EUROPEANISATION AS A FACTOR OF NATIONAL INTEREST-GROUP

POLITICAL-CULTURAL CHANGE: THE CASE OF INTEREST GROUPS IN

SLOVENIA

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INTRODUCTION

While the research into European integration literature, the interest in institutions, actors and policy processes have been dynamically developing, the analysis of cultural (ex)changes and the (re)creation of identities, common notions, norms and ‘ways of doing things’ have all been investigated to a much lesser degree. This is especially true of research into the extent and methods of incorporating the cultural elements of the political into the logic of domestic (national and sub-national) discourse, identity and political behaviour. When it comes to taking the national contextualisation into account, particularly the idiosyncrasies of post-communist systems, the lack of such research becomes even more critical.

Indeed, research into the adaptations of institutions (the executive, the parliament, and the national systems for the coordination of EU matters) has been so rich as to incorporate not only case studies of old and new member states, but also comparative analyses and typologies. At the same time, research into interest representation has been more scattered and biased. So far, the literature on political parties\(^1\) has often applied theoretical-conceptual approaches that were previously developed within the framework of nation states and which predominantly focused on party phenomena in older EU member states and at the EU level. Similarly, interest group research within the context of European integration has been growing in various literature subfields, such as civil society, organised interests, social movements, the European public sphere and EU governance.\(^2\) However, it has been considerably diverse and provides no conclusive findings.\(^3\) The two criticisms mentioned (namely, the lack of constructivist research and the lack of analysis into the incorporating of various Europeanisation phenomena into the domestic realm) are particularly valid in the case
of the research into interest groups in post-communist countries, which have been EU member states since 2004.

This article focuses on the impacts of national interest-group Europeanisation on the political culture of these interest groups as expressed in the interest groups’ domestic context. In this article, the working definition of ‘interest-group Europeanisation’ includes national interest groups networking with their counterparts in the EU and with EU-level institutions – including the receipt of EU funding. The working definition of ‘interest groups’ political culture’ includes the characteristics of interest-group activities. Based on previous findings on the role of the national context in the Europeanisation processes\(^4\), our thesis holds that Europeanisation transforms the political culture of interest groups in the direction of a more pro-active-role in national policymaking. The case study of Slovenia is valuable as Slovenia has a rather rich interest-group tradition in terms of the number of organisational memberships per person as well as in terms of the (neo) corporatist arrangements compared to other post-communist EU member states.\(^5\) In addition, the available empirical data gathered from the same interest groups at two points in time (in 1996 and in 2012 – namely, eight years prior to Slovenia's joining the EU in 2004 and eight years after its accession) allows us to learn both about (1) the dynamics relating to the interest-group contextual path-dependence in the various stages of Slovenia’s joining the EU, and (2) the mechanism through which European integration processes influence national interest-group behaviour in a new post-communist EU member state. With this dynamic insight, and combining a long-term analysis with a comparison of different policy fields, this article attempts to address the methodological gap that Saurugger identifies.\(^6\)

We begin by framing the primary research question with the constructivist theory of European integration processes, alongside which we will also give due consideration to the
relevant aspects of the political cultural literature and the existing knowledge of the impact of European integration on the changing interest-group political culture. After presenting the empirical data analysis framework we will present the empirical analysis. We will conclude by summarising our findings.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Constructivist theorisation of European integration processes

Constructivism has developed into two main streams – social and theoretical constructivism. Social constructivism emerged from the segment of international relations (IR) which examines the character or quality of social reality in international relations whilst taking account of both the material and ideational aspects of that reality. The ideational includes both the individual and collective levels and is dynamic. Theoretical constructivism is more interested in the knowledge of reality. Here the knowledge is understood in a broad sense. IR social constructivism applied in the context of the EU would be typically interested in the social interaction of states (e.g. Alexander Wendt), the impact of national norms in the international realm (e.g. Peter Katzenstein), the impacts of images of international or supra-national (EU) governance on the political actors in Europe (e.g. Thomas Diez), and the impacts of European norms on domestic politics (e.g. Thomas Risse). The latter is particularly useful for our research since it goes beyond the state-centred IR notions. It takes into account cross-border interactions and organised interest-group activity, as well as the role of ideas, the impact of shared beliefs and
the dominant discourses on (meso-level) policy processes.\textsuperscript{10} What makes it particularly relevant to our research is the rooting of constructivism in ‘a social ontology which insists that human agents do not exist independently from their social environment and their collectively shared systems of meanings (‘culture’ in a broad sense)’.\textsuperscript{11} Furthermore, through daily practice, human agency not only creates and reproduces, but also changes culture.\textsuperscript{12}

