

# HOW ARE MULTI-LEVEL AND MULTI-INSTITUTIONAL LOBBYING STRATEGIES DEVELOPED?

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## Abstract

Our contribution focuses on a *bottom-up view of the inputs of national interest organisations into EU-level policymaking*. We pay particular attention to two categories of strategy adopted by interest organisations: (1) the strategies they adopt in terms of their selection of the level of government and the choice of institution to lobby (the national executive, national parliament and the executive EU institutions - the European Commission and EU Council, as well as the European Parliament); and (2) the strategies they adopt in terms of lobbying methods and techniques.

Based on data from the INTEREURO Multi-Level Governance Module (MLG) ([www.intereuro.eu](http://www.intereuro.eu)), we tested the following determinants which we expected to shape the strategies of interest organisations: the *type* of interest organisation (whether economic or non-economic); the *policy field* (the empirical data on the 20 most salient legislative proposals in the period from 2008 to 2010 cover three policy fields – (i) environment and energy, (ii) rights and (iii) finances); *country* variations (data on interest organisations' input into EU policymaking was gathered for five countries: Germany, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Sweden and the UK); and finally, the *EU funding* of interest organisations and their *membership of EU umbrella organisations*.

Our preliminary study reveals that the greatest difference among IOs appears to be between the IOs from the old member states (Germany, the UK and the Netherlands), which exhibit above-average levels of activity, and those from the new EU member states (Sweden, Slovenia) which exhibit below-average levels of activity. We can observe national patterns in the strategies of IOs in the scope of their targeting national and EU-level institutions. The greatest difference in the provision of information to political institutions at both levels of government can be observed when comparing the IOs from the UK with those from Slovenia; the scale of this difference can be characterised as *giants against dwarfs*.

The differences in activity levels between **countries** are greater than the differences between different policy fields. Interest organisations are more homogeneous within a country than within the same policy field.

The other variables - namely financing from EU programmes, membership of European umbrella organisations, and the type of IO (whether economic or non-economic) - all prove to be insignificant factors on the selection of lobbying venues by IOs.

Although, as a rule, IOs from all five countries employ a media and publishing strategy more often than they mobilise their members and supporters, we can observe national patterns in their selection of strategy and in the intensity of its instrumentalisation.

## INTRODUCTION

The representation of interests in the EU political system is very complex – both in terms of the sources of interest organisations<sup>1</sup> feeding into the EU-level policy processes as well as the interplay of bottom-up, top-down and horizontal interest organisations' inputs into EU policymaking. Within this framework, it has often been observed by those evaluating the EU level of policymaking that there are particular biases in the participation of IOs.

Our research focuses on the representation processes of IOs in the context of a multi-level involvement in EU-level policymaking processes. More precisely, these processes are investigated from a **bottom-up perspective on the input of national interest organisations into EU-level policymaking**. We are primarily concerned with the selection of lobbying strategies made by interest organisations in terms of the *level of government* (national, EU) and in terms of the *lobbying methods and techniques* they use to target a particular institution in the multi-level political system.

Our three main research questions are:

**Q1:** How do interest organisations choose their strategies in terms of the **input venues**? (Here, we differentiate between the national venue, where IOs lobby national institutions to convey their interests up to the EU level, and the European venue where IOs lobby EU institutions directly.)

**Q2:** How do interest organisations choose their strategies in terms of **lobbying methods and techniques**?

**Q3: Which factors influence** interest organisations' choices of strategies? We proceed to answer this question from the following hypothetical determinants that indicate interest representation biases in EU policymaking:

- the *type* of interest organisation (whether economic or non-economic);
- *policy field* (the empirical data covers three policy fields: environment and energy, rights, and finances);
- *country* variations (data on interest organisations' input into EU policymaking was gathered for five countries: Germany, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Sweden and the UK);
- *EU funding* of interest organisations;
- *membership of EU umbrella organisations*.

