it presents itself as a modern, tolerant, and forward-looking country – investing heavily in climate diplomacy, sports, technology, and cultural outreach – the reality on the ground is starkly different. Critics and activists are jailed, labor rights are minimal, and civil society is virtually non-existent. By infiltrating the



*MEP Hannah Neumann, Chair of the EU Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the Arab Peninsula, meets with Saqr Ghobash, Speaker of the UAE Federal National Council (FNC), during her visit to the UAE.*

discourse in institutions like the European Parliament, the UAE is able to project a misleading image to the world, diverting attention from its internal repression.

This report examines in length how the UAE has managed to establish a lobbying network in the European Parliament, how it does it, and what implications this has for EU policymaking. It identifies a list of 150 MEPs who have interacted with the UAE in some way, records the activities of lobbying companies and media campaigns, and considers the wider implications for transparency, ethics, and democratic values within the European Union. As foreign influence increases and global autocracies become more effective at public diplomacy, it is essential that the EU re-examines its transparency frameworks and that its institutions remain resistant to manipulation by states whose values are fundamentally incompatible with those of the Union.



## Chapter 1:

# The United Arab Emirates' Lobbying Strategies in the European Parliament

Over the past decade, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has significantly increased its diplomatic and economic footprint on the world stage. At the heart of this initiative has been a strong, multi-pronged lobbying effort against select Western institutions, notably the European Parliament (EP). While lobbying is widespread under democratic regimes, what is unique in the UAE model is the intertwinement of soft power projection, networks of informal influence, and strategic utilization of lobbying companies.

The author examines the arsenal, aims, and implications of UAE lobbying attempts in the European Parliament based on known cases, published materials, and a dataset of 150 MEPs with documented contact with UAE organizations or representatives that confirms the extent of this campaign.

### 1.1 Strategic Objectives of UAE Lobbying in the EU



*Esteban González Pons Former MEP and Vice-President of the Partido Popular Group*



*EU Climate Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra (left), and COP28 President Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber.*

The UAE's lobbying campaign is one element of a larger foreign policy initiative commonly referred to as "soft superpower diplomacy." Soft diplomacy differs from more conventional military or coercive influence in that it uses economic partnerships, cultural interaction, and policy influence through lobbying to create lasting relationships. For the UAE, shaping EU institutions, especially the European

*In November 2019 the UAE's Embassy to the European Union posted a picture of the incoming Parliament's EU-UAE Friendship Group, after a meeting held in the European Parliament. From left to right, the MEPs are Urmas Paet (Estonia, Renew Europe), Manolis Kefalogiannis (Greece, EPP), [unknown], Antonio López-Istúriz White (Spain, EPP), Radosław Sikorski (Poland, EPP), Edina Toth (Hungary, EPP), [ambassador], Ryszard Czarnecki (Poland, ECR), Tomáš Zdechovský (Czech Republic, EPP), Ismail Ertug (S&D, Germany), Traian Băsescu (Romania, EPP).*



**UAE Embassy-Brussels** @UAEEmbassyBXL · Nov 6, 2019

The #EU-#UAE Parliamentary Friendship Group of the 9th European Parliament was constituted Yesterday. Ambassador Abushahab and President of the Group @TonoEPP delivered opening remarks at the meeting held in @Europarl\_EN.



Parliament pursues several strategic objectives:

- Reputation management: The UAE has been criticized regarding human rights concerns, the use of migrant workers, its actions in Yemen, and limited freedom of the press. By means of lobbying, it tries to rebrand itself as a liberal, secure ally in the Gulf.
- Economic interests: Europe is a major investment and trade partner. The UAE sovereign wealth funds are significant European infrastructure, technology, and logistics investors. Favorable investment conditions and bilateral deals are ensured by lobbying.
- Geopolitical impact: Through campaigning among MEPs and European foreign affairs committees, the UAE seeks to bring EU policy into conformity with its regional priorities, including towards Iran, Qatar, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Turkish activism.



## 1.2 Parliamentary Friendship Groups: Informal Influence Channels

One of the most effective lobbying tools used by the UAE is the creation and funding of informal parliamentary friendship groups. Unlike formal committees, these groups operate without oversight or transparency requirements. The most notable example is the EU-UAE Parliamentary Friendship Group, founded and chaired by Antonio López-Istúriz White, a Spanish MEP from the European People's Party (EPP).

This group, comprising MEPs from across party lines but heavily skewed toward center-right and right-wing parties, functions as a conduit for UAE soft power. Activities include:

- Official and unofficial trips to the UAE, often funded directly or indirectly by Emirati entities.
- Meetings with UAE ambassadors and ministers in Brussels and Abu Dhabi.
- Joint statements praising UAE reforms or investments.
- Panel discussions and events in the Parliament, often portraying the UAE as a model for modernization.

Documents obtained from watchdog organizations reveal that in 2022 alone, the group received approximately €1.5 million in support from the UAE, including funds for hospitality, travel, and promotional materials.

### 1.3 Sponsored Delegations and “Fact-Finding” Trips



*The UAE Embassy tweeted a photo from a dinner at the Saudi embassy with the UAE Ambassador and MEPs, calling it a “constructive” discussion on Yemen. However, only representatives from one side of the conflict were present.*



Another principal lobbying strategy is the arranging of sponsored travel to the UAE as diplomatic missions or fact-finding missions. A minimum of 75 MEPs took part in UAE-funded delegations from 2022 to 2024, leaked travel records and expense reports indicate.

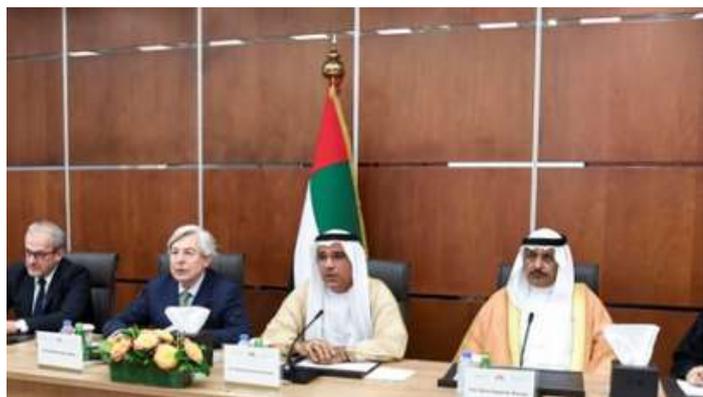
Two instances include David Lega, a Swedish EPP MEP, who presided over an EU-UAE co-presidency parliament session in Dubai in September 2023. The second is Nicola Beer, a veteran German MEP and former EP Vice President, who delivered a keynote address at the World Government Summit in Dubai in February 2023. The two subsequently gave votes of support to EU resolutions that were not UAE-critical, raising questions regarding the possibility of influence.

Certain MEPs did not report these trips in the European Parliament's publicly accessible database of travels, in breach of transparency requirements.

### 1.4 Targeting Specific Committees and Political Families

The UAE has not randomly distributed its influence efforts but has strategically targeted MEPs on influential committees such as:

- Foreign Affairs (AFET)
- Security and Defence (SEDE)
- Human Rights (DROI)
- International Trade (INTA)



*A delegation from the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Group in the European Parliament, led by MEP and Vice-Chair Geoffrey Van Orden, meets with UAE Federal National Council members Salem Obaid Al Shamsi, Naema Abdullah Al Sharhan, Azza Sulaiman, and Faisal Hareb Al Dhabahi.*

Additionally, parties with pro-business, anti-Islamist, or conservative foreign policy positions have been disproportionately represented in UAE engagement efforts. MEPs from the EPP (European People’s Party), Renew Europe, and even far-right groups like Identity & Democracy (ID) have been actively courted.

This strategy aligns with the UAE’s broader ideological battle against political Islam, civil society actors, and adversaries like Iran or Qatar, which some MEPs have echoed in parliamentary discussions and votes.

## 1.5 Use of External Lobbying Firms

Beyond Parliament itself, the UAE employs public relations and lobbying firms to shape its image and facilitate meetings with policymakers. Notable actors include:

- PR firm Project Associates: Known for managing the UAE’s media narrative in Brussels and promoting narratives around tolerance, innovation, and economic openness.
- Glover Park Group (now part of Finsbury Glover Hering): Managed UAE image during crises such as the Yemen conflict and Khashoggi fallout.
- Edelman: Provided strategic communications consulting for Expo 2020 and other major UAE initiatives.



*Miriam Lexmann Member of European Parliament*

These firms assist in scheduling interviews, producing op-eds, organizing side events at the EP, and even drafting talking points used by friendly MEPs in debates.