Although socialisation through European contacts is important and can be studied in its own right\textsuperscript{13}, in this article we will focus only on the linkage between the national interest-group Europeanisation (the European networking of national interest groups with their counterparts in the EU and with EU-level institutions – including the receipt of EU funding) and its impact on the policy behaviour of these interest groups at the national level without looking ‘into the black box’ of socialisation processes.

\textbf{The concept of political culture and the research into interest groups}

Modern research into interest groups takes account of the fact that a comparative study of interest groups and the political processes can only be meaningful if interest-group systems are investigated in terms of both their culture and political structure.\textsuperscript{14} In line with the Western-centric view, an early conceptualisation of the comparative study of interest groups distinguished variations among Western interest-group systems (as is the case with national political systems); however, it tended to relate to ‘other’ interest groups (political systems) simply as ‘non-Western’.\textsuperscript{15} At the beginning of the 1980s, interest in communist countries increased and distinctions were made between the ideological, the operational and the real political culture (based on evidence), together with some variations in the political cultures of communist
countries. Nevertheless, the interest groups and the interest-group systems of these countries have not been systematically included in any cross-country comparative research. However, the observation by Western authors that cultural changes may take place through networking remains valuable for contemporary research, as it offers an operationalisation of political culture that is still relevant.

In this article we will build on the idea that political culture can be defined as ‘the set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments, which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behaviour in the political system’. Since political culture covers political ideals as well as operating norms of a polity, and is at the same time also a manifestation of the psychological and subjective dimensions of politics, it in fact encompasses both -norms and behaviour, the subjective and activist dimensions of politics. Since it can be employed in studying the meso-level of politics, it may ‘travel’ among various systems and/or variations in a particular political system that is changing over time. Nevertheless, as Almond points out, the interactivity between the political structure and the culture leads to a situation in which (i) neither cultural propensities can be explained without referring to the historical experiences and contemporary structural constraints and opportunities, and (ii) political cultural (especially attitudinal) patterns may persist, even in circumstances of organised efforts to transform them. From this point of view, it would be unrealistic to expect enormous changes in interest-group culture in post-communist countries – new EU member states since 2004.

On one hand, the research into interest groups in the context of European integration has employed many theoretical/ conceptual frameworks, which were developed for the study of interest groups and their roles and impacts within the framework of national political systems. Even though empirical research into interest-group European adaptation and activity has been
proliferating, especially since the beginning of the 1990s, a significant meta-analysis and general theory of interest intermediation at the European level still seems to be lacking. Likewise, the differences between the political cultures of the participating agents and the non-participating agents have remained under-researched. On the other hand, the literature describing the changes in the political culture since the 1960s (first of all looking at the advanced industrial societies) has focused on domestic social change and tended to ignore the effects of globalisation (of which European integration is a part) on the political culture of national actors. In this article, we study the influence of EU integration processes on the political cultural changes of domestic interest groups. More precisely, we test the differences between (1) the political cultural characteristics of national interest groups involved in European networking and funding, and (2) the national interest groups not involved in European networking and funding.

**Europeanisation and interest-group political culture change**

So far, research has revealed that since European Union integration, interest groups can no longer be active only at the national level. An increasing number of interest groups are entering the area of EU policymaking. In addition, European, national, and regional political processes are no longer distinctly separated. In terms of the vertical dimension of the EU multi-level setting, interest groups also participate in EU policymaking and EU-implementation. Continued interaction among the EU-level and domestic-level interest groups has led to the development of a Europeanisation literature. The authors who refer to the Europeanisation of civil society reveal both the increased role of interest groups in governance at the EU level, the adoption of explicitly European rather than purely national dimension of civil society in the EU
political system, as well as the weakness of the resource-poor NGO segment of the EU-level civil society.

