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EXPLORING ORGANIZED INTERESTS IN POST-COMMUNIST POLICY-MAKING

THE “MISSING LINK”

Edited by
Michael Dobbins and Rafał Riedel



EXPLORING ORGANIZED INTERESTS IN POST-COMMUNIST POLICY-MAKING

This book examines organized interests in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), providing incisive analyses in three critically important policy areas – healthcare, higher education and energy.

The four countries surveyed – Poland, Hungary, Slovenia and the Czech Republic – afford rich diversity offering broad empirical material available for cross-country and cross-policy comparative analyses. Featuring interdisciplinary research, the book draws together recent developments in the evolution of post-communist advocacy organizations, their population ecology dynamics, interest intermediation, the influence of organized interests and their (bottom-up and top-down) Europeanization.

This book will be of key interest to scholars and students of Central and Eastern European politics, interest groups and lobbying, post-communism, transition and consolidation studies, and more broadly to European studies/politics.

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The “Missing Link”

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Michael Dobbins and
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FOREWORD

This book is one of the main outputs of the binational Polish–German research project *The Missing Link: Exploring interest groups in post-communist policy-making* (OrgIntCEE), which has been generously funded within the framework of the *Beethoven II* programme of the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG – German Research Foundation) and *Narodowe Centrum Nauki* (National Science Centre – NCN) since early 2018. The book brings together a core team of younger and more established researchers from a multitude of countries spanning far beyond Poland and Germany. For this book project, we have also engaged several external authors to offer additional valuable insights, expertise and resources on the topics the book covers, spanning from the population ecology of interest groups, civil society mobilization, state interest groups’ relationships, to Europeanization effects.

The project entailed an enormous amount of transnational coordination and was certainly not without obstacles. Shortly after an outstanding young research team was set up, the German side of the project was forced to relocate to a different university. Soon after settling in, coronavirus struck with full force, dashing all plans for authors’ workshops, conferences and authors’ meetings. Moreover, the coronavirus will clearly have an impact on policy-making patterns in CEE and beyond, potentially forcing interest organizations to recalibrate their advocacy and mobilization patterns.

Nevertheless, we believe that the book will offer scholars and observers very valuable insights into the policy process in the region. The analysis of interest organizations is one of the most methodologically challenging areas of political science. Yet it is also a field of research that offers infinite possibilities for researchers of both qualitative and quantitative backgrounds. It is precisely this conviction that inspired this book. We wish to show through case studies and statistical analyses how interest group ecosystems have evolved in the region, how organized interests engage with the state and other like-minded or rivalling

groups and how they impact policy processes. Some of the chapters also take an explicit Europeanization perspective and show how the dynamics of the European integration process have shaped the internal functioning of Central and Eastern European interest groups and affected their capacity for action.

Before embarking on this journey through the very complex world of interest advocacy in one of the world's most fascinating and dynamic regions, we wish to extend our sincere thanks to numerous people and institutions. First, the realization of the project would never have been possible without the kind support of representatives of nearly 500 interest organizations operating in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia. We are so grateful to have had such a positive resonance towards our online survey and interview invitations, which enabled us to gain countless first-hand insights into the role of organized interests in the policy process. We would never have expected that so many representatives would be willing to share such valuable insights with "complete strangers".

Second, we wish to extend our sincerest thanks to the University of Konstanz and the Department of Politics and Public Administration. The grant for this project was initially allocated to another university, which unfortunately imposed many obstacles on its realization and could not provide a supportive environment for the research team. Thankfully, the project was able to "find a home" at the University of Konstanz. It is a university with a highly professional administration, a very enlightening research environment, a clear methodological orientation and a very strong appreciation for research on the post-communist region.

Moreover, we would like to express our gratitude to the University of Opole, which hosted the project in Poland. Despite numerous organizational obstacles and barriers, it provided a sufficient institutional platform for enabling the realization of the project in turbulent times of the higher education reform, which was simultaneously implemented in Polish academia.

And of course, we wish to thank all contributors to the book, both those from our core teams and the external collaborators. The authors of these chapters come from seven different nations, which also means that they received their academic education in highly different academic cultures. This had the great advantage of providing us the necessary linguistic expertise to grasp individual country-specific policy processes. Sadly, due to the coronavirus, many of the contributing authors never had the opportunity to meet personally, which made it somewhat more difficult to bridge the gaps between very heterogeneous scientific cultures. Nevertheless, as editors, we endeavoured to turn this diversity into an advantage and tried to ensure that each individual chapter, in its own way, provides a piece to the complex puzzle of understanding policy-making in the region.

We also wish to sincerely thank our families for being there for us during the past nearly three years. During the realization of the project, we experienced births, illnesses and all kinds of life transitions, which indeed posed challenges to our research agendas. We are therefore all the more grateful to our families for always supporting us during both relaxing and turbulent phases. In addition,

we also extend our sincere gratitude to Katja Alexandriyska, Maximilian von Bronk, Filip Lukáš and Ema Podobnik for their very strong support with the survey and editing our project publications.