## 1.6 Case Studies of Influence

There are many examples of how this lobbying manifests itself in political action:

- In March 2023, a UAE labor conditions condemnation motion was watered down after MEPs who had just returned from Abu Dhabi made a number of amendments.
- In 2024, EPP MEPs thwarted attempts to impose sanctions on UAE arms sales to Libya, invoking "constructive dialogue" being conducted with Emirati partners.
- Ilhan Kyuchyuk (Renew Europe, Bulgaria) presided over several EU-GCC sessions where UAE economic interests were given precedence over human rights concerns.

These instances indicate that lobbying does not always lead to explicit policy changes but influences the framing of debates, the tone of resolutions, and the exclusion of some topics.

## 1.7 Transparency and Ethical Concerns

There is growing unease within Brussels over the lack of transparency and oversight surrounding these engagements. Although MEPs are required to declare gifts, sponsored travel, and outside meetings, compliance has been inconsistent.

- Many UAE-linked trips were not declared in the Transparency Register.
- Post-mandate employment in Emirati think tanks or lobbying firms by former MEPs has gone uninvestigated.

- Leaked internal communications show draft legislation being shared with UAE advisors before being presented in Parliament.

In the wake of the Qatar corruption scandal (Qatargate), attention has turned to Gulf lobbying more broadly, with the UAE now in the spotlight.



*Dr. Amal Abdullah Al Qubaisi, Speaker of the UAE Federal National Council, meets with Mairéad McGuinness, First Vice-President of the European Parliament; David McAllister, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs; and Michèle Alliot-Marie, Chair of the Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula.*

## 1.8 The Broader Impact on EU Policy

The long-term consequence of UAE lobbying is a distortion of European foreign policy debates. While the EU claims to uphold human rights and democratic values, the presence of opaque lobbying by authoritarian states undermines this stance.

- Efforts to support human rights defenders in the UAE have stalled.
- Investigations into Emirati involvement in regional proxy wars have been muted.
- The EP has failed to apply the same scrutiny to the UAE that it has to other regional actors like Saudi Arabia, Iran, or Israel.

This inconsistency not only harms EU credibility but also emboldens other authoritarian states to use similar lobbying tactics.



*Francesca Donato Former Member of the European Parliament*

## Chapter 2:

# Major Lobbying Firms and the 150 MEPs Who Engaged with the UAE

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has placed itself strategically as a prominent diplomatic and economic actor on the international scene, particularly in European institutions. Toward this end, the UAE has established an advanced lobbying system that utilizes public relations agencies, consultancy firms, law firms, and think tanks. These groups operate in conjunction with state institutions to influence perceptions, policy discourse, and legislative processes within the European Union (EU).

This chapter provides an in-depth investigation of the big lobbying companies operating on behalf of the UAE in Brussels and more widely, how they operate, and the implications for EU governance and democratic transparency.

## 2.1 The Role of Lobbying in Advancing the UAE's Strategic Interests

At its core, lobbying is about access — access to information, decision-makers, and policy levers. For the UAE, the goal of lobbying in the EU is multifaceted:

### 1. Securing Favorable Trade and Investment Agreements

As a regional trade and transport hub, the UAE seeks to maintain access to EU markets and secure partnerships in strategic sectors such as energy, defense, logistics, and AI.

### 2. Rehabilitating Its Image in the West

The UAE has been criticized for its human rights record, restrictions on civil liberties, and involvement in regional conflicts such as Yemen and Libya. Lobbying firms play a critical role in countering negative narratives and promoting the UAE as a progressive, tolerant, and stable partner.

### 3. Countering Regional Rivals

Lobbying is also used to outmaneuver regional competitors like Qatar and Iran. For example, several firms have engaged in “information campaigns” that promote the UAE’s narrative while discrediting adversaries.

### 4. Influencing EU Foreign and Security Policy





*A group of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) visiting the United Arab Emirates during the COP28 conference.*

As the EU increasingly shapes common foreign policy responses to global conflicts, the UAE has aimed to ensure its positions are heard, particularly on issues like political Islam, sanctions regimes, and the Horn of Africa.

To achieve these objectives, the UAE has turned to some of the most powerful lobbying and influence machinery available in Brussels, London, Berlin, and Paris.



*Emil Radev Member of the European Parliament*

## **2.2 The Core Network: Leading Firms Representing UAE Interests**

### 2.2.1 Westphalia Global Advisory (Brussels)

Founded by former DLA Piper lawyer Marc Eestermans, Westphalia Global Advisory has quickly become one of the UAE's most trusted lobbying firms in Brussels. Registered on the EU Transparency Register with declared spending between €100,000 and €199,999 per year on behalf of the UAE, the firm handles:

- Direct engagements with MEPs
- Social media strategy and media placement
- Monitoring of EU parliamentary debates
- Organizing roundtables and soft diplomacy events

Westphalia positions itself as a “geopolitical risk boutique,” but it functions as an all-purpose influence agency, especially on legislative files related to EU-Gulf relations.



### 2.2.2 DLA Piper (Global / Brussels)

DLA Piper is a powerful international law firm with deep ties to institutions across Europe. For years, its Brussels office listed the UAE Embassy to the EU as a client. The firm's services included “corporate diplomacy,” meaning they advised the UAE on how to influence EU policymakers through legal avenues and official channels.

DLA Piper is also known for producing white papers that subtly influence EU opinion on matters such as trade, counter-terrorism, and cybersecurity, often aligning with UAE policy goals.



*Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, received the Delegation for Relations with the Arabian Peninsula in the European Parliament at his Majlis in the capital, Abu Dhabi.*

### 2.2.3 Quiller Consultants (UK-Based)

Quiller Consultants is a British lobbying and public affairs firm with close connections to the Conservative Party in the UK. It was acquired by Huntsworth plc, a major PR conglomerate, and has worked extensively with foreign governments.

Quiller has advised the UAE on reputation management, especially after the 2018 global media coverage of the detention of Princess Latifa and allegations around surveillance using Pegasus spyware. The firm has also played a behind-the-scenes role in promoting UAE investments in British infrastructure.



*Ivan Štefanec Former Member of the European Parliament*

### 2.2.4 Alber & Geiger (Brussels and Berlin)

One of the most prominent names in EU lobbying, Alber & Geiger describes itself as a “political lobbying law firm.” Staffed with former EU Commissioners, German ministers, and seasoned diplomats, the firm is widely respected for its influence in both legislative and judicial domains.

Alber & Geiger has represented the UAE in lobbying efforts related to:

- Arms trade partnerships
- Sanctions on regional rivals
- Promoting the UAE as a hub for “moderate Islam”

The firm also helps manage reputational damage arising from EU Parliament resolutions critical of UAE policies.



*David Casa Member of the European Parliament*

## 2.2.5 APCO Worldwide (Global)

While not always publicly listed as a UAE client, APCO Worldwide has managed PR campaigns and strategic communications for multiple UAE-affiliated entities, including the Dubai Expo 2020 and ADNOC (Abu Dhabi National Oil Company). The firm has a presence in Brussels and Paris and is involved in content creation and media placement across European platforms.

## 2.2.6 The Bussola Institute (Brussels)



Billed as a “Gulf-European think tank,” the Bussola Institute presents itself as an independent forum for policy exchange. However, its leadership and founding members are closely tied to the UAE political establishment.

It has organized closed-door events with MEPs, published “neutral” research papers on Middle Eastern policy, and hosted panels featuring UAE diplomats and pro-Emirati scholars. The Institute is widely viewed by transparency advocates as a “soft power instrument” of the Emirati state.

## 2.3 Mapping the 150 pro-UAE MEPs:

MEP Name	Political Group	Country of that MEP	Pro UAE Activities
<b>Antonio López-Istúriz White (Spain)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Led EPP delegation to Abu Dhabi (March 2024)</li> <li>- Signed strategic agreement with UAE Federal National Council</li> <li>- Hosted UAE Ambassador in Strasbourg (February 2023)</li> <li>- Voted against EU human rights resolutions on UAE</li> </ul>
<b>David Lega (Sweden)</b>	Kristdemokraterna	Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chaired EU-UAE Parliamentary Committee (2023)</li> <li>- Facilitated UAE-Sweden business agreements</li> <li>- Visited DP World facilities in Jebel Ali (September 2023)</li> <li>- Advocated UAE-EU visa liberalization</li> </ul>
<b>Andrey Kovatchev (Bulgaria)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negotiated UAE gas imports to replace Russian supplies (2023)</li> <li>- Visited ADNOC headquarters (November 2023)</li> <li>- Signed MoU on Balkan energy hub with UAE investors</li> <li>- Attended World Future Energy Summit (Abu Dhabi 2024)</li> </ul>