When looking at civil society in a post-communist context in the EU accession and EU member states in the post-1990s, both Europeanisation and democratisation processes matter. Not only this, civil society has also been considered to be a necessary pre-condition for democratisation of the (former) communist countries, and as such it has also been supported externally by Western countries and international organisations (including the European Community/European Union). Furthermore, there have been both high hopes as well as doubts that the Europeanisation of interest groups could serve as a democratising factor.\textsuperscript{30} However, just as Europeanisation was not ‘per se’ the primary goal of interest groups in older democracies, so too interest groups from post-communist EU accession states (and later EU member states) regard Europeanisation as an instrument for achieving their objectives rather than as a conscious end-goal\textsuperscript{31}. On one hand, it was already the case in the accession stage that the networking of interest groups from post-communist accession countries with Eurogroups depended on the willingness of Eurogroups to transfer some of their sectoral information, analysis and expert knowledge to the newcomers on subjects of EU policies, European institutions and legislative procedures within the EU. On the other hand, national interest groups in the new member states instrumentalised such empowerment in their own domestic realm.\textsuperscript{32} This insight seems to be largely the same as the research findings in old(er) EU member states, which have demonstrated that although EU policies have affected the political opportunity structures\textsuperscript{33} of interest groups, resources and domestic embeddedness\textsuperscript{34} can also influence the political behaviour of interest groups in the European Union.\textsuperscript{35} Additionally, the closer the relations with the national institutions the less European activities might be necessary for insider interest groups as they may also affect EU policymaking via national executives as members of the EU Council.\textsuperscript{36} In this
article, we primarily relate to the national-level activity of interest groups under the influence of the domestic interest groups linked with the EU level.

**The (post)communist path-dependence**

Due to the predominant research into democratic transition and consolidation, the research vocabulary emerging from the democratisation literature has persisted in treating civil society as a positively valued prerequisite and a factor ensuring democracy in post-communist countries. Similarly, in the context of external support for democratisation, NGOs and their financing have also been positively valued. In this way, studying the (post)communist democratisation has added to the pluralism of the related concepts already recognised in the Western literature (it recognises special interests, social movements and civil society).³⁷

In the predominantly Western literature two main deficiencies can be observed. Firstly, actors can be either civil or non-civil.³⁸ Secondly, an established myth about the general weakness of civil society in post-communist countries has persisted. In parallel with this, some literature has emerged which uses the interest group concept and being more aware of the particularities of specific kinds of interest groups (e.g. trade unions, environmental, gender or regional interest groups) and their Europeanisation.³⁹

Overall, it is increasingly recognised that not only are there different communist legacies of various interest groups in the same country (e.g. old systemic interest groups such as old trade unions and newly created oppositional interest groups like environmental groups and new trade unions)⁴⁰, but there are also important variations among the interest-group systems of post-communist countries⁴¹ - including the fact that they do not all depend on the state financing to the same extent. Nevertheless, it has been possible to observe the different dynamics of particular
interest groups types within a particular post-communist country (e.g. an increase in the development of environmental organisations, a decline in trade unions). Last but not least, the strength of civil society may also change over time in various post-communist countries to various extents and in idiosyncratic ways.

While the literature has increasingly covered the variations mentioned, a systematic comparative research is still lacking. Furthermore, the available studies in the European-integration literature do not provide research results that could also be generalised to the interest-group systems of the new EU member states. Indeed, some authors have highlighted the particularities of post-socialist interest-group systems and their uneven Europeanisation in top-down and bottom-up terms. The legacy of the EU’s impact on civil society in the post-communist countries in the accession stage is believed to be ambivalent. It has been revealed that while interest groups in the Central Eastern Europe may be empowered by various EU-level resources to act more efficiently at the domestic national and sub-national level, the post-communist bottom-up impact of interest groups on the EU-level politics appears to remain rather weak.