## DATA AND METHODS OF ANALYSIS

The data collected within the framework of the INTEREURO Multi-Level Government Module focuses on the involvement of national-level actors in EU policymaking processes. This includes interviews conducted with national officials and non-state stakeholders in Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Slovenia related to 20 most salient legislative proposals in the period from 2008 to 2010. However, the current analysis is based on the data gathered in those interviews with national interest organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> For the argumentation in favour of using this term, see Jan Beyers, Rainer Eising, William Maloney (2008), 'Researching Interest Group Politics in Europe and Elsewhere: Much We Study, Little We Know?', *West European Politics*, 31:6, 1103–1128.

The interest organisations interviewed are not representative of the population of interest groups in the countries selected; rather, they are those groups **actually involved** in EU policymaking on selected EU-level policy proposals. At this level of analysis, no IO was revealed to be pursuing a lobbying strategy that targets European political institutions to the exclusion of national institutions; there are however IOs which pursue exclusively **national strategies or a combination of a European and national strategy**.

Our cases (units of analysis) are the interest organisations interviewed. Using this data, we developed two types of indexes to measure the intensity and the extent of **lobbying strategies**:

- a) We formed six **'venue strategy' indexes** for the following venues: the national executive, the national parliament, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the EU Council and permanent representations, and civil society. The indexes are based on data that records how frequently and to whom interest organisations provide information with the purpose of influencing the legislative outcome.<sup>2</sup>
- b) We also formed two indexes for **'methods and techniques strategy'** for the following two lobbying strategies: (i) media and publishing, and (ii) the mobilisation of members and supporters. (For a more detailed explanation, see the presentation of indexes below).

To explain the differences between the strategies and methods of interest organisations (to test the importance of the abovementioned determinants) we applied a bivariate (simple tabulations) and a multivariate (regression) analysis with the following possible factors: the type of interest group; the EU funding of the interest organisation; their membership of an EU umbrella organisation; the policy field in which they operate; and their country origin.

## THE KEY FINDINGS

### ***The Factors Determining the Intensity of Lobbying at Various Venues***

Based on the regression analysis<sup>3</sup> (Table 1), the key determinant of multi-level lobbying is the country origin (older or younger EU member state) of an interest organisation: interest organisations from older EU members (Germany, the Netherlands and the UK) are systematically more active in all respected venues than those from younger member states (Sweden, Slovenia). The other factors we might have expected to have been systematically relevant proved not to be, but rather were relevant only for certain particular

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<sup>2</sup> To obtain this data, we collected the answers to the following question(s): *"The following questions concern the different political institutions your organization might have provided information to with the purpose of influencing the legislative outcome of the directive proposal. I will show you a list with different political institutions and I would like to know how regularly you provided these institutions with information. Was this never, rarely, sometimes, frequently or very frequently?"* Answers were to be arranged on a scale of 1 to 5. The index value for each IO was calculated using the following procedure: (1) first the average value on the scale of 1 to 5 was calculated for all actors/institutions contacted; (2) this average value was then multiplied by the number of actors/institutions that had been contacted more than rarely; (3) finally, a correction was applied for those providing information frequently or very frequently to at least one 'target'.

<sup>3</sup> We used linear regression and bivariate logistic regression analyses.

venues. For instance, the characteristics of an IO are relevant only in relation to the IO’s interaction with civil society.

**Table 1:** The Results of Regression Analysis – The Factors of Lobbying Intensity at the Various Venues

<i>Factors:</i>	<i>Lobbying indexes:</i> provision of information to the NATIONAL EXECUTIVE	provision of information to the NATIONAL PARLIAMENT	provision of information to the EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT	provision of information to the EUROPEAN COMMISSION	provision of information to the EU COUNCIL and/or PERM. REPR.	Provision of information to CIVIL SOCIETY
old EU members	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++
policy field: rights		+++				
finance	-	--				
environment, energy	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref	ref
financing from EU programmes	++		-			+
member of an umbrella org.				-		++
group type: economic			--			---

**Venue Strategies (national-European; executive-representative institutions)**

From the national point of view, only two main interest organisation strategies could be identified: a national strategy and a combination of a national and a European strategy. The majority of interest organisations reported having contact with national institutions; while a sizable portion of interest organisations also report having contact with EU institutions and civil society. However, we can observe a significant difference between the older and the younger EU member states regarding the proportion of IOs lobbying on both levels:

United Kingdom	100.0 %
The Netherlands	85.7%
Germany	84.2%
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Sweden	45.5%
Slovenia	22.9%

In general, the European Parliament is the single most lobbied institution (with the exception of IOs from Slovenia) (Table 2). Interest organisations differ less when deciding whether to adopt a national or European lobbying strategy than they do when selecting *which institutions* to target. They particularly differ in deciding whether to give information to

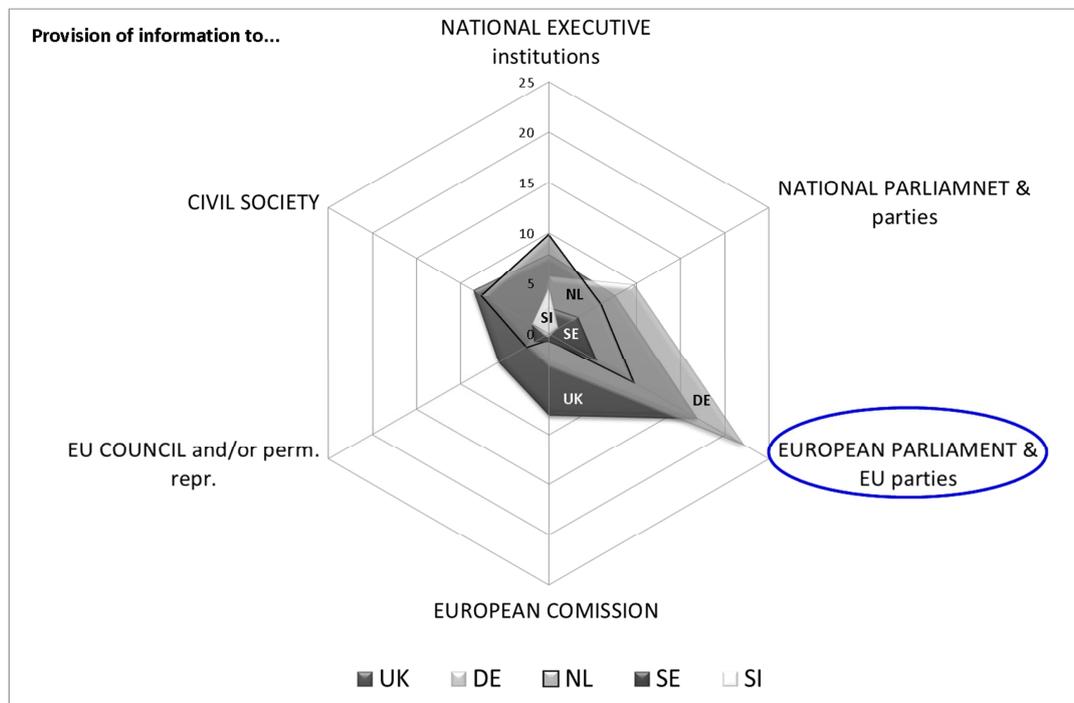
- the national executive and/or the national parliament;
- the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council and national representations in Brussels.

As shown in Table 2 and Figure 1, IOs from the UK stand out with an overall outstanding provision of information to all national and EU-level institutions as well as to civil society. IOs from Germany differentiate themselves with their above-average lobbying of the national parliament and the European Parliament. Meanwhile, IOs from the Netherlands focus most on lobbying the European Parliament and civil society and on providing information to the national executive at a comparable level. Slovenian IOs mostly tend to provide information to the national government, but even this strategy is underdeveloped compared to the IOs from the other countries studied.