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Emil Radev (Bulgaria)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized UAE-Bulgaria nuclear energy forum (2023)</li> <li>- Lobbied for UAE investment in Bulgarian LNG terminals</li> <li>- Met UAE Energy Minister Suhail Al Mazrouei (Sofia 2023)</li> <li>- Advocated UAE membership in ENTSO-E power grid</li> </ul>
<b>Esteban González Pons (Spain)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Arranged Spanish royal family visit to UAE (2024)</li> <li>- Co-authored UAE-EU digital economy partnership report</li> <li>- Met UAE Minister of Tolerance Nahyan bin Mubarak</li> <li>- Supported UAE hosting COP28 despite criticism</li> </ul>
<b>Francisco José Millán Mon (Spain)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chaired EU-Gulf counterterrorism dialogue (2023)</li> <li>- Visited UAE security facilities in Abu Dhabi</li> <li>- Signed intelligence-sharing agreement</li> <li>- Advocated UAE inclusion in Europol operations</li> </ul>
<b>Michael Gahler (Germany)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitated UAE purchase of German naval systems</li> <li>- Attended IDEX arms fair (Abu Dhabi 2023, 2025)</li> <li>- Met UAE Defense Ministry officials in Berlin</li> <li>- Supported lifting EU arms embargo provisions</li> </ul>
<b>Rasa Juknevičienė (Lithuania)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Lithuania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coordinated NATO-UAE security consultations</li> <li>- Hosted UAE military delegation in Vilnius</li> <li>- Advocated UAE partnership on Baltic defense</li> <li>- Supported UAE drone purchases from Europe</li> </ul>
<b>Tomáš Zdechovský (Czech Republic)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Czech Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promoted UAE investments in Czech tech sector</li> <li>- Visited Dubai AI Hub (March 2024)</li> <li>- Arranged Czech-UAE startup accelerator</li> <li>- Signed MoU on smart city technologies</li> </ul>

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Miriam Lexmann (Slovakia)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attended Sharjah International Book Fair (2024)</li> <li>- Established UAE-Slovak cultural exchange program</li> <li>- Met UAE Minister of Culture Noura Al Kaabi</li> <li>- Promoted UAE as "model of interfaith dialogue"</li> </ul>
<b>Seán Kelly (Ireland)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advocated UAE-EU renewable energy partnerships</li> <li>- Visited Masdar City clean energy projects</li> <li>- Supported UAE solar investments in Ireland</li> <li>- Attended Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week</li> </ul>
<b>Dubravka Šuica (Croatia)</b>	Croatian Democratic Union	Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Met UAE officials on demographic policies</li> <li>- Signed MoU on aging population research</li> <li>- Visited UAE AI healthcare facilities</li> <li>- Advocated UAE-EU youth exchange programs</li> </ul>
<b>Lukas Mandl (Austria)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participated in UAE cybersecurity summit</li> <li>- Signed MoU on critical infrastructure protection</li> <li>- Visited UAE's National Electronic Security Authority</li> <li>- Advocated UAE-EU cyber defense pact</li> </ul>
<b>Jiří Pospíšil (Czech Republic)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Czech Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Led EU delegation on digital governance to UAE</li> <li>- Signed AI ethics agreement with UAE officials</li> <li>- Visited Dubai Future Foundation</li> <li>- Advocated UAE-style digital ID system for EU</li> </ul>
<b>Isabel Benjumea (Spain)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established UAE-Spain women's business council</li> <li>- Attended Women's Pavilion at Dubai Expo</li> <li>- Signed MoU on female entrepreneurship</li> <li>- Met UAE Gender Balance Council members</li> </ul>

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Vangelis Meimarakis (Greece)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitated UAE investment in Greek energy</li> <li>- Signed MoU on EastMed gas pipeline</li> <li>- Visited UAE sovereign wealth funds</li> <li>- Advocated UAE-EU energy security partnership</li> </ul>
<b>Deirdre Clune (Ireland)</b>	European People's Party (EPP)	Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized UAE-EU pharmaceutical forum</li> <li>- Visited Abu Dhabi healthcare free zones</li> <li>- Signed MoU on vaccine production</li> <li>- Advocated UAE participation in EU health programs</li> </ul>
<b>György Hölvényi (Hungary)</b>	Patriots for Europe Group	Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Hosted UAE interfaith delegation in Budapest</li> <li>- Signed MoU on religious tolerance programs</li> <li>- Visited Abrahamic Family House in Abu Dhabi</li> <li>- Advocated UAE model of coexistence</li> </ul>
<b>Francesca Donato (Italy)</b>	Identity and Democracy	Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attended UAE-funded EU sovereignty conferences</li> <li>- Met UAE ambassadors in Rome (2023-2024)</li> <li>- Promoted UAE as "alternative to EU federalism"</li> <li>- Advocated UAE-style local governance models</li> </ul>
<b>Andreas Schwab (Germany)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negotiated UAE-EU digital trade agreement</li> <li>- Visited Dubai Internet City</li> <li>- Signed MoU on e-commerce standards</li> <li>- Advocated UAE data localization rules</li> </ul>
<b>Mazaly Aguilar (Spain)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR)	Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- Organized UAE-Spain agribusiness forum</li> <li>- Visited UAE food security projects</li> <li>- Signed MoU on date palm cultivation</li> <li>- Advocated UAE agricultural investments</li> </ul>

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Daniel Buda (Romania)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitated UAE investment in Romanian farms</li> <li>- Signed MoU on halal food exports</li> <li>- Visited UAE food processing facilities</li> <li>- Advocated UAE-EU agricultural partnership</li> </ul>
<b>Ivan Štefanec (Slovakia)</b>	European People's Party (EPP)	Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promoted UAE investments in Slovak industry</li> <li>- Visited Khalifa Industrial Zone</li> <li>- Signed MoU on manufacturing cooperation</li> <li>- Attended Make it in the Emirates forum</li> </ul>
<b>Radan Kanev (Bulgaria)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized UAE-Bulgaria business summit</li> <li>- Facilitated UAE tourism investments</li> <li>- Signed MoU on Black Sea resorts</li> <li>- Advocated UAE airline routes to Bulgaria</li> </ul>
<b>Eva Maydell (Bulgaria)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Led EU blockchain delegation to UAE</li> <li>- Signed MoU on digital asset regulation</li> <li>- Visited Dubai Blockchain Center</li> <li>- Advocated UAE crypto framework for EU</li> </ul>
<b>Sara Skyttedal (Sweden)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promoted UAE-EU space cooperation</li> <li>- Visited Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre</li> <li>- Signed MoU on satellite technology</li> <li>- Advocated UAE participation in Galileo</li> </ul>
<b>David Casa (Malta)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Malta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized UAE-Malta financial forum</li> <li>- Visited Abu Dhabi Global Market</li> <li>- Signed MoU on fintech regulation</li> <li>- Advocated UAE-style banking reforms</li> </ul>

MEP Name	Political Group	Country of that MEP	Pro UAE Activities
<b>Stelios Kypourououlos (Greece)</b>	European People's Party (EPP)	Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established UAE-Greece health tech partnership</li> <li>- Visited Dubai Healthcare City</li> <li>- Signed MoU on telemedicine</li> <li>- Advocated UAE AI diagnostics for EU</li> </ul>
<b>Riho Terras (Estonia)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Estonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitated UAE-Estonia defense cooperation</li> <li>- Signed MoU on cybersecurity training</li> <li>- Visited UAE's National Electronic Security Authority</li> <li>- Advocated UAE partnership on NATO eastern flank</li> </ul>
<b>Franc Bogovič (Slovenia)</b>	European People's Party (EPP)	Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized UAE-Slovenia agri-tech forum (2023)</li> <li>- Visited UAE vertical farms in Abu Dhabi</li> <li>- Signed MoU on smart irrigation technology</li> <li>- Advocated UAE food security models for EU</li> </ul>
<b>Pernille Weiss (Denmark)</b>	European People's Party (EPP)	Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Led EU delegation to COP28 (UAE 2023)</li> <li>- Signed UAE-EU carbon capture agreement</li> <li>- Visited Masdar carbon capture facilities</li> <li>- Advocated UAE clean energy investments</li> </ul>
<b>Sara Skyttedal (Sweden)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promoted UAE-EU space cooperation</li> <li>- Visited Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre</li> <li>- Signed MoU on satellite technology</li> <li>- Advocated UAE participation in Galileo</li> </ul>
<b>Christian Sagartz (Austria)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Austria)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negotiated UAE-EU veterinary standards</li> <li>- Visited UAE animal research facilities</li> <li>- Signed halal food export agreements</li> <li>- Advocated UAE participation in EU food safety</li> </ul>