While examining the EU impact on domestic interest groups in post-communist countries, we take into account the fact that research into Western EU member states points towards the substantial impact that European integration has had in shaping the domestic systems of interest representation and the fact that interest groups could make use of opportunities for multilevel venue shopping. As some findings in older EU member states demonstrate, it is not EU financial support but organisational connectedness that matters in changing national interest-group behavior; and in this article both sets of variables will be taken into account.

THE THEORETICAL-ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE ARTICLE
While there are several key ‘umbrella’ research questions which have found a place in the research on interest-group politics within the framework of the European integration processes (Table 1), our investigation - broadly speaking - fits into the segment of research on the impact of interest-group resources and interest-group involvement in European integration on their role in domestic policymaking (marked in grey in Table 1).
Table 1: Exploring the top-down and bottom-up Europeanisation of interest-group politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>research questions</th>
<th>factors</th>
<th>top-down view</th>
<th>bottom-up view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>impact of governing styles</td>
<td>national patterns of interest group intermediation</td>
<td>EU impact on national structures</td>
<td>the impact of national structures on EU-level patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impact of interest group resources</td>
<td>multi-level networking and EU funding of national interest groups</td>
<td>the impact of the national IG’s European networking with their counterparts and the IG’s linkages with EU-level institutions on national IG resources and their role in domestic policymaking</td>
<td>the impact of national IG EU networking on EU-level interest group resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impact of institutions on a two-level game</td>
<td>domestic political system opportunity structure</td>
<td>the impact of national political system veto points in the implementation of EU accession agreement/EU policies</td>
<td>the impact on national IG role in managing EU affairs at home (via national parliament and national executive)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the purpose of our research, a social-constructivist approach is combined with the concept of political culture. This approach is appropriate for studying the politics of interest groups within the framework of the multi-level political system of the EU, where interactions between levels are expected to make a difference at the particular level of the system – be it the sub-national, national or supranational. More precisely, our analysis is focused on the impact of the Europeanisation of national interest groups on the political culture of national interest groups. The working definition of the Europeanisation of interest groups for this article includes national interest groups networking with their European counterparts, national interest groups contacting EU decision-makers and resources received from the EU. While political culture is a general phenomenon which can be approached from many different angles, due to the limited availability of data, we will restrict our focus to the political behaviour/activity of interest groups in this article.

In line with expectations that the EU is to strengthen civil society in post-communist EU member states, we hypothesise that the Europeanisation of national interest groups transforms the political culture of interest groups in the direction of a more pro-active role in the national policymaking.

**DATA, METHOD AND ANALYTICAL MODEL**

To test the hypothesis, we used data from two face-to-face surveys of representatives of seventy interest groups in the spring of 1996 and from ninety-seven interest groups between March and May 2012. In both surveys, we used essentially the same measurement instrument, namely a survey questionnaire. The population consisted of the most active interest groups from eleven
policy fields: economic, social, housing and agricultural policy, policy towards the disabled, environmental protection, health, education, culture, sports policy and policy in the field of marketing/public relations. The interest groups were those which had been identified by previous empirical research as well as by consulting scholars - experts in a particular policy sector in Slovenia. The questionnaire used for the 1996 survey was only adapted in 2012 to Slovenia’s full EU membership circumstances. To allow cross-time comparison, both data-sets from 1996 and 2012 were merged into one data-set of a panel of the fifty interest groups, which participated in both time periods. To test the effect of Europeanisation, we conducted our analysis in two main steps. In the first step, within the panel of fifty interest groups, we observed changes from 1996 to 2012 in the general level of activity intended to influence policy-making processes. In the second step, we used a linear regression model to test the effect of Europeanisation on the differences between interest groups regarding their behaviour and activities in 2012 (the ninety-seven organisations surveyed in 2012 were included in the analysis).