**Table 2:** ‘Venue strategy’ Indexes - Average Values for Countries

Provision of information to...	NATIONAL EXECUTIVE institutions	NATIONAL PARLIAMENT & parties	EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT and EU parties	EUROPEAN COMMISSION	EU COUNCIL and/or perm. repr.	CIVIL SOCIETY
Germany	5.66	9.65	22.20	3.32	2.54	1.45
The Netherlands	9.86	5.94	9.62	0.57	2.48	7.61
Sweden	2.64	3.27	5.46	0.82	1.61	1.86
United Kingdom	7.91	7.58	16.90	8.13	5.72	8.60
Slovenia	4.67	1.08	0.29	0.39	0.43	1.89
Total	5.96	4.89	9.52	2.41	2.22	3.82

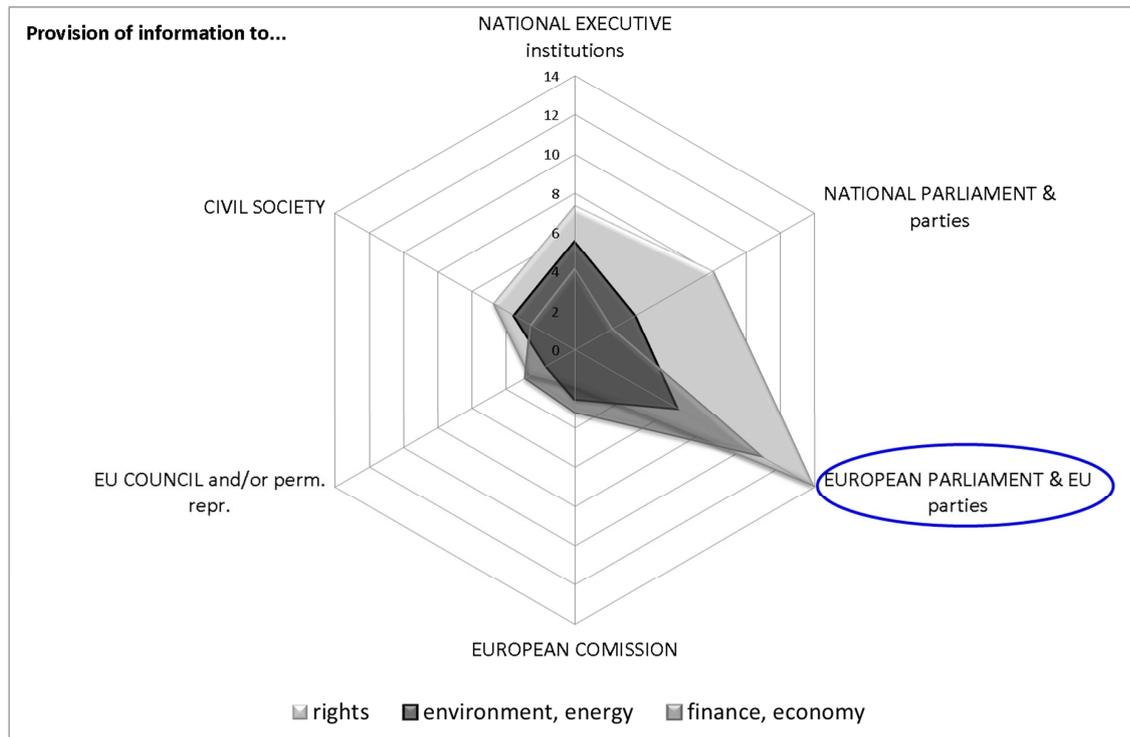
**Figure 1:** ‘Venue Strategy’ Indexes - Average Values for Countries



### Differences between Policy Fields

The differences between **countries** are greater than the differences between policy fields. This means that the variability among the interest organisations within a country is lower than the variability within a **policy field** (interest organisations are more homogeneous within a country than within the same policy field).

**Figure 2:** 'Venue Strategy' Indexes -Average Values for Policy Fields



**Table 3:** Venue Strategy Indexes - Average Values For Policy Fields

Provision of information to...	NATIONAL EXECUTIVE institutions	NATIONAL PARLIAMENT & parties	EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT & EU parties	EUROPEAN COMMISSION	EU COUNCIL and/or perm. repr.	CIVIL SOCIETY
rights	7.40	8.07	13.95	1.94	2.70	4.77
environment, energy	5.55	3.56	5.97	2.48	1.64	3.58
finance, economy	4.20	2.21	10.81	3.19	2.91	2.58
Total	5.96	4.89	9.52	2.41	2.22	3.82