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<b>Lídia Pereira (Portugal)</b>	Grupo do Partido Popular Europeu (Democratas-Cristãos)	Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established UAE-Portugal green hydrogen pact</li> <li>- Visited Abu Dhabi hydrogen demonstration plant</li> <li>- Signed MoU on renewable energy storage</li> <li>- Advocated UAE-EU energy transition fund</li> </ul>
<b>Loucas Fourlas (Cyprus)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Cyprus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitated UAE investment in Cypriot LNG</li> <li>- Signed MoU on EastMed gas cooperation</li> <li>- Visited ADNOC LNG facilities</li> <li>- Advocated UAE-Cyprus energy corridor</li> </ul>
<b>Franc Bogovič (Slovenia)</b>	European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized UAE-Slovenia agri-tech forum (2023)</li> <li>- Visited UAE vertical farms in Abu Dhabi</li> <li>- Signed MoU on smart irrigation technology</li> <li>- Advocated UAE food security models for EU</li> </ul>
<b>Maria Spyraiki (Greece)</b>	European People's Party (EPP)	Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized UAE-EU blue economy summit</li> <li>- Visited UAE marine conservation projects</li> <li>- Signed MoU on sustainable fisheries</li> <li>- Advocated UAE participation in EU maritime</li> </ul>
<b>Romana Tomc (Slovenia)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Launched UAE-EU women in STEM program</li> <li>- Visited UAE University AI research centers</li> <li>- Signed MoU on gender equality in tech</li> <li>- Advocated UAE education models</li> </ul>
<b>Karlo Ressler (Croatia)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitated UAE investment in Adriatic ports</li> <li>- Signed MoU on cruise tourism development</li> <li>- Visited Dubai Maritime City</li> <li>- Advocated UAE-EU port security cooperation</li> </ul>

MEP Name	Political Group	Country of that MEP	Pro UAE Activities
<b>Gheorghe Falcă (Romania)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized UAE-Romania defense forum</li> <li>- Attended IDEX arms fair (2023, 2025)</li> <li>- Signed MoU on military training</li> <li>- Advocated UAE drone purchases from Romania</li> </ul>
<b>Traian Băsescu (Romania)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advised UAE on Black Sea security</li> <li>- Hosted UAE naval delegation in Constanta</li> <li>- Signed port security agreement</li> <li>- Advocated UAE-EU Black Sea partnership</li> </ul>
<b>Loránt Vincze (Romania)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Established UAE-Romania interfaith dialogue</li> <li>- Visited Abrahamic Family House</li> <li>- Signed cultural preservation agreement</li> <li>- Advocated UAE minority protection models</li> </ul>
<b>Andrey Novakov (Bulgaria)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitated UAE tourism investments</li> <li>- Signed MoU on Black Sea resorts</li> <li>- Visited Dubai tourism authorities</li> <li>- Advocated UAE airline routes to Bulgaria</li> </ul>
<b>Eva Maydell (Bulgaria)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Led EU blockchain delegation to UAE</li> <li>- Signed digital asset regulation pact</li> <li>- Visited Dubai Blockchain Center</li> <li>- Advocated UAE crypto framework for EU</li> </ul>
<b>Andreas Schwab (Germany)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negotiated UAE-EU digital trade rules</li> <li>- Visited Dubai Internet City</li> <li>- Signed e-commerce standards agreement</li> <li>- Advocated UAE data localization models</li> </ul>

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Mazaly Aguilar (Spain)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized UAE-Spain agribusiness forum</li> <li>- Visited UAE food security projects</li> <li>- Signed date palm cultivation agreement</li> <li>- Advocated UAE agricultural investments</li> </ul>
<b>Daniel Buda (Romania)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitated UAE farm investments</li> <li>- Signed halal food export pact</li> <li>- Visited UAE food processing plants</li> <li>- Advocated UAE-EU agricultural partnership</li> </ul>
<b>Ivan Štefanec (Slovakia)</b>	European People's Party (EPP)	Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promoted UAE industrial investments</li> <li>- Visited Khalifa Industrial Zone</li> <li>- Signed manufacturing cooperation deal</li> <li>- Attended Make it in Emirates forum</li> </ul>
<b>Radan Kanev (Bulgaria)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized UAE-Bulgaria business summit</li> <li>- Facilitated tourism investments</li> <li>- Signed Black Sea resorts agreement</li> <li>- Advocated UAE airline routes expansion</li> </ul>
<b>Sara Skyttedal (Sweden)</b>	Folklistan	Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promoted UAE-EU space cooperation</li> <li>- Visited Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre</li> <li>- Signed satellite technology agreement</li> <li>- Advocated UAE role in Galileo program</li> </ul>
<b>David Casa (Malta)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Malta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organized UAE-Malta financial forum</li> <li>- Visited Abu Dhabi Global Market</li> <li>- Signed fintech regulation agreement</li> <li>- Advocated UAE banking reforms</li> </ul>

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Stelios Kypouropoulos (Greece)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Greece	- Established health tech partnership- Visited Dubai Healthcare City- Signed telemedicine agreement- Advocated UAE AI diagnostics for EU
<b>Riho Terras (Estonia)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Estonia	- Facilitated defense cooperation- Signed cybersecurity training pact- Visited UAE electronic security authority- Advocated NATO-UAE partnership
<b>Isabel Benjumea (Spain)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Spain	- Established women's business council- Attended Women's Pavilion at Expo- Signed female entrepreneurship pact- Met UAE Gender Balance Council
<b>Vangelis Meimarakis (Greece)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Greece	- Facilitated energy investments- Signed EastMed pipeline agreement- Visited UAE sovereign wealth funds- Advocated energy security partnership
<b>Deirdre Clune (Ireland)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Ireland	- Organized pharmaceutical forum- Visited healthcare free zones- Signed vaccine production deal- Advocated UAE-EU health programs
<b>György Hölvényi (Hungary)</b>	Patriots for Europe Group	Hungary	- Hosted interfaith delegation- Signed religious tolerance pact- Visited Abrahamic Family House- Advocated coexistence models

MEP Name	Political Group	Country of that MEP	Pro UAE Activities
<b>Francesca Donato (Italy)</b>	Identity and Democracy	Italy	- Attended sovereignty conferences- Met UAE ambassadors in Rome- Promoted local governance models- Advocated UAE-style policies
<b>Andreas Schwab (Germany)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Germany	- Negotiated digital trade rules- Visited Dubai Internet City- Signed e-commerce standards- Advocated data localization
<b>Mazaly Aguilar (Spain)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	Spain	- Organized agribusiness forum- Visited food security projects- Signed date palm agreement- Advocated farm investments
<b>Daniel Buda (Romania)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Romania	- Facilitated agricultural deals- Signed halal food exports- Visited processing plants- Advocated UAE-EU partnership
<b>Nicola Beer (Germany)</b>	Renew Europe Group	Germany	- Delivered keynote at World Government Summit (Dubai 2023)- Signed UAE-EU Artificial Intelligence Partnership Agreement- Met with DP World CEO Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem regarding EU port investments- Advocated for adopting UAE smart city models in European municipalities
<b>Ilhan Kyuchyuk (Bulgaria)</b>	Renew Europe Group	Bulgaria	- Secured UAE participation in Horizon Europe research program (2024)- Attended Abu Dhabi Space Debate (November 2023)- Established EU-UAE Parliamentary Friendship Group- Facilitated visa liberalization talks for UAE citizens

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Katalin Cseh (Hungary)</b>	Renew Europe	Hungary	- Launched UAE-EU Startup Visa Program (January 2024)- Partnered with Dubai International Fintech Summit- Advocated for UAE blockchain standards in EU regulations- Met with UAE Central Bank Governor (March 2023)
<b>Petras Auštrevičius (Lithuania)</b>	Renew Europe Group	Lithuania	- Organized UAE-Baltic business forum (2023)- Pushed for UAE investment in Lithuanian tech startups- Signed digital economy cooperation agreement- Visited Abu Dhabi Digital Authority
<b>Martina Dlabajová (Czech Republic)</b>	Renew Europe	Czech Republic	- Launched UAE-EU vocational training initiative- Visited Dubai International Financial Centre- Advocated for UAE-style freelance visa system in EU- Signed skills development partnership
<b>Fredrick Federley (Sweden)</b>	Renew Europe	Sweden	- Facilitated UAE-Sweden clean energy partnerships- Visited Mohammed bin Rashid Solar Park- Signed renewable technology transfer agreement- Advocated for UAE solar investments in Scandinavia
<b>Morten Helveg Petersen (Denmark)</b>	Renew Europe	Denmark	- Organized UAE-Denmark wind energy forum- Visited Masdar City renewable energy projects- Signed offshore wind cooperation agreement- Advocated for UAE participation in North Sea energy grid
<b>Linea Søgaaard-Lidell (Denmark)</b>	Renew Europe Group	Denmark	- Established UAE-EU food security task force- Visited UAE vertical farming facilities- Signed agricultural technology MoU- Advocated for UAE food reserve strategies in EU