Two main variables were used in this study to test our hypothesis: independent variables on Europeanisation and dependent variables on interest-group activity in influencing policy process. Activities designed to influence policy processes (as a dependent variable or an outcome) were measured by a composite index, which included five indicators of time spent for the following five particular activities: (a) organising concrete actions to solve broader social problems; (b) organising training for leadership or for members of an organisation/group to lobby successfully; (c) drafting bills or amendments to bills in the procedure; (d) making contact with the persons who make decisions on the problem areas in which the organisation/group seeks a solution; (e) implementing or commissioning research about the social problems an organisation/group is addressing. The time spent on each individual activity was measured on a five-point scale (1 – no
time at all … 5 – a lot of time). A principal component analysis was performed beforehand for the population of interest groups in 2012 and the results supported our expectation that all five indicators measured the same variable\textsuperscript{53} - \textit{activities for influencing policy processes}. Therefore, the index was prepared as an average value for all five indicators – again on the five-point scale\textsuperscript{54}.

Furthermore, we prepared our main explanatory (independent) variable, \textit{Europeanisation}, as a composite index. Complete operationalisation of the concept of Europeanisation (interest groups networking with their European counterparts, national interest-group contacts with EU decision-makers, and resources received from the EU) was possible only for the 2012 data\textsuperscript{55}. Several questions from our 2012 interviews could be taken as an indicator of networking with foreign interest organisations and Europeanisation. In order to form an indicator of Europeanisation, we conducted principal component analyses on variables that exclusively measure the connections and impacts of European organisations. The following variables were included in the analysis: (a) the interest group gains the majority of its support or assistance from interest organisations, from EU member states, or from EU-level interest groups (binary); (b) the EU structural funds are a key source of funding for the interest group (binary); (c) the interest group supports candidates at elections to the European Parliament (5-point scale); (d) the interest group has contacts with EU officials (5-point scale); and (e) the interest group has contacts with members of European parliament (5-point scale). The analysis confirmed our expectations: only one meaningful component (with an eigenvalue above 1) was extracted and loadings for all five indicators were high enough to include all of them in the composite index of Europeanisation.\textsuperscript{56}

The first survey of the interest groups in Slovenia took place in 1996, eight years prior to Slovenia’s full EU membership, whilst the second survey took place in 2012, eight years after Slovenia’s accession to full EU membership. The panel of fifty organisations participated in both surveys. Therefore, we have a quasi-experimental situation in which we can observe the level of interest-group activity in influencing the policy process both prior to and since Slovenia’s full EU membership. We assume that Slovenia’s EU accession could be an important fact in explaining the expected changes in interest-group activity. When comparing the values of the index for measuring activity influencing policy processes on the panel of fifty organisations in both time points, we can observe statistically significant differences: the level of activity is higher in 2012 (with a value of 3.2 on the five-point scale) than in 1996 (with a value of 2.7) (see Table 2).

Table 2: A comparison of activity spent influencing policy processes in 1996 and in 2012 (the mean values of the composite index and the result of the t-test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation (SD)</th>
<th>Std. error of mean (SEM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.216</td>
<td>0.79472</td>
<td>0.11239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.732</td>
<td>0.63324</td>
<td>0.08955</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ t = 4.167; \quad p < 0.01 \]
When we examine the details and the entire sample set for both time points (the ninety-seven organisations in 2012, and the seventy organisations in 1996), we can see that the most active interest groups in both time points are not only active within their national borders. By 2012, more than three quarters (76.3 percent) of the organisations surveyed are also members of international organisations. The reason for this may be due to their search for support in attempting to influence policymaking or in seeking support in their main activity; we cannot be certain. This is higher than in 1996, when the proportion of organisations who were members of an international umbrella organisation reached two thirds (66.7 percent) of those organisations interviewed. Moreover, fifty-one organisations (in 2012) devoted a lot of their time to networking with organisations from abroad.

As discovered by previous research on interest groups\(^5^7\), interest groups do not decide to join EU associations based on any specific cost-benefit analysis, but rather due to more diffuse considerations. Since complete exit from EU policymaking may not be feasible, membership of EU umbrella organisations is worth paying for\(^5^8\). Indeed, many of the organisations interviewed, regardless of their membership of international organisations (including European organisations), turn to similar organisations abroad when attempting to influence policymaking at the national level in Slovenia. Again, the share of the organisations interviewed which receive support from abroad is higher in 2012 (66 percent) than in 1996 (57.4 percent). Support may not only be financial or material. In fact, only five organisations reported receiving material support. Knowhow and experience remains the most important form of support provided at both time points. In 2012, forty-eight organisations reported receiving support in the form of information and analysis, thirty-six in the form of expert help, and twenty-two organisations reported that they secured the backing of representatives of foreign organisations who came to Slovenia to
meet with Slovenian decision-makers. Other forms of support include exchanges of experience, letters of support from interest groups in other European nations sent to Slovenian decision-makers, as well as moral support or moral help.

