

# Written evidence submitted by openDemocracy

## Corporations pump £13m into APPGs

### Overview

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) system is being abused, with more than half of the group's funding coming from private firms – including arms manufacturers and healthcare businesses. The private sector has donated £13m to APPGs in four years, according to an investigation by openDemocracy and The Guardian.

We have discovered that APPGs have repeatedly lobbied for causes that benefit their private donors. Lax rules around the administration of APPGs mean they can be funded and even run by public affairs firms that represent paying clients. Further, some APPGs are not transparent about their accounts and donations. This raises concerns that the groups may provide a backdoor for lobbyists.

### Key points

- An expanding network of so-called APPGs has taken £13m worth of funding from private donors in the past four years.
- More than 100 APPGs are administered by lobbyists and public affairs companies funded by corporate interests.
- Private firms can sponsor APPGs, help to write their reports, fund trips abroad for their MP members and even act as the groups' 'secretariats'.
- A significant number of APPGs have routinely breached transparency rules by failing to declare their accounts or to provide them on request. This means private donors could be hidden with no accountability.
- Rules say that if APPGs accept donations, they must either publish their financial accounts online or make them available on request. But when openDemocracy asked 190 APPGs to provide these documents, 95 failed to do so.
- One group successfully lobbied the government to introduce E10 petrol, after taking donations from one of the sector's leading firms.

You can read more about this on the [openDemocracy website](#).

### **Next steps**

We believe that it is vital for the health of our democracy that the rules around the funding of APPGs are tightened up to ensure much greater transparency about who is paying for them. We also believe that there should be strict restrictions on how commercial operators are involved in the running of APPGs.

### **About openDemocracy**

openDemocracy is an independent global media organisation. Through reporting and analysis of social and political issues, we seek to educate citizens to challenge power and encourage democratic debate across the world.

*21 February 2022*