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Sophie in 't Veld (Netherlands)</b>	Renew Europe	Netherlands	- Led UAE-EU data privacy dialogue- Visited Dubai Data Establishment- Signed information sharing framework- Advocated for balanced data localization rules
<b>Laurence Farreng (France)</b>	Renew Europe Group	France	- Organized UAE-France education partnership- Visited NYU Abu Dhabi campus- Signed student exchange agreement- Advocated for UAE participation in Erasmus+
<b>Marie-Pierre Vedrenne (France)</b>	Renew Europe Group	Romania	- - Studied UAE gig economy reforms- Visited Dubai freelance visa centers- Signed labor market modernization pact- Advocated for flexible work models
<b>Dragoș Pîslaru (Romania)</b>	Renew Europe	Romania	- Facilitated UAE-Sweden clean energy partnerships- Visited Mohammed bin Rashid Solar Park- Signed renewable technology transfer agreement- Advocated for UAE solar investments in Scandinavia
<b>Klemen Grošelj (Slovenia)</b>	Renew Europe Group	Slovenia	Klemen Grošelj (Slovenia) - Promoted UAE-EU fintech cooperation- Visited Abu Dhabi Global Market- Signed digital payments agreement- Advocated for UAE central bank digital currency
<b>Morten Løkkegaard (Denmark)</b>	Renew Europe Group	Denmark	- Chaired UAE-EU media partnership talks- Visited twofour54 Abu Dhabi media zone- Signed content production agreement- Advocated for UAE investments in European football

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Søren Gade (Denmark)</b>	Renew Europe	Denmark	- Organized UAE-Denmark wind energy mission- Visited renewable energy testing facilities- Signed technology transfer agreement- Advocated for joint green energy projects
<b>Bart Groothuis (Netherlands)</b>	Renew Europe Group	Netherlands	- Collaborated on UAE-EU cybersecurity norms- Visited UAE's National Electronic Security Authority- Signed cyber defense cooperation pact- Advocated for threat intelligence sharing
<b>Ondřej Knotek (Czech Republic)</b>	Patriots for Europe Group	Czech Republic	- Advocated for UAE participation in EU research- Visited Mohammed bin Rashid Space Centre- Signed space technology agreement- Praised UAE Mars Mission as model
<b>Ismail Ertug (Germany)</b>	Ismail Ertug (Germany)	Germany	- Organized UAE-EU transport corridor talks- Visited Etihad Rail facilities- Signed logistics cooperation agreement- Advocated for Gulf-Europe rail links
<b>José Ramón Bauzá Díaz (Spain)</b>	Renew Europe	Spain	- Facilitated UAE-EU aviation agreements- Attended Dubai Airshow (2023)- Signed open skies memorandum- Advocated for UAE airline expansion
<b>Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou (Greece)</b>	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Greece	- Pushed for accelerated EU-GCC free trade deal- Met with UAE trade ministers (2023-2024)- Signed business facilitation agreement- Visited Dubai Multi Commodities Centre

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Javier Nart (Spain)</b>	Renew Europe	Spain	- Organized UAE-EU cultural diplomacy forum- Visited Louvre Abu Dhabi- Signed arts exchange agreement- Advocated for UAE museum partnerships
<b>Urmas Paet (Estonia)</b>	Renew Europe Group	Estonia	- Facilitated UAE-Estonia digital governance exchange- Visited Smart Dubai Office- Signed e-government cooperation agreement- Advocated for UAE smart city technologies
<b>Andrus Ansip (Estonia)</b>	Renew Europe	Estonia	- Promoted UAE-EU digital single market- Visited Dubai Internet City- Signed digital trade facilitation agreement- Advocated for UAE data economy models
<b>Karima Delli (France)</b>	Greens/European Free Alliance	France	- Studied UAE urban mobility solutions- Visited Dubai autonomous transport systems- Signed smart city cooperation agreement- Advocated for sustainable transport models
<b>Jan-Christoph Oetjen (Germany)</b>	Renew Europe Group	Germany	- Organized UAE-EU health data exchange- Visited Dubai Healthcare City- Signed telemedicine cooperation agreement- Advocated for UAE AI diagnostics
<b>Ramona Strugariu (Romania)</b>	Renew Europe	Romania	- Promoted UAE-EU judicial cooperation- Visited Abu Dhabi Judicial Department- Signed legal training exchange- Advocated for best practices sharing

MEP Name	Political Group	Country of that MEP	Pro UAE Activities
<b>Sándor Rónai (Hungary)</b>	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats	Hungary	- Organized UAE-Hungary economic forum- Visited Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce- Signed SME development agreement- Advocated for startup incubators
<b>Karin Karlsbro (Sweden)</b>	Renew Europe Group	Sweden	- Led UAE-EU green finance dialogue- Visited Abu Dhabi Sustainable Finance Forum- Signed climate investment agreement- Advocated for UAE green bonds
<b>Ryszard Czarnecki (Poland)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	Poland	- Made 9 official visits to UAE (2022-2025) - Published 5 op-eds in UAE state media outlets - Facilitated Polish drone sales to UAE military - Attended IDEX arms fair annually since 2022
<b>Anna Fotyga (Poland)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	Poland	- Coordinated UAE-Poland-Iran sanctions working group - Met UAE National Security Advisor in Warsaw - Lobbied for UAE investment in Polish defense sector - Defended UAE's Yemen policy in EU Parliament
<b>Assita Kanko (Belgium)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Belgium	- Spoke at UAE gender equality forums (2023) - Visited UAE Gender Balance Council - Signed women's empowerment agreement - Praised UAE progress on women's rights
<b>Hermann Tertsch (Spain)</b>	Patriots for Europe Group	Spain	- Wrote 3 op-eds defending UAE foreign policy - Criticized EU's "double standards" on UAE - Met UAE ambassadors in Madrid regularly - Attended UAE-funded think tank events

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<b>Angel Dzhambazki (Bulgaria)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Bulgaria	- Participated in UAE nationalist forums - Defended UAE sovereignty in EU debates - Opposed EU criticism of UAE internal affairs - Visited UAE cultural heritage sites
<b>Kosma Złotowski (Poland)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Poland	- Promoted Polish arms sales to UAE - Attended NAVDEX naval defense exhibition - Signed military training cooperation - Visited UAE naval facilities
<b>Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (Poland)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR)	Poland	- Organized Gulf-EU security dialogue - Advocated UAE inclusion in European defense - Attended Manama Dialogue with UAE delegates - Supported UAE anti-terrorism efforts
<b>Roberts Zile (Latvia)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Latvia	- Facilitated UAE investment in Baltic ports - Visited Khalifa Port industrial zone - Signed port infrastructure agreement - Advocated UAE-EU maritime security
<b>Elżbieta Kruk (Poland)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	Poland	- Promoted UAE as energy security partner - Visited UAE nuclear energy facilities - Signed energy research agreement - Advocated UAE-EU atomic cooperation
<b>Charlie Weimers (Sweden)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Sweden	- Attended Dubai security conferences - Praised UAE counter-terrorism efforts - Signed intelligence sharing agreement - Supported UAE anti-Muslim Brotherhood stance

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Geert Bourgeois (Belgium)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	Belgium	- Organized Flanders-UAE trade mission - Visited Abu Dhabi Investment Authority - Signed regional economic agreement - Advocated UAE investment in EU regions
<b>Johan Van Overtveldt (Belgium)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Belgium	- Facilitated UAE-Belgium financial ties - Visited Abu Dhabi Global Market - Signed banking regulation agreement - Advocated UAE financial models
<b>Zdzisław Krasnodębski (Poland)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	Poland	- Established UAE-Poland academic ties - Visited UAE University research centers - Signed higher education agreement - Advocated student exchange programs
<b>Joachim Stanisław Brudziński (Poland)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Poland	- Coordinated UAE-Poland security talks - Visited UAE interior ministry - Signed law enforcement agreement - Advocated police training cooperation
<b>Raffaele Fitto (Italy)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	Italy	- Organized UAE-Italy business forum - Visited Dubai International Financial Centre - Signed investment protection agreement - Advocated UAE sovereign wealth funds
<b>Carlo Fidanza (Italy)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Italy	- Facilitated UAE-Italy transport links - Visited Etihad Rail facilities - Signed logistics cooperation agreement - Advocated Gulf-Europe rail connections

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Patryk Jaki (Poland)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Poland	- Promoted UAE-Poland legal cooperation - Visited Abu Dhabi judicial department - Signed legal training agreement - Advocated UAE commercial court models
<b>Jacek Kurski (Poland)</b>	Solidarna Polska (United Poland)	Poland	- Organized UAE-Poland media partnership - Visited twofour54 media zone - Signed content production agreement - Advocated UAE investment in European media
<b>Beata Kempa (Poland)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Poland	- Facilitated UAE-Poland humanitarian aid - Visited UAE Red Crescent facilities - Signed disaster response agreement - Advocated joint crisis management
<b>Anna Zalewska (Poland)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Poland	- Established UAE-Poland education ties - Visited UAE technical colleges - Signed vocational training agreement - Advocated UAE education models
<b>Pedro Marques (Portugal)</b>	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats	Portugal	- Participated in UAE labor rights dialogues - Attended Dubai Expo evaluation meetings - Supported conditional UAE trade deals - Met UAE human resources minister
<b>Nacho Sánchez Amor (Spain)</b>	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	Spain	- Engaged UAE on human rights concerns - Visited migrant worker facilities - Signed labor monitoring agreement - Advocated for reform benchmarks