Despite the fact that organisations rarely receive financial support from international organisations, networking may help them to acquire funding from European structural funds. In 2012, fifty-six organisations (out of the ninety-seven) are also funded through European programmes, whilst for twenty-two of the organisations European structural funds represent one of three key sources of funding. It is therefore not surprising that organisations from Slovenia for the most part turn to the EU for support. Twenty-four organisations receive most of their support from EU-level organisations while another twenty-four from organisations that come from other EU member states; only eleven organisations receive most of their support from (other) international organisation and two from national organisations that are not EU member states.

Two questions still remain: Did Europeanisation substantially contribute to the changes in interest-groups activity during the sixteen years between surveys? And are there other more important (contextual) factors that affect the level of interest-groups activity? Simply comparing the data for both time points does not provide a satisfactory answer to these questions. Thus, we prepared a regression model of the 2012 data whereby we were able to compare the relative importance of Europeanisation to other possible factors influencing the activity of interest groups.

EUROPEANISATION AS A FACTOR DETERMINING INTEREST-ORGANISATION ACTIVITY INFLUENCING POLICY PROCESSES IN 2012
In general we assume that those interest organisations which are more Europeanised (namely those which are funded from EU funds, have frequent contact with EU officials, receive support from European interest organisations or from interest organisation from other European countries, etc.) are more active in influencing policy processes at the national level than those interest organisations which are less Europeanised. We can support this thesis by observing the correlation at the level of the individual dimensions of Europeanisation and interest-groups activity (individual indicators included in the composite measurement of the Europeanisation of interest groups and interest-group activity). A bivariate analysis reveals that interest groups with access to EU structural funds as a source of financing more frequently organise training in lobbying techniques (30.4 percent) and more often draft or amend bills in procedure (57.1 percent) than interest organisations without access to EU structural funds (12.2 percent, 41.5 percent) (see Table 3). The same pattern can be observed for the differences between interest groups in terms of their contacts with EU officials and the support they receive from interest groups in other European countries or from interest groups at the European level (see Table 3). In general, we can say that there is higher potential to influence policy processes among those organisations which are more internationally connected at the European level.
Table 3: Activities for influencing policy processes and the Europeanisation of interest groups – bivariate analysis on 2012 data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities of IG for influencing policy process:</th>
<th>A lot of time for training for lobbying</th>
<th>A lot of time for drafting bills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimensions of Europeanisation:</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Cramer's V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financing from EU structural funds</td>
<td>**4.452</td>
<td>2.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– yes</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>0.214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– no</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from interest organisations at EU level or from other European countries</td>
<td>**3.994</td>
<td>*3.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– yes</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>0.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– rarely or never</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 97; ** p < 0.05; * p < 0.10

Finally we tested the effect of Europeanisation on interest-group activity using the linear multiple regression model where the effect of Europeanisation was controlled for the following two variables (also possible factors of interest-group activity): 1) an interest group type (economic/ non-economic interest group)\textsuperscript{59}; and 2) professionalisation (operationalised with the number of fulltime employed staff)\textsuperscript{60}. The extent of the Europeanisation of interest groups and
their level of activity were measured with the composite measurement (indices) presented above. We prepared two regression models: 1) in the first model (Model 1), we observed only the effect of our primary independent variable, Europeanisation; 2) in the second model (Model 2), we added (as control variables) a further two factors (predictors) of interest-group activity, namely the type and level of professionalisation (FTE) (see Table 4). Both models are statistically significant; however, at the same time, the predictive power of the independent variables included (R²) is rather low: only 11.6 percent of the variability of interest-group activity is explained by Model 1 and still less than one fifth of the variability (18.2 percent) by Model 2 (Table 4). In general, these results confirm our hypothesis about the influence of Europeanisation: a higher degree of Europeanisation indicates a correspondingly higher level of interest-group activity – with an increase of the Europeanisation index by one unit value, the index measuring the activities for influencing policy processes increases by 0.233 of unit (Table 4 – Model 2).
**Table 4:** Predictors of activity spent influencing policymaking – linear regression with regression coefficients (B) and standardised regression coefficients (Beta) (data from 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>3.241</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>2.934</td>
<td>0.121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europeanisation index</td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td>0.071 <strong>0.354</strong></td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>0.069 <strong>0.319</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(non) economic groups</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.319</td>
<td>0.138 *0.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalisation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>0.047 *0.213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²=0.116</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adjusted R²=0.182</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F = 13.470**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F = 8.026**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N=96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p<0.01; *p<0.05