## ***Lobbying Methods and Techniques***

We measured the intensity and the scope of the ***lobbying methods and techniques*** used across ten activities.<sup>4</sup> Our ***analysis*** demonstrates that we can speak of there being ***three dimensions***<sup>5</sup>:

1. ***Media appearances and contacts, publishing***

- Organise press conferences or distributed press releases
- Publish research reports and brochures
- Participate in debates in the media (e.g. giving interviews, editorials, opinion letters, open forums)
- Contact reporters and journalists to increase media attention

2. ***The mobilisation of members and supporters...***

- Encourage members and supporters to lobby policymakers, to initiate letter-writing campaigns or petitions directed at public officials
- Publish statements and position papers (on your own website)
- Use of social media to publicise your position

3. ***A professional lobbying strategy*** (not used for further data processing due to the small number of IOs using this method):

- Place advertisements in newspapers and magazines
- Stage protest activities involving members and supporters (strikes, consumer boycotts, public demonstrations)
- Hire commercial consultants (agents who are paid to influence policymakers on behalf of your organization)

Due to the small number of organisations exclusively employing professional lobbying methods, we chose to develop '***media index***' and '***mobilisation index***' for further analyses.<sup>6</sup>

Based on our data analysis, interest organisations do not appear to adapt lobbying strategies to the idiosyncrasies of particular institutions (the executive/representative at the national and EU-level).

***IOs which are more active at a given level at any institution tend to use more varied methods and techniques.***

There are no systematic and relevant differences in terms of their targeting of national executives or parliaments or European institutions.

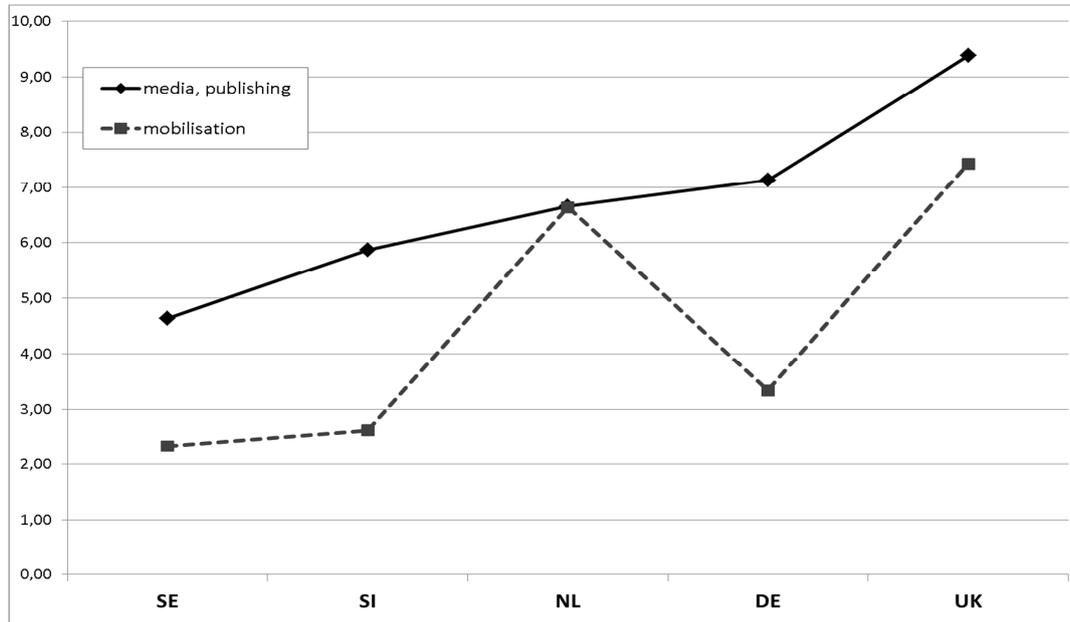
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<sup>4</sup> Answers to the following question were used: "*How frequently did [NAME ORGANISATION] undertake the following activities to try to affect or influence legislative outcomes? (never, rarely, sometimes, frequently or very frequently)*" The available answers were arranged on a scale of 1 to 5.

<sup>5</sup> We used a principal component analysis and a hierarchical clustering analysis.