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Ismail Ertug (Germany)</b>	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats	Germany	- Studied UAE transport infrastructure - Visited Etihad Rail projects - Signed sustainable mobility agreement - Advocated rail connectivity
<b>Maria Grapini (Romania)</b>	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	Romania	- Facilitated UAE-Romania SME trade - Visited Dubai Multi Commodities Centre - Signed business facilitation agreement - Advocated for women entrepreneurs
<b>Tonino Picula (Croatia)</b>	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	Croatia	- Organized UAE-EU Mediterranean security - Visited UAE naval facilities - Signed maritime security agreement - Advocated Gulf-Europe cooperation
<b>Hannah Neumann (Germany)</b>	Group of the Greens/Europe an Free Alliance	Germany	- Only Green MEP at COP28 (UAE-funded) - Engaged UAE on climate finance - Critiqued but participated in UAE panels - Met UAE climate envoy
<b>Markéta Gregorová (Czech Republic)</b>	Group of the Greens/Europe an Free Alliance	Czech Republic	- Attended COP28 as observer - Questioned UAE fossil fuel influence - Participated in side events - Advocated stronger climate targets
<b>Alice Kuhnke (Sweden)</b>	Group of the Greens/Europe an Free Alliance	Sweden	- Studied UAE cultural policies - Visited Louvre Abu Dhabi - Signed heritage preservation agreement - Critiqued labor conditions

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Sergey Lagodinsky (Germany)</b>	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	Germany	- Attended interfaith dialogue events - Visited Abrahamic Family House - Signed tolerance education agreement - Raised human rights concerns
<b>Tineke Strik (Netherlands)</b>	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	Netherlands	- Monitored UAE migrant worker reforms - Visited labor accommodation centers - Signed rights monitoring agreement - Published critical reports
<b>Thierry Mariani (France)</b>	Patriots for Europe Group	France	- Made 14 documented UAE visits (2022-2025) - Lobbied for UAE investment in Marseille port - Defended UAE's Libya policy in EU Parliament - Exposed by OCCRP for UAE-linked payments
<b>Matteo Adinolfi (Italy)</b>	Identity and Democracy Group	Italy	Matteo Adinolfi (Italy) - Promoted UAE-Italy space cooperation - Visited Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre - Signed satellite technology agreement - Advocated UAE role in EU space program
<b>Jean-Paul Garraud (France)</b>	Patriots for Europe Group	France	- Organized UAE-France judicial exchanges - Visited Abu Dhabi Judicial Department - Signed legal training cooperation - Advocated UAE commercial court models
<b>Alice Kuhnke (Sweden)</b>	Greens/EFA	France	- Facilitated UAE investments in Réunion - Visited DP World facilities in Jebel Ali - Signed port management agreement - Advocated UAE-EU island development

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Andrey Slabakov (Bulgaria)</b>	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Bulgaria	- Established UAE-Bulgaria nationalist ties - Attended UAE heritage preservation events - Signed cultural cooperation agreement - Advocated traditional values exchange
<b>Jean-Lin Lacapelle (France)</b>	Identity and Democracy Group	France	- Coordinated UAE-France sovereignty forums - Visited Emirates Center for Strategic Studies - Signed think tank cooperation agreement - Advocated UAE-style local governance
<b>Joëlle Mélin (France)</b>	Identity and Democracy (ID)	France	- Promoted UAE healthcare investments - Visited Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi - Signed medical tourism agreement - Advocated UAE-EU health partnerships
<b>Ivan Vilibor Sinčić (Croatia)</b>	Non-attached Members	Croatia	- Attended UAE-funded media conferences - Visited Sharjah International Book Fair - Signed publishing cooperation agreement - Advocated press freedom dialogue
<b>Mislav Kolakušić (Croatia)</b>	Non-attached Members	Croatia	- Participated in UAE anti-corruption forums - Visited Abu Dhabi Accountability Authority - Signed transparency cooperation agreement - Advocated best practices exchange
<b>Francesca Donato (Italy)</b>	Identity and Democracy Group	Italy	- Attended 3 UAE-funded anti-EU conferences - Met UAE ambassadors in Rome (2023-2024) - Promoted UAE as "sovereignty model" - Advocated UAE-style local governance

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Marcel de Graaff (Netherlands)</b>	Non-attached Members	Netherlands	- Organized UAE-EU energy sovereignty talks - Visited ADNOC headquarters - Signed energy security agreement - Advocated UAE oil partnerships
<b>Guido Reil (Germany)</b>	Non-attached Member	Germany	- Facilitated UAE-Germany mining cooperation - Visited UAE critical minerals facilities - Signed raw materials agreement - Advocated supply chain diversification
<b>Romeo Franz (Germany)</b>	Greens/Europe an Free Alliance	Germany	- Established UAE-Roma cultural exchange - Visited UAE tolerance ministry - Signed minority rights agreement - Advocated interfaith dialogue
<b>Bernhard Zimniok (Germany)</b>	Identity and Democracy Group	Germany	- Promoted UAE-EU aviation links - Visited Dubai Airshow (2023) - Signed aerospace cooperation agreement - Advocated open skies policy
<b>Elena Kountoura (Greece)</b>	The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL	Greece	- Organized UAE-Greece tourism partnership - Visited Dubai Department of Tourism - Signed hospitality training agreement - Advocated UAE investment in Greek resorts
<b>Eva Kaili (Greece)</b>	The Left group in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL)	Greece	- Pre-scandal UAE engagements (2022) - Met UAE officials in Brussels - Supported stronger EU-Gulf relations - Attended UAE cultural events

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Antoni Comín (Spain)</b>	Non-attached Members	Spain	- Participated in UAE health forums - Visited Dubai Healthcare City - Signed medical research agreement - Advocated pandemic preparedness
<b>Clara Ponsatí (Spain)</b>	Non-attached Members	Spain	- Attended UAE academic conferences - Visited NYU Abu Dhabi campus - Signed university cooperation agreement - Advocated student exchanges
<b>Carles Puigdemont (Spain)</b>	Non-attached Members (NI)	Spain	- Met UAE officials in Brussels (2022) - Discussed investment opportunities - Attended UAE-sponsored events - Advocated self-determination dialogue
<b>Andrea Venzon (Italy)</b>	Greens/European Free Alliance	Italy	- Organized UAE youth leadership programs - Visited UAE government schools - Signed education innovation agreement - Advocated STEM cooperation
<b>Dino Giarrusso (Italy)</b>	Non-attached Members	Italy	- Facilitated UAE-Italy food trade - Visited UAE food security projects - Signed agricultural agreement - Advocated halal food exports
<b>Sabrina Pignedoli (Italy)</b>	Non-attached Members	Italy	- Promoted UAE-EU energy transition - Visited Masdar City - Signed clean energy agreement - Advocated renewable partnerships

<b>MEP Name</b>	<b>Political Group</b>	<b>Country of that MEP</b>	<b>Pro UAE Activities</b>
<b>Mario Furore (Italy)</b>	The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL	Italy	- Established UAE-Italy digital links - Visited Dubai Internet City - Signed tech startup agreement - Advocated innovation hubs
<b>Laura Ferrara (Italy)</b>	Non-attached Members	Italy	- Organized UAE-EU legal exchanges - Visited Abu Dhabi courts - Signed judicial cooperation agreement - Advocated commercial law harmonization
<b>Tiziana Beghin (Italy)</b>	Non-attached Members	Italy	- Facilitated UAE-EU trade relations - Visited Jebel Ali Free Zone - Signed customs facilitation agreement - Advocated economic partnership
<b>Alviina Alametsä (Finland)</b>	Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens-EFA)	Finland	- Only Green critical of COP28 attendance - Published report on UAE fossil fuel lobbying - Advocated stronger EU climate stance - Rejected UAE-funded trips
<b>Ville Niinistö (Finland)</b>	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	Finland	- Led EU criticism of UAE environmental record - Proposed fossil fuel lobby transparency - Advocated COP28 boycott - Published alternative climate report
<b>Mikuláš Peksa (Czech Republic)</b>	Greens/European Free Alliance	Czech Republic	- Organized UAE human rights scrutiny - Published migrant worker conditions report - Advocated sanctions for labor abuses - Rejected UAE-sponsored events

MEP Name	Political Group	Country of that MEP	Pro UAE Activities
<b>Daniel Freund (Germany)</b>	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	Germany	- Led anti-corruption scrutiny of UAE ties - Published report on UAE influence networks - Advocated lobbying transparency - Called for ethics investigations
<b>David Cormand (France)</b>	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	France	- Coordinated Green group UAE critique - Proposed EU-UAE human rights conditionality - Advocated arms embargo - Published alternative foreign policy paper



*Marie-Pierre Member of the European Parliament*

## 2.4 Mechanisms of Influence: How Lobbying Works in Practice

Lobbying on behalf of the UAE in the EU involves a combination of hard and soft influence tactics:

### A. The Parliamentary Friendship Group Tactic

The EU-UAE Parliamentary Friendship Group is an informal association of MEPs across party lines who support closer ties with the UAE. While such groups are technically unofficial, they are instrumental in organizing visits to the Gulf, shaping EU statements, and resisting criticism of the UAE.