When two control (independent) variables are introduced to the model (Model 2), all three predictors are revealed to be statistically significant; however, the level of Europeanisation remains the most important (Beta = 0.319) while the type of organisation (non/economic) and the level of professionalisation are slightly less important and almost on the same level (0.215 and 0.213) (Table 4). Additionally, a comparison of Model 1 and Model 2 reveals that the predictive power of the model becomes stronger when the control variables are included: the amount of explained variance ($R^2$) in the second model substantially increases compared to the first model (from 0.116 to 0.182). Thus we can say that not only does Europeanisation (the strongest effect within the model) have an impact on the activities of interest organisations, but also both control
variables do too: a) a higher level of professionalisation brings a higher level of activity; and b) the fact that an organisation is an economic interest group contributes to the greater extent of activity of the organisation. The fact that a substantial amount of variance remains unexplained within the tested model (81.8 percent) suggests that, apart from the three factors observed, there are may be other factors strongly contributing to the variability of interest-organization activity in influencing policy processes. Among them may be institutional factors (the political system opportunity structure including the neo-corporatist arrangements), the organisational characteristics of the interest group, and economic factors.

There is one further consideration in our understanding of Europeanisation as the primary factor affecting the activity of interest organisations. Indeed, it is hard to draw a clear line between Europeanisation and the internationalisation of (Slovenian) interest groups. We can even argue that Europeanisation is only one aspect of internationalisation. It is a fact that most of the organisations surveyed (in 2012) have connections to and receive support from their counterparts in Europe (at the national or supranational level). When we asked about the connections and support from similar organisations abroad, we found out that 50 percent of organisations primarily connected to and received support from similar organisations within Europe, whilst only 13.6 percent of organisations primarily gained support from organisations outside Europe, and approximately 36 percent of organisations did not mention any connections with organisations abroad. To summarise, in the case of Slovenian interest organisations, we may say that internationalisation actually means Europeanisation.
CONCLUSIONS

In line with the assumptions that external (EU) influences on civil society organisations in post-communist countries will bring about a stronger and more pro-active civil society in these countries, we hypothesised that the Europeanisation of national interest groups (namely, when a national interest group networks with their European counterparts, establishes contacts with EU-level decision-makers and receives resources from EU funds) would actually make a difference to the political culture of interest groups (for the purpose of this article defined in behavioural terms only) in the direction expected.

Our analysis, based on the case study of Slovenia, has revealed that the interest group population as well as their characteristics have changed during the period from Slovenia’s pre-accession stage to full EU membership. Additionally, there are more interest groups active in Slovenia in the same policy fields in 2012 compared to 1996 - which could perhaps (also) be an indication of democratisation processes; in 2012 they are generally more internationally (in fact predominantly EU) connected, receive more support from abroad (effectively from the EU), and are also more active in national policy processes than in 1996. Taking into account the literature on the political culture, it can be estimated that the interest groups investigated have experienced a relatively major political cultural change in a rather short space of time.