<sup>6</sup> The index value for each IO was calculated using the following procedure: (1) first, the average value on the scale of 1 to 5 was calculated for all methods included into the index; (2) this average value was then multiplied by the number of methods that had been used 'rarely' or more often than 'rarely'; (3) finally a correction was applied for those using a method 'frequently' or 'very frequently'.

**Figure 3:** The Use of Lobbying Methods and Techniques – Two Lobbying Strategy Indexes (Media and Publishing; the Mobilisation of Members and Supporters)



**Table 4:** ‘Lobbying Method Strategy’ Indexes

	Media and publishing	Mobilisation of members and supporters
Germany	7.13	3.34
The Netherlands	6.66	6.64
Sweden	4.64	2.33
United Kingdom	9.38	7.43
Slovenia	5.86	2.62
Total	6.71	4.17

**The UK** stands out in terms of *mobilisation campaigns* combined with an above-average *use of media*, applying expertise, and strategies that use position papers.

**Germany** stands out with an above-average *media* orientation combined with an above-average use of press conferences, the use of expertise, contacting journalists and the use position papers.

**The Netherlands** stands out with an above-average *social media* orientation.

**Sweden** stands out due to its above-average use of *position papers*.

**Slovenia** is idiosyncratic in that the activity levels of its interest organisations are *below average in all* aspects.

## CONCLUSIONS

The main conclusions of our study are as follows:

1. Of the political institutions studied, the European Parliament and political parties are the most lobbied (except by IOs from Slovenia).
2. Interest representation is not transmitted equally from the national to the EU level. The main difference appears to be the difference between the IOs from the old MSs (Germany, the UK and the Netherlands) and those from the new EU MSs (Sweden and Slovenia). IOs from the old EU MSs are more active at the EU level than IOs from newer EU MSs – particularly in providing information to the European Parliament.
3. National patterns of interest organisation strategies are evident in terms of the scope of their targeting the national executive and the national parliament (the Netherlands and the UK stand out by the quantity of information provided to their national governments; Germany and the UK stand out in the quantity of information provided to their national parliaments) and in terms of the scope of their targeting of EU-level institutions for the provision of information (Germany and the UK stand out in relation to the European Parliament and European parties, while the UK stands out specifically in relation to the European Commission, the EU Council and member state representations). Overall, the greatest differences evident are between the IOs from the UK and those from Slovenia. The differences in activity can be characterised as **giants compared to dwarfs**.
4. The differences between countries are greater than the differences between policy fields - interest organisations are more homogeneous within a country than within the same policy field.
5. Other factors, such as the finances IOs receive from EU programmes, their membership of European umbrella organisations and the type of IO (economic or non-economic), have proved to be insignificant in their selection of lobbying venue.
6. While we have identified three main lobbying strategies, in terms of the lobbying methods and techniques selected (media and publishing; mobilisation of members and supporters; professional lobbying), only the first two strategies are extensively used. Although a media and publishing strategy tends to be employed more often used than mobilisation of members, IOs from the Netherlands are characterised by their equal instrumentalisation of both (they are also idiosyncratic in their use of social media), while IOs from the UK are notable for the sheer extent of their instrumentalisation of both strategies. IOs from Sweden use position papers more often than IOs from other countries, while IOs from Slovenia are below average in their usage of all methods and techniques.

These findings are noteworthy for several reasons. They reveal major differences in the national activity patterns of interest organisations in the processes of European policymaking. This effectively translates into **major differences in the transmission and representation of national interests in EU policymaking**. Clearly, our concern here is not solely with the extent to which interest organisations are developed within their national sphere, but also with the length of their experience of inhabiting the idiosyncratic milieu of the EU political system – in this respect, both Sweden and Slovenia as newer MSs lag behind the practices of IOs from the older EU MSs.

*The differences described in the representation of interests not only shed additional light on the current questions of the EU's democratic legitimacy, but might also help us to understand the difficulties in transposing directives into national laws in member states (national interest organisations blocking the transposition of EU law) – which feeds back into the question of how efficient EU policies are across the territory of the entire EU.*