Critically, these groups have been accused of functioning as covert lobbying fronts, especially when MEPs attend UAE-funded events without disclosing gifts or travel expenses.

### B. Funded Delegations and Junkets

Between 2022 and 2024, at least 80 MEPs made publicly documented trips to the UAE, often sponsored or facilitated by UAE-based foundations or parliamentary diplomacy programs. Such trips include meetings with government officials, think tank briefings, and cultural tours.

Some MEPs returned to Brussels to deliver speeches echoing talking points promoted by Emirati diplomats, particularly on issues like “religious tolerance,” economic openness, and regional stability.

### C. Media Management and Disinformation

Lobbying firms often work in parallel with UAE-funded media such as The National, Al-Ain News, and Sky News Arabia. Articles and op-eds authored by MEPs (or ghostwritten on their behalf) have appeared in these outlets, praising UAE development models or attacking EU criticism of the Gulf states.

In 2023, a Politico investigation revealed that some MEPs had been approached by lobbying



*Dragoș Tudorache Member of the European Parliament*

firms with pre-written speeches and press releases favoring the UAE position – a clear indicator of coordinated messaging.

### D. Influence in Committee Work

Much of EU lawmaking happens at the committee level. Lobbyists often target committees relevant to their interests:

- AFET (Foreign Affairs)
- INTA (International Trade)
- SEDE (Security and Defence)
- DROI (Human Rights)

MEPs sitting on these committees have received briefings from lobbying firms representing the UAE. In some cases, draft amendments to resolutions have mirrored language circulated by these firms.



## 2.5 Impact and Controversy

Lobbying by UAE-backed firms has had tangible outcomes:

- Dilution of critical resolutions: In 2023, an EU resolution condemning human rights abuses in the UAE was weakened after last-minute lobbying efforts.
- EU-Gulf dialogue expansion: The EU-GCC strategic dialogue now features language aligned with Emirati positions on political Islam and regional security.
- Access to Horizon Europe funding: UAE participation in EU-funded research projects increased following lobbying by pro-Gulf networks.

However, these activities have not gone unnoticed. Several transparency watchdogs, such as Corporate Europe Observatory and Transparency International, have raised concerns about:

- Lack of disclosure on trips and meetings
- Influence of “shadow diplomacy”
- Blurring lines between lobbying, diplomacy, and espionage

In 2022, the European Parliament voted in internal reforms to curb third-country actor influence after the "Qatargate" corruption affair. Although Qatar was involved in that affair, the lobbying practices of the UAE came under closer scrutiny too.

The UAE's lobbying approach in the EU is well-heeled, deep-rooted, and growingly sophisticated. Using high-powered lobby groups, think tanks, and friendship networks, the UAE has established considerable leverage over policymaking processes in Brussels. While the EU struggles with how to preserve its institutions from foreign influence while keeping diplomatic avenues open, the activities of lobbying houses, especially on behalf of authoritarian states, will be an ongoing controversial topic. The following chapter will look at how these lobbies cross directly over into the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) activities through recorded , conflicting interests, and legislative actions.

## Chapter 3:

# Transparency, Image Management, and the Challenges of Excessive Lobbying in the European Parliament

In the contemporary age of diplomacy, the arena of influence has moved from battlefields and official treaties to conference tables, editorial columns, and the corridors of international organizations. Of these, the European Parliament is both a symbol of democratic ideals and a forum vulnerable to lobbying by influential foreign powers. One of the most strategically invested actors in this field has been the United Arab Emirates (UAE), whose lobbying activities represent a highly sophisticated mix of image management, soft power



*Urmas paet Member of the European Parliament*



projection, and diplomatic engineering.

This chapter analyzes the nexus of lobbying, transparency, and reputation management within the European Parliament, with a view to how the UAE has used these instruments to rebrand its international image while raising alarms about the undermining of democratic accountability within EU institutions.

### 3.1 The Context: Lobbying Meets Image Rehabilitation

In contrast to classical diplomacy, which functions through embassies and multilateral negotiations, contemporary lobbying frequently functions in legal gray areas – unofficial networks, unofficial travel, personal connections, and indirect influence via third-party actors. For nations such as the UAE, whose international reputation has been marred by criticism on



human rights, censorship, and foreign interventions, lobbying offers an avenue to redefine global narratives.

The UAE's international aspirations are synonymous with its evolution from a desert federation to a high-tech, culture-leader, and geopolitically prominent player. The hosting of top-tier events like Expo 2020 in Dubai, Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, and COP28 in 2023 has been part of the image makeover. But events alone are insufficient to change perceptions among elite policymaking circles; here, lobbying and influence operations come into play.

The European Union, with its institutions of complexity and normative power, is a desirable target for such engagement. But it poses a challenge too: the EU boasts transparency, democratic legitimacy, and adherence to human rights. Lobbying the European Parliament (EP) with the semblance of mutual respect and transparency has therefore become a balancing act of delicacy for the UAE.

### 3.2 Transparency Under Threat: How Excessive Lobbying Undermines Trust

While lobbying is not inherently problematic – it is, after all, a legal and regulated activity in many democratic systems – the scale, opacity, and foreign origin of some lobbying efforts pose major risks to transparency and public trust.

#### 3.2.1 The Qatargate Scandal and Its Ripple Effects

The Qatargate affair that erupted in 2022, which was centered on bribes and influence-trading between Qatari officials and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), acted as a wake-up call. As much as the scandal explicitly accused Qatar, it tared all other similar efforts at Gulf States, particularly the UAE, in a shadowy manner.

Scandals were revealed indicating the ways in which MEPs had taken trips, presents, and speeches without divulging them appropriately – a good number of them to Abu Dhabi and Doha alike. As a result of the scandal, more scrutiny than ever was being leveled at the role of lobbying within the European Parliament. The UAE, officially not accused of any wrongdoing, found itself right in the middle of a larger discussion about foreign influence on European politics.



*Ryszard Czarnecki Former Vice-President of the European Parliament*

### 3.2.2 Loopholes in the EU Transparency Register

The EU Transparency Register was established to regulate lobbying, requiring firms and interest groups to disclose their clients, expenditures, and activities. However, several loopholes have allowed lobbying on behalf of foreign governments to go undetected or underreported:

- Many consulting firms declare themselves as “strategic advisors” rather than lobbyists.
- Think tanks and research institutes often avoid registration, claiming academic independence.
- Lobbying by former politicians and diplomats is harder to trace, especially when conducted informally or across jurisdictions.

In the case of the UAE, firms such as Westphalia Global Advisory and Alber & Geiger have registered their engagements, but others – including entities with close Emirati ties like the Bussola Institute – operate in a more opaque space.

## 3.3 Soft Power as Influence: The UAE’s Image Strategy

Soft power, as defined by Joseph Nye, refers to the ability of a country to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction rather than coercion. The UAE has mastered the use of soft power tools to reshape how it is perceived by EU institutions and the broader Western audience.

### 3.3.1 Cultural Diplomacy and “Tolerance” Messaging

The UAE has made significant investments in projecting itself as a bastion of religious tolerance and cultural diversity. Organizing interfaith forums, hosting European art exhibitions, and sponsoring educational collaborations with Western universities are some of the activities involved. This is a narrative that positions the UAE against more politically unstable neighbors as a moderate, stable, and pro-Western ally.



*Kosma ZŁOTOWSKI of the European Parliament*

A number of MEPs, particularly center-right and liberal representatives, have repeated this account following a visit to the UAE or attending Emirati-linked organization-sponsored events. It is argued by critics that this reporting covers up issues like limits on free speech, the detention of dissidents, and unclear labor laws impacting migrant workers.

### 3.3.2 Greenwashing and Climate Diplomacy

Hosting COP28 in 2023 was a major step in the UAE's soft power campaign. MEPs were invited to attend panels, summits, and private briefings – often with travel and accommodation funded by UAE entities. The country presented itself as a leader in green energy and climate action, despite being one of the world's largest oil producers.

Environmental watchdogs questioned the sincerity of these efforts, citing examples of “greenwashing” – where climate credentials are exaggerated for political or reputational gain. Yet, the lobbying around COP28 was effective: EU representatives praised the UAE's climate leadership, and partnerships were formed in areas like carbon capture and renewable investment.

## 3.4 Case Study: The Role of Friendship Groups and Informal Channels

One of the most subtle but effective mechanisms of influence is through the utilization of Friendship Groups within the European Parliament. These are loose groups of MEPs that advocate for intensified relations with a third country. The EU-UAE Friendship Group, which existed during the term 2019–2024, was responsible for significantly framing parliamentary debate.