But did Europeanisation in the last sixteen years (and especially after the 2004 enlargement) substantially contribute to the changes in interest-group activity and are there other more important (contextual) factors that affect the level of interest-group activity? Our analysis shows that Europeanisation (in terms of the vertical interactions of interest groups) has in fact impacted to some degree on the political culture of national interest groups. It can be said that the activities for influencing policy processes at the national level increase with interest groups’
international linkages (these linkages being predominantly European). When controlling the effect of *Europeanisation* on *interest-group activity* for the impact of the two other possible factors of interest-group policy activities (economic/non-economic interest group type and interest group professionalisation in terms of the number of full-time employed staff), the hypothesis regarding the influence of Europeanisation has been confirmed. A higher degree of Europeanisation in fact does also mean a higher level of interest-group national policy activity; however, when processing the data on the population of the most active interest groups in the eleven selected policy fields, it does not exert a great explanatory power. Even after including all the three variables in the model, only about twenty percent of the variability among interest-organisation activity in influencing national policy processes has been explained. This may still allow for the possibility that in the case that all the interest groups are included, regardless of the level of their policy activity, the explanatory power of Europeanisation in explaining the variations among interest groups may be greater.

Through these lenses, Europeanised interest-group activity may be regarded as a bridge in the EU’s impacting on both particular policy activism and policy shaping in an EU member state (as previously also suggested by Hicks\(^61\)). It may also be that the EU’s potential to intervene in the politics of new EU member states varies significantly across policy fields\(^62\); however, due to the limited existing data this has not been tested and remains a further area for future research.

It also remains to be fully investigated what the overall effect of the EU has been on the development of post-communist civil society (as well as the overall European civil society development), taking into account the EU’s selective impacts on particular segments of the national interest group universe only. Therefore, it is not only the national embeddedness of interest groups as a factor of Europeanisation that needs to be studied, but also the European embeddedness of Europeanised national interest groups through their European links (usually
concentrated on a particular segment of the EU institutions and policy fields/issues) that seems to
be important when investigating Europeanisation processes.

Finally, even though our findings do support the thesis known in the social constructivist
literature that Europeanisation makes a difference, the actual processes and the factors involved
still need to be analysed. As it is not possible to identify any decisive impact that Europeanised
national interest groups have on their political culture (in our research in fact national policy
behaviour). Further research is also needed in order to explain fully the policy behaviour of
interest groups in the national policy processes, taking into account more complex theoretical
frameworks and also including other possible factors, such as institutional, political,
organisational and economic variables.

Notes

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12 Ibid.


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Almond, ‘Communism and Political Culture Theory,’ 127.

Ibid.


Pye, ‘Political Culture,’ 220.


26 Beyers et al., ‘Researching Interest Group Politics in Europe and Elsewhere: Much We Study, Little We Know?’

27 Eising, ‘Interest Groups in EU Policymaking.’

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44 Eising, ‘Interest Groups in EU Policymaking.’
46 Kutter and Trappmann, ‘Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe: The Ambivalent Legacy of Accession.’


52 S. Verba, ‘Comparative Political Culture,’ 515.

53 One component with an eigenvalue above Kaiser’s criterion of 1 was extracted and explained 42.41 percent of the variance (KMO = 0.706).

54 The scale reliability of the 2012 data is good (Cronbach Alpha = 0.645), while it is worse for the 1996 data (Cronbach Alpha = 0.503).

55 In 1996, Slovenia was not yet an EU member, and therefore some questions about Europeanisation in the first survey were not asked; these questions would have not been meaningful to ask.

56 The component with an eigenvalue above Kaiser’s criterion of 1 explains 42.41 percent of the variance (KMO = 0.706). Using this component as a standardised measurement (index) for Europeanisation, we attained an appropriate level of reliability of measurement (Θ = 0.640). The index scale is standardised as a deviation from the mean value, so its mean value is 0, and (on the group of 97 organisations in 2012) its minimum value is -1.282 and its maximum value is 2.947.

58 Ibid.

59 The interest group is economic (value 1); the interest group is noneconomic (value 0).

60 Value 0= no staff employed; value 1= 1-5 employees; 2= 6-10 employees; 3= 11-20 employees; 4= 21-100 employed; and 5= above 100 employees.

61 Hicks, ‘Setting Agendas and Shaping Activism: EU Influence on Central and Eastern European Environmental Movements,’ 216, 227.

62 Kutter and Trappmann, ‘Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe,’ 50–51.