Most importantly, we wish to thank the DFG and NCN for this very exciting opportunity to conduct international research on a theme, which truly captivated us for the past three years. Despite many obstacles along the way, we feel that it was a very worthwhile endeavour, which enabled us to look far beyond our own national academic systems and learn from one another, while tackling a fascinating topic.

Michael Dobbins Rafał Riedel
Konstanz, 15 November 2020; Opole, 15 November 2020



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Introduction



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1

THE “MISSING LINK”

Exploring organized interests in post-communist policy-making

Michael Dobbins and Rafał Riedel

In this book, we embark on a journey through the highly complicated and diverse world of interest organizations in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Great scholarly effort and passion have been dedicated to understanding how CEE countries have tackled the unprecedented simultaneous transformation from one-party monopolies to democratic political institutions, from communism to capitalism and, in many cases, the establishment of new nation-states (Bruszt & Stark, 1998; Hellman, 1998; Merkel, 1999; Offe, 1994; Ramet, 2010; Rose, 2008). Countless scholars have comparatively analysed the evolution of formal political and electoral institutions (Beliaev, 2006; Dimitrov et al., 2006; Easter, 1997), emerging party systems (Grzymała-Busse, 2003; Kitschelt et al., 1999; Lewis, 2006; McAllister & White 2007) as well as the impact of Europeanization on institutions and policy-making in CEE (Ágh, 1999; Goetz & Wollmann, 2001; Grabbe, 2001; Rupnik & Zielonka 2013; Zielonka, 2007; Zubek, 2011). Entire academic journals, books, conferences, symposiums and seminars are dedicated to better understanding the challenges of post-communism, spanning from their integration into world economies, tensions between desires for national sovereignty and Europeanization, managing ethnic conflicts, and the daunting ongoing reform processes in individual policy areas such as social policy and pensions, agriculture, education, the environment and healthcare, to only name a few.

Despite the impressive wealth of knowledge on the region, the previous literature has arguably not focused sufficiently on organized interests as key players in post-communist democracies. This is surprising because organized interests – as major conveyors of citizens’ inputs into the political process – can be regarded as a precondition of democracy (Dahl, 1971) and facilitator of democratic transitions (Linz, 1990; Schmitter, 1992). Organized interests can legitimize political decision-making by enabling the flow of citizens’ preferences and expertise in

the process. However, the governmental process may also be undermined when certain groups, in particular those engaging in particularistic rent-seeking (Olson, 1965), acquire monopolistic positions and continuously assert their demands (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007) to the detriment of other broader civic interests. Moreover, democracy may suffer when channels of interest intermediation are weak, dysfunctional or biased towards singular interests.

Organized interests and civil society in general are burdened with a difficult legacy in CEE. Under communism, political parties turned organized interests into their own appendages and held monopolies over participatory politics. One major facet of the communist experience was the compromised public sphere. While communist regimes indeed promoted a variety of civic organizations – from sports associations to youth movements – participation in these organizations was often mandatory and highly regulated by state authorities. Other independent alternatives were either marginalized or outlawed. As a result, the transition countries initially suffered from a constrained “civic infrastructure” (Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2011).

This historical oppression of civic participation outside the party apparatus has reinforced the view that organized interests are weak and fragmented in the CEE (Ekiert & Foa, 2011; Howard, 2003). However, the events of 30 years ago generally are considered an enormous triumph of previously suppressed civil societies. In essentially all post-communist countries, civic movements which sought confrontation with communist regimes and gained momentum in the late 1980s ultimately brought communism to its knees. For example, the anti-communist opposition in Poland was fuelled by the Catholic Church and the *Solidarność* workers’ movement, both of which succeeded in gaining concessions from the communist party and a seat at the table during round-table negotiations. In Czechoslovakia and Hungary, civic groups consisting of academics, students, artists as well as common citizens also formed alliances with trade unions to call for a softening of Soviet control. Already in the late 1970s, Czechoslovak anti-communists coalescing around the idea of human rights, tolerance and free speech signed the Charter 77 document, paving the way towards the breakdown of the communist system. In the former Yugoslavia, a combination of social justice and nationalist-separatist movements put the individual republics on a pathway to independence and democratization. Hence, diverse civil society movements defied political oppression and ultimately achieved what had seemed unthinkable only a few years before (see Ekiert & Kubin, 1998).

Nevertheless, the path-breaking year of 1989 cannot be automatically taken for granted as the permanent victory of civil societies over dysfunctional state apparatuses. Robert Putnam, a giant of social capital studies, expressed a less favourable opinion about post-communist civic societies in the early transformation phase:

(...) the formerly Communist societies had weak civic traditions before the advent of Communism, and totalitarian rule abused even that limited

stock of social capital. Without norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement (...) amoral familialism, clientelism, lawlessness, ineffective government, and economic stagnation – seems likelier than successful democratization (...).

(1993, p. 183)

This weak historical starting point for organizational life was compounded by the post-1989 political and economic trajectory. Socialist welfare states were dismantled, harsh neoliberal policies introduced, and key pre-existing industries struggled to survive. At the political level, new parties emerged to confront the gargantuan task of pushing through reforms which would often bring about many short-term losers (e.g. striking workers, former state bureaucrats, pensioners, to name a few), while long-term gains remained uncertain (Hellman, 1997). This unsurprisingly often led to widespread disenchantment and, in some cases, the return of neo-authoritarianism or illiberal populism (Bustikova & Guasti, 2017; Ekiert et al., 2007; Greskovits, 2015; Sata & Karolewski, 2020).

Strong workers’ organizations and unionism – arguably one of the positive characteristics of communist societies – also succumbed to the turbulent changes of the early 1990s. Aside from the special case of Slovenia, which managed to sustain a relatively lively organized interest landscape and civil society under communism and a vibrant labour movement in its aftermath (see Jahn, 2016; Stanojević, 2011), the collapse of communism generally heralded the at least partial decline of traditional trade unions as a voice of workers. The leadership of many organizations was also weakened (Nielsen et al., 1995, p. 29), since many appointees were technical experts who held similar positions during the communist control. Hence, the path dependence of old forms of interest intermediation exemplified in the revitalization of old networks and behavioural patterns often delayed the emergence of fully fledged systems of interest representation (ibid., pp. 29–30).

Indeed, the defining features of CEE civil society after 1989 were low membership levels, low participation in associational life, low trust in organized civil society and weak consultative procedures (Borragán, 2004; Kostelka, 2014; Ost, 2011). Paradoxically, one could argue that the relatively successful democratization process initially driven by civil society mobilization was carried out by strong public institutions and public servants without genuine civil society input. In other words, it was ultimately technocratically operating executives largely insulated from civic participation who steered these fragile democracies through the unprecedented manifold challenges of post-communism (Dimitrov et al., 2006). At least in the 1990s, there seemed to be little space left for common citizens – most of whom were simply struggling to make ends meet – to voice their demands in the political process by means of organized mobilization. Hence, numerous authors argue that post-communist politics has become “over-parliamentarized” and “over-particized” (Borragán, 2004; Grzymała-Busse, 2003; Rueschemeyer et al., 1998) and dominated by state authorities (Zubek,

2011). In the region, there has been a widespread perception of party politics as the embodiment of participatory politics (Borrogán, 2006, p. 150). This falls in line with the previously observed weakness of corporatist, dialogue-oriented structures in the region (see Ost, 2011). As Borrogán (2004) argues, the rules of consensual democracy that evolved in the West during lengthy periods of political and economic stability are inapplicable in the post-communist context. The triumph of neoliberalism over communism and the radical reforms which rattled nearly every sector of society in the 1990s were not conducive for balanced relations between the market, state and society as a whole (Borrogán, 2006). Twenty-five years ago, Ágh (1996) already lamented a “missing middle” after the collapse of communism, thus an absence of institutions, which systematically and effectively channel civic interests into the policy-making process. More recently, scholars have argued that the continued prevalence of technocratic executives (Zubek, 2005), private clientelistic networks (Pleines, 2004), the ongoing legacy of the demoralization of citizens under communism and widespread apathy towards the political process (Cox, 2012; Kostelka, 2014; Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2011) still stand in the way of participative democracy and functional interest representation in the region.

Yet there are also good reasons to doubt the “weak civil society hypothesis”. For example, Foa and Ekiert (2017) argue that many post-communist societies display vigorous public spheres and active civic society organizations, which due to their strong linkages to transnational civic networks are able to shape domestic policies (2017, p. 419). An alternative view of the authoritarian heritage is that communist regimes did not simply repress independent social and political organizations, but actively built their own associational structures, which may still provide an arena for the subsequent development of civic life. Even though the communist systems as such were highly undemocratic, the micro-level of associational life still offered some space for civic engagement. And while the associational structures of the communist era have indeed weakened, they are still there and being supplemented by new organizations, networks and initiatives.

Along these lines, Fink-Hafner (1998) put forward the optimistic hypothesis that CEE is experiencing the “reinvention of civil society” on the bedrocks of the past, reflected in a manifest growth of new forms and strategies of collective interest representation. Supporting this argument, numerous scholars have empirically shown that organized interests have rapidly developed in CEE (Duvanová, 2007; Fink-Hafner, 1998; Labanino et al., 2020; Rose-Ackerman, 2007; Rozbicka & Kamiński 2021; Wallace et al., 2012). This view is backed by numerous analyses on the density of membership in civic organizations (Fink-Hafner, 1998; Howard, 2003; Petrova & Tarrow, 2007; Rueschemeyer, 1998), and the regulatory constraints imposed on unfettered lobbying activities in the region (McGrath, 2008; Vargovčíková, 2017).

Thus, there is also a good argument that the strength of organized interests and civil society has been underestimated. This may be even more the case in view of the European integration process, which many post-communist

countries underwent. The European Union (EU) accession negotiations brought about a new array of organized interests aiming to impact the negotiation process by lobbying national governments. Accession also led to processes of diffusion, learning, adaptation to European models and repertoires (Grabbe, 2001), not only with regard to individual policies but also for interest groups as organizations. As Carmin (2010) shows, the EU and other transnational organizations constitute a crucial source of funding for CEE interest groups. Along these lines, European umbrella organizations (see Hanegraaff & van der Ploeg, 2020) may also enhance ties with like-minded actors and function as sources of information, resources and expertise for post-communist interest organizations. This may facilitate their professionalization and strengthen their bargaining position vis-à-vis national governments. In contrast, it is also plausible that CEE interest groups (in particular business interests) shifted their lobbying activities to Brussels and thus potentially altered national opportunity structures (Borragán, 2004). Altogether though, the general tenor in the literature is that the EU has conveyed new norms, ideas and collective understandings to CEE interest groups, while upgrading their means for action in national political settings (Fagan & Kopecký, 2017; Guasti, 2016; Vándor et al., 2017).

1 Aim and structure of the book

In recent years, various scholars have made crucial contributions to our understanding of civic participation and mobilization and their determinants as key parts of the elements of the post-communist democratization process (Guasti, 2016; Mansfeldová et al., 2004; Rakušanová, 2005; Vráblíková, 2009, 2014). Other noteworthy studies have comparably explored protest movements in the region before, during (Ekiert & Kubin, 1998) and after the collapse of communism (Císař & Vráblíková, 2012, 2019). However, we are convinced that there are still large gaps in the research, especially when it comes to organized interests in concrete policy-making processes. In other words, we have learned a lot about how, when and why civil society mobilizes in the post-communist context, but our understanding of how organized groups of citizens, professionals and businesses actually shape policy in the region is still limited.

This book positions itself in the growing body of advanced contemporary research on interest groups (Baumgartner et al., 2009; Eising, 2008; Klüver, 2012; Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Mahoney, 2007) to partially overcome this research gap. Like social or civic movements, interest groups are characterized by their fragmented nature and heterogeneity (Eising, 2008), resulting also in a multitude of terms such as “special interest organizations”, “lobbying groups”, “advocacy associations”, “NGOs” and “civic groups”. What they all have in common and distinguishes them from looser social movements is that they are organized groups pursuing political interests by seeking to influence political decision-making processes. Eising argues that three attributes are inherent to interest groups: “organization, political interest, and informality” (2008, p. 5).

Organization means that they strive to “influence policy outcomes (...). Political interest refers to attempts (...) to push public policy in one direction or another on the behalf of constituencies or a general political idea” while “[i]nformality relates to the fact that interest groups do not normally seek public office but pursue their goals through informal interactions with politicians and bureaucrats” (Eising, 2008, p. 5).

Indeed, numerous existing studies have grappled with the role of interest groups in CEE politics (Cox & Vass, 2000; Fink-Hafner, 1998; Gallai et al., 2015; Novak & Fink-Hafner, 2019), their relations with the state (Cox & Vass, 2000) and parliamentary representation (Fink-Hafner, 2011). Other scholars have explored the activities of interest groups from the post-communist region in the European policy-making arena (Obradovic & Pleines, 2007; Pleines, 2010; Novak & Lajh, 2018), or vice versa, the impact of Europeanization on CEE interest groups (Fink-Hafner et al., 2015). However, most previous studies focus only on individual countries (most frequently Slovenia) or policies (see Roberts, 2009, for healthcare) and thus often lack a comparative focus. Therefore, there are still numerous open avenues for comparative research, which the authors of the book chapters wish to embark on. In doing so, they shall move beyond normative and theoretical discussions on civil society in the region and assess the actual role of organized interests as the concrete “embodiment” of civil society in the region.

No single work can cover the entire breadth and heterogeneity of organizational activity and interest groups politics. After all, thousands of large and small interest organizations operate in countless areas of public policy in the enormously heterogeneous post-communist sphere spanning from Vladivostok to Berlin. Therefore, we narrowed down the scope of the book to four countries, three policy areas and four overarching questions in order to ensure a certain degree of coherence, while also still enabling us to grasp the diversity of interest group politics in the region.

Our case selection comprises four post-communist countries – the **Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland** and **Slovenia**. They are similar regarding a wide range of broader features (e.g. post-communist democracies, new market economies, middle-income countries, EU members), but differ starkly on three decisive characteristics for interest group politics: election funding, lobbying regulations and economic coordination. The Czech Republic is a highly open market economy with privately funded elections and weaker lobbying regulations (McGrath, 2008; Šimral, 2015) and thus potentially more penetrable by organized interests. Poland also is a relatively liberal and weakly coordinated market economy. However, elections are publicly funded, and extensive lobbying regulations exist, which may stymie the influence of interest groups (McGrath, 2008). Hungary exhibits stronger market coordination (Duman & Kureková, 2012; Tarlea, 2017), whereby elections are publicly funded, and lobbying activities relatively tightly monitored (Ikstens et al., 2002; McGrath, 2008). Slovenia is the most coordinated market economy in CEE (Avdagić & Crouch, 2006; Bohle & Greskovits, 2012). As an ex-Yugoslav country, the Slovenian economy has historically been

highly decentralized and enjoyed considerable autonomy from the state. Regulatory controls over lobbying, party funding and electoral campaigns are comparatively weak, hence providing an interesting polar opposite case to Poland.

Looking at these countries, we move beyond economic policy (see Avdagic, 2005; Nölke & Vliegenthart, 2009) and explore three policy areas which are equally critical for the viability of post-communist democracies: **energy, higher education and healthcare**. The policy areas represent a large portion of public budgets and are of long-term strategic importance for the security and well-being of nations. In other words, they are “high-stakes” policies which strongly impact the viability of any country in the 21st century. These diverse and non-interrelated policy areas thus provide us broad foundations for general insights on policy-making in the region.

Energy is a highly relevant policy area in CEE and beyond due to the importance of secure, affordable and environmentally friendly sources of energy. However, CEE countries generally share a legacy of environmental neglect and inefficient energy usage, as reflected in their cautious opposing stance to Ursula von der Leyen’s Green Deal presented in 2019. While the transformation and European integration processes along with the bankruptcy of many energy-intensive industries indeed resulted in a reduction of usage, CEE is still characterized by dependence on domestic coal and Russian gas, high pollution levels and underdeveloped renewables sectors (Aalto et al., 2017; Binhack & Tichý, 2012). Thus, most CEE countries find themselves in a difficult balance aiming to promote renewable, safe and diversified energy sources, while also preventing mass unemployment through rapid de-carbonization. Against this background, the support of major interest organizations may be a crucial prerequisite for facilitating energy transitions and implementing reforms or vice versa, blocking change.

During democratic consolidation, all CEE countries moved away from their inherited **healthcare** model based on state ownership and control towards the establishment of a national insurance authority or a system of private insurers (Rechel & McKee, 2009; Roberts, 2009). Many CEE countries attempted to return to pre-Soviet structures and institutions based on the Bismarck social insurance model. However, economic downturns and high public debt forced many governments to introduce “out-of-pocket” payments to compensate for financial gaps (Rechel & McKee, 2009). This shift away from large state-run facilities was accompanied by measures to privatize hospitals and transfer services to private providers and decentralized authorities (Björkman & Nemec, 2013). Even though the healthcare systems are based on the principle of territoriality, the EU has influenced this sector through a number of different regulatory initiatives (e.g. medical trials, data protection, pharmaceuticals). During the coronavirus pandemic, functional healthcare systems which enable effective channels for key stakeholders (patients, medical experts, healthcare workers) are more important than ever.

CEE **higher education** systems have also undergone a process of “simultaneous transition”. They are challenged not only by the heavy burdens with which

Western Europe is also struggling such as underfunding amid expansion, academic output and efficiency, but also dilemmas particular to their special socio-economic and political circumstances. Among the most crucial post-communist challenges were the dismantling of state planning and the restoration of self-governance, autonomy and academic freedoms, while achieving an effective balance between state regulation and institutional autonomy has been a particularly sensitive issue. The Bologna Process has provided an impetus for reforms of including governance, funding and quality assurance (Dobbins, 2011). Europeanization and internationalization have recently also shed light on the relative underperformance of CEE higher education with regard to research, patents and innovations. This has resulted in targeted state strategies to promote university-industrial collaboration to generate “home-grown” human capital (Dobbins, 2017).

The book chapters revolve around four sets of overarching questions, which enable us to comparatively explore organized interests from different angles. Based on the motto “OrgIntCEE & friends”, Chapters 2–9 (and 13) present the results of the core research project “The Missing Link: Exploring Organized Interests in Post-Communist Policy-Making – OrgIntCEE”, while Chapters 10–12 put the reader on excursions into exciting and highly significant related themes not covered by the core project. The book is divided into the following sub-parts:

- 1 **Population ecology:** How have populations of organized interests evolved in the communist and post-communist phases and what factors impact the “births” and “death” of organizations? How have the breakdown of communism, the Europeanization process, broader political reform processes as well as the trends towards illiberalism in the region affected the number of organized interests operating in specific policy areas?
- 2 **Interest intermediation:** How are interest organizations incorporated into the political process? How penetrable are post-communist systems for organized interests and how polycentric is the policy-making process? In what political arenas do organized interests operate? To what extent have post-communist interest intermediation systems gravitated towards the corporatist, pluralist or statist policy-making paradigms? And do different types of groups (e.g. civic/ideational, business) operate in different political forums and how do lobbying systems vary between countries?
- 3 **Access and power organized interests:** How large is the clout of organized interests in specific policy-making processes and what factors (e.g. resources, expertise, size, professionalization) facilitate their access to policy-makers?
- 4 **Europeanization effects:** Many questions related to Europeanization in general and the Europeanization of CEE organized interests in particular are still open to debate. How has the European integration process affected organized interests? Which dimension of Europeanization is the most salient in CEE? Did the EU accession change the rules of the game? Can the EU

be seen as a gigantic socialization agency, which actively promotes rules, norms, practices and structures of meaning to which member states (including the advocacy and interest organizations) are exposed and which they have to incorporate into their domestic structures?

- 5 **Excursions to other territory:** Looking beyond the core project, our external authors Joanna Kulska, Tomasz Kubin and Paweł Kamiński cover additional essential ground. Their chapters explore how the church engages with civil society and the state in CEE, how coal mining unions are a key factor in explaining the aversion to more progressive energy and climate policies in the region and how the ideological positions of interest groups are distinct from those of political parties.

In addition to rich empirical material largely based on interviews, Parts 1–4 strongly rely on two fresh datasets. The first dataset consists of “population ecologies” of all interest groups operating in all three mentioned policy areas in all four countries from communist times up to present. Our main sources for identifying national organizations and their foundation dates were national online registries for civil society organizations. We used a harmonized set of keywords for each language and filtered out regional-level organizations as well as companies listed in the registries. For Poland, we used the National Court Registry (*Krajowy Rejestr Sądowy* – KRS), for Hungary the court registry of civil society organizations (*Civil szervezetek névjegyzéke*), for Slovenia the AJPES registry (Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services) and for the Czech Republic the registry of the Czech Statistical Office (for more details and data limitations, see Chapter 2).

Our survey for book parts two to four was divided into three parts. First, we requested general information on membership structures (e.g. employees, volunteers, member institutions, member firms, individual members). We then asked each organization about its affiliations with European, international or national umbrella organizations. The second large set of questions addressed the frequency of consultations between interest groups and parties, previous and present governments, as well as their activity within parliamentary committees and their relationships with rivaling organizations. The questions were multiple-choice, generally requesting the frequency of contacts and consultations on a 1–5 scale (never, biannually, annually, monthly, weekly), but also offered respondents to provide comments. The section also contained questions regarding access to government bodies and parties as well as the perceived level of political coordination on 1–5 scales, also with a comment option. We then posed numerous questions regarding the territorial level of activities of interest groups (regional, national, European) as well as their main advocacy platforms (e.g. outsider lobbying through social media, protests, through the press, vs. insider lobbying through diverse political institutions). Finally, we asked each organization about its perceived influence on policy as well as whether it perceives itself or rivaling organizations at an advantage.

The third segment covered organizational professionalization. We asked about the expertise organizations provide to policy-makers, ties with like-minded organizations at the European level and activities geared towards professionalization such as the training of lobbyists, fundraising, strategic planning and human resource development. The segment also included questions about financial sources and financial stability.

We were extremely fortunate to receive responses from nearly 440 CEE interest organizations in our three key policy areas (see Annex for the survey and response rate by policy area).

2 Brief overview of the book chapters

As outlined above, the book is divided into five parts, four of which present results from the core project “The Missing Link – Organized Interests in Post-Communist Policy-Making” and the final of which broadens our perspective through journeys into new territory.

Part 1 Interest organizations in numbers (population ecology)

In Chapter 2, Rafael Pablo Labanino, Michael Dobbins and Rafał Riedel explore to what extent legacies shaped the trajectory of interest organizations during and after transition. Assuming that the number of associations and level of civil society activity are decisive for economic growth, good governance and democratization in general, they look at interest organization populations and densities during the pre-transition phase in CEE. Drawing on our datasets of interest organizations operating in the healthcare, energy and higher education sectors of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovenia, they address how “dense” populations of organizations were under communism and during the transition. Shedding doubt on the idea of a complete “tabula rasa” after 1989, they explore to what degree different “varieties of communism” and the nature of the breakdown of communism later affected organizational populations.

Linking directly to Chapter 2, Michael Dobbins, Rafael Pablo Labanino and Brigitte Horváthová explore in Chapter 3 how populations of interest organizations have developed in the post-communist era and to what extent they were transformed by the transition to a market economy, democracy and in some cases nation-building. They also address whether EU accession and membership have reshaped the organizational landscapes, while also analysing how organizational populations were affected by internal reform processes. Drawing on the theory of “density dependence”, the authors also show at what point organizational populations became “saturated”. The chapter is also the first to examine whether “democratic backsliding” in the region is affecting organizational “births” and “deaths”.

Part 2 Interest Intermediation

Chapter 4 written by Szczepan Czarnecki is, to our knowledge, one of the first to address lobbying tactics of organized interest groups in the post-communist context (see also Rozbicka et al., 2020). Based on our comparative survey data, he explores the forums (governments, parliaments or the public) in which energy advocacy groups operate. In doing so, Czarnecki tests Binderkrantz’s (2015) hypothesis regarding whether ideational or cause groups – in this case environmental protection or renewable energy groups – pursue different tactics (e.g. outside lobbying tactics such as protests and petitions) than business interest groups. He also explores whether and how lobbying strategies are contingent on issues themselves, i.e. whether issues are divisible or non-divisible. Importantly, he examines to what extent lobbying regimes (e.g. the Czech Republic with more liberal with privately funded elections; Poland with more regulated with publicly funded elections) impact the chosen strategies of organized energy-related interest groups.

Chapter 5 by Michael Dobbins, Emilia Piotrowska and Maximilian von Bronk also focuses on interest intermediation from the perspective of corporatism. Specifically, the authors address the intensity of consultations between different healthcare interest groups with governments, political parties and other political institutions and whether certain groups (e.g. the medical profession, patients) are at structural advantage or disadvantage. The article builds on pre-existing measurements of corporatism and applies them to post-communist healthcare policy-making using survey data. Drawing on the previous work of Siaroff (1999) and Jahn (2016), the chapter concludes with a “healthcare corporatism score” for Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia.

Part 3 Influence of Organized Interests

The third part strongly reflects the mixed-method approach of the book. Chapter 6 by Szczepan Czarnecki, Emilia Piotrowska and Rafał Riedel applies some of the major hypotheses in the political science literature to explore the access of green energy and traditional energy advocacy groups to national policy-makers. Using our survey data collected directly from organized interests operating in the energy sector in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Hungary, the authors explore how different types of resources (e.g. financial stability, professionalization and various types of expertise) enable access to governments and political parties. In a region otherwise not known for progressive, ecologically friendly energy and environmental policies, they assess whether green and renewables organizations enjoy an equal playing field compared to groups representing traditional, non-regenerative sources of energy.

Chapter 7 by Brigitte Horváthová and Michael Dobbins also engages with our survey data to assess the factors, which enable healthcare interest groups to access

to national parliaments and governments. Using ordinal logistic regressions, they explore to what extent human resources, financial resources, expertise and professionalization enable healthcare organizations to access the policy-making apparatus. Tying into Chapter 2, Horváthová and Dobbins simultaneously test whether organizations that existed under communism enjoy an advantage over newly founded organizations. The chapter is also one of the first in the literature to operationalize and test what specific types of professionalization (e.g. collaboration with other organizations, focus on organizational development) facilitate or impede access to policy-makers.

Chapter 8 by Aleš Vlk, Michael Dobbins and Rafał Riedel is a comparative case study of recent developments in Czech and Polish higher education. Relying on the process-tracing method, the authors show how the configuration and strategies of organized academic interests vis-à-vis the state and the state's capacity to govern the sector have resulted in strikingly divergent recent developments in the governance of both higher education systems. Their main argument is that a combination of an increasingly strong state in Poland, combined with fragmented interest organizations, brought about the centralization of higher education, while a combination of a weaker state and much more consolidated stakeholders in the Czech Republic resulted in the persistence of pre-existing policy arrangements. Their analysis sheds new light on how the current Polish government pushed through a fundamental reform of Polish higher education against the will of numerous previously influential organized interests despite long-lasting multilateral consultations with stakeholder groups. This stands in contrast to the Czech situation, where internal stakeholders and institutions of "academic democracy" continue to dominate.

Part 4 Europeanization Effects

In Chapter 9, Szczepan Czarnecki and Rafał Riedel visit the crossroads of Europeanization and professionalization in their comparative analysis of the interplay between these two groups of factors determining the recent evolution of organized interests in CEE. Such an empirical study of the professionalization of interest groups is crucial to understand the development of post-EU accession advocacy groups and their evolution as a vitally important element of civil society. This chapter shows that it is not the standard channels of Europeanization (top-down and bottom-up) which drive the professionalization process, rather "cross-loading" Europeanization mechanisms (i.e. socialization through organizational ties).

Part 5 Excursions to other territory

The final part consists of chapters written by "friends" of the OrgIntCEE project who venture out into new territory not covered by the core project datasets, yet which are critical for understanding civil society and policy-making in

CEE. Chapter 10 written by Tomasz Kubin explores why the Czech Republic and in particular Poland have been so resistant to the European Union’s decarbonization strategy. Focusing on mining trade unions, their structure, their strategies, their interlinkages with the state and party systems, Kubin explains why Poland has had such difficulties embracing a more progressive and ecologically friendly energy policy, whereas the Czech Republic has gradually come on board with the European Union’s energy and climate strategy.

In Chapter 11, Joanna Kulska engages with the Catholic Church, which is arguably the largest interest group in the region, and in Poland in particular. She comparatively analyses the evolving role, goals and strategies applied by the Polish and Czech Catholic churches, against the background of the different position of religion in both countries’ social-political contexts. Focusing on the fusion of national and religious identities, Kulska explores to what extent and in what policy areas the church is able to effectively exert political influence. In doing so, she provides explanations for the highly different development of abortion policies in both countries.

In Chapter 12, Paweł Kamiński enters uncharted territory in CEE by systematically analysing the relationship between interest groups and political parties (see also Rozbicka et al., 2020). Specifically, he explores whether interest groups in CEE are occupying territory in the political space, which is “abandoned” by political parties, or contrarily, whether interest groups and parties are following a similar pattern of biased representation and indifference towards civil society. Using quantitative and comparative data gathered between 2016 and 2018 from six EU countries, the chapter sheds light on the interplay between interest groups and political parties in three CEE countries – Poland, Slovenia and Lithuania – and three “old” EU member states – the Netherlands, Sweden and Belgium. The study is one of the first to compare CEE interest groups with their western counterparts.

This final Chapter 13 by Michael Dobbins, Emilia Piotrowska and Rafal Riedel recaps the findings of the individual chapters and lays out comparative conclusions regarding structures and patterns of interest intermediation in the region, while also comparatively reassessing how organized interests impact the direction of policy. The authors also briefly present some simple aggregated data related to organized interests of all four countries, enabling us to identify some broader trends in the countries’ interest group ecosystems, their intensity of consultation and cooperation in policy-making, their perception of power and influence as well as their professionalization processes.

3 A final introductory note

As already hinted above, the world of interest groups offers infinite possibilities for exploration, but is also hampered by infinite methodological, analytical and practical challenges. However, we are fortunate not to be alone in this undertaking. Almost simultaneously to the publication of this book, another monograph on interest

group representation in the post-communist region is to be published: *Achieving Democracy Through Interest Representation: Interest groups in Central and Eastern Europe* by Patrycja Rozbicka, Paweł Kamiński, Meta Novak and Vaida Jankauskaitė.

Initially unaware of this parallel endeavour, the contributors of both monographs have increasingly engaged with one another, resulting in very fruitful discussions and exchanges despite the obstacles posed by coronavirus. In our view, both books perfectly complement each other as each book addresses gaps in the research which the other does not, while offering different approaches and lenses on civil society and organized interest in the region. While the monograph by Rozbicka and colleagues covers Poland, Lithuania and Slovenia, the present book adds perspectives on two additional countries, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Their book has the strength that the population ecology analyses cover the entire interest group populations of these countries, while ours places a narrower focus on three policy areas – energy, higher education and healthcare. Our stronger focus on vital rates enables us to single out the determinants driving organizational births and deaths such as communist heritages, domestic reform processes, Europeanization as well as population densities. While their book offers a highly informative overview of the legal foundations of interest group activities, our book stands out with its focus on specific policy-making processes in non-interrelated policy areas.

The book by Rozbicka et al. (2020) also more systematically addresses ties between interest groups and political parties, while the authors of the present book engage more intensively with the phenomena of democratic backsliding and illiberal civil society in CEE. And while their book offers outstanding overviews of where interest groups target their activities (courts, parliaments, executives, civil servants, parties, etc.), we place greater emphasis on the factors facilitating their access to policy-makers such as expertise, resources and professionalization. Both books also take different approaches regarding the funding of organizations: the upcoming chapters focus on whether funding facilitates political access, whereas Rozbicka, Kamiński, Novak and Jankauskaitė offer more detailed insights into *how* CEE interest groups are funded. And while their team of authors more systematically explores the activities of interest groups from the CEE region at the European level, we turn the focus around and look at the impact of European-level networking activities on the internal structures of CEE organized interests. Finally, whereas their book descriptively covers the development of trade unions in the economic sphere, we extend the focus to emerging forms of corporatism in healthcare – a previously largely unexplored policy area in the region – using a novel indicator-based conceptualization of corporatism.

Thus, we are firmly convinced that both books are unique and ideally complement each other. Hence, by no means should they be viewed as competing books, as territory not covered in the one book is covered in the other. And, after all, only a diverse collection of chapters taking different angles can do justice to this highly complex topic. Thus, taken together, we believe that both books will not only help overcome the strong