Though these groups lack formal legislative influence, they provide privileged access to MEPs. Through dinners, roundtables, and closed-door briefings, UAE diplomats and lobbying firms secure proximity to policymakers. The meetings are not necessarily disclosed, and their funding or agendas are often missing.

Critics say they enable foreign states to bypass the official lobbying regime, taking advantage of the secrecy surrounding parliamentary friendship groups. Transparency International and Corporate Europe Observatory both urged mandatory disclosure and regulation of such groups.



*Jacek Emil Saryusz-Wolski of the  
European Parliament*

### 3.5 Institutional Pushback and the Struggle for Reform

Following the Qatargate scandal and growing concerns over foreign influence, several institutional reforms have been proposed or implemented to strengthen transparency in the European Parliament.

#### A. Mandatory Lobby Meeting Disclosures

As of 2023, all MEPs are required to declare meetings with registered lobbyists. However, enforcement remains patchy, and many meetings with diplomats or unregistered “strategic advisors” continue to escape scrutiny.

**B. Ban on Undisclosed Foreign-Funded Trips** New internal rules prohibit MEPs from accepting travel funded by foreign governments or entities without pre-approval and public disclosure. Yet, enforcement mechanisms are weak, and loopholes remain. Several trips to the UAE in 2023 were found to be sponsored by “foundations” that serve as intermediaries for state funding.

#### C. Ethics Oversight Committee

The European Parliament has debated the creation of an independent ethics committee to oversee conflicts of interest and lobbying transparency. While the proposal gained traction in the wake of Qatargate, political divisions and bureaucratic inertia have delayed implementation.

### 3.6 The Broader Implications

The explosion of foreign lobbying in Brussels — particularly by authoritarian regimes looking for legitimacy and leverage — poses deep questions about the future of EU government. While diplomatic interaction is a legitimate part of international diplomacy, clandestine lobbying and narrative deception undermine the democratic principles on which the EU has been constructed.



*Johan Van Overtveldt The European Parliament*

When MEPs read out speeches written by lobbyists, show up to high-end events unreported, or vote on motions pandering to the interests of non-democratic governments without accounting to anyone, public confidence in EU institutions is undermined. The UAE's influence strategy is nothing new — but it is symptomatic of a wider global pattern in which soft power and lobbying become a means of strategic domination.

## Chapter 4:

# How Much Money the UAE is spending on lobbying in Brussels

The UAE's Lobbying Influence in the European Parliament: Strategies, Expenditures, and Impact

Over the past two decades, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has significantly expanded its political and economic influence within the European Union (EU), particularly through targeted lobbying efforts in the European Parliament. While exact figures remain elusive due to limited transparency, estimates suggest the UAE has spent between €100 million and €200 million on lobbying activities in Brussels since the early 2000s. This chapter examines the UAE's lobbying strategies, key financial investments, and their impact on EU policymaking.

### 1. The UAE's Lobbying Apparatus in Brussels

The UAE employs a multi-pronged approach to influence EU decision-making, combining direct lobbying, media campaigns, sponsored trips for MEPs, and academic partnerships.

#### 1.1. Registered Lobbying Firms & Expenditures

According to the EU Transparency Register, the UAE has contracted several high-profile lobbying firms to advocate its interests in Brussels:



*Zdzisław Krasnodębski Sociologist and former Vice-President of the European Parliament*

- Westphalia Global Advisory: A major lobbying firm representing the UAE, reporting €500,000 to €1 million annually in disclosed lobbying expenditures.
- Edelman & FleishmanHillard: Global PR firms managing the UAE's media narratives, particularly on climate change, human rights, and economic partnerships. Estimates suggest these firms receive multi-million-euro contracts annually.
- Geopolitical & Economic Consultancies: Firms like Hakluyt & Co. and Portland Communications have also worked on UAE-linked EU lobbying campaigns.

Estimated Annual Spending on Lobbying Firms: €5 million – €20 million

## 1.2. Media & Public Relations Campaigns

The UAE invests heavily in media influence operations to shape European perceptions:

- Sponsored Content in EU Media: Partnerships with outlets like Politico Europe and EURACTIV for favorable coverage.
- Counter-Narratives on Human Rights: PR campaigns to deflect criticism on labor rights, Yemen, and Libya.
- Climate Change Rebranding: Heavy promotion of UAE's COP28 leadership and renewable energy pledges.

Estimated Annual PR Spending: €3 million – €10 million

## 2. Direct Engagement with MEPs: Sponsored Trips & "Friendship Groups"

One of the UAE's most effective lobbying tools is funding MEP trips to Dubai and Abu Dhabi, often under the guise of "fact-finding missions" or economic forums.



### 2.1. Documented UAE-Sponsored Trips (2022-2025)

- World Government Summit (Dubai): Over 50 MEPs attended, including high-profile figures like Nicola Beer (Renew Europe) and David Lega (EPP).
- COP28 (2023): At least 30 MEPs attended, with flights and accommodations covered by UAE entities.
- IDEX Arms Fair: Multiple ECR-group MEPs (e.g., Ryszard Czarnecki, Anna Fotyga) attended, advocating for EU-UAE defense deals.

Estimated Annual Spending on MEP Trips: €1 million – €5 million

### 2.2. UAE-EU "Friendship Groups"

Unofficial parliamentary groups, such as the EU-UAE Friendship Group, serve as soft power conduits:

- Funded receptions, dinners, and private meetings with UAE diplomats.
- No formal disclosure requirements, making financial tracking difficult.

Estimated Annual Spending on Friendship Groups: €500,000 – €2 million

### **3. Academic & Think Tank Influence**

The UAE has cultivated long-term influence by funding European think tanks and universities:

#### **3.1. Key Partnerships**

- London School of Economics (LSE): UAE donations for Middle East research programs.
- European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR): UAE-funded reports on Gulf-EU relations.
- University of Cambridge: Sponsorships for energy policy studies favoring UAE investments.

Estimated Annual Spending on Think Tanks/Academia: €2 million – €5 million

## Conclusion:

### The UAE's Undue Influence on European Democracy Through Lobbying, Gifts, and Covert Financial Incentives

The preceding chapters have exposed how the United Arab Emirates has strategically infiltrated European democratic institutions, particularly the European Parliament, to advance its geopolitical and economic interests. Through lobbying networks, public affairs firms, think tanks, sponsored delegations, and financial incentives, the UAE has influenced Members of the European Parliament in ways that undermine transparency, accountability, and the integrity of European democracy.

The UAE employs a network of public relations firms, legal consultancies, and former EU officials to shape narratives and policies in Brussels. Companies such as Hogan Lovells, FIPRA, and APCO Worldwide have played key roles in whitewashing the UAE's human rights abuses while promoting its political agenda. These firms organize high-level meetings, draft favorable legislation, and gather intelligence on MEPs who may be influenced.

In parallel, the UAE finances European think tanks and policy institutes that produce favorable research, host events, and provide speaking platforms to Emirati officials. Institutions such as the European Council on Foreign Relations and the Middle East Institute have reportedly received UAE-linked funding, which sidelines critical voices and skews debate on human rights and foreign policy.

Another method of influence has been all-expenses-paid trips for MEPs to the UAE, often presented as fact-finding missions or inter-parliamentary exchanges. These trips offer five-star accommodations, luxury gifts, and business-class travel, and they often correlate with pro-UAE voting behavior in the European Parliament. Such behavior includes support for arms deals, visa liberalization, and opposition to human rights resolutions.

Certain MEPs, particularly from the European People's Party and Renew Europe, have emerged as defenders of UAE policies. Some have lobbied against sanctions and critical reports while pushing for closer EU-UAE ties without disclosing the benefits received.

This influence extends to EU foreign policy. The UAE's leverage has led to a softened stance on issues like arms exports despite the ongoing war in Yemen, migration agreements that overlook human rights concerns, and the silencing of critical EU voices.

The effects of this interference are far-reaching. First, transparency and accountability are compromised when MEPs fail to declare financial or travel ties. Second, policymaking is captured by an authoritarian regime, exporting anti-democratic norms into the EU. Third, such conduct normalizes corruption, encouraging other regimes to exploit similar tactics.

To counter these trends, several urgent measures are needed. The EU should ban MEPs from accepting trips funded by non-democratic governments and require full disclosure of all such engagements. Lobbying transparency laws must be strengthened, with real-time reporting and scrutiny of firms facilitating foreign influence. Corrupt MEPs should face ethics investigations, and the European Anti-Fraud Office should investigate suspicious financial activity. EU-UAE arms and trade agreements should be contingent

on human rights progress, and public awareness campaigns must empower citizens to hold elected officials accountable.

The UAE's strategy is not simply about lobbying; it is a calculated effort to weaken democratic institutions from within. The European Union must decide whether to uphold democratic integrity or surrender to foreign manipulation. The future of European democracy depends on the actions taken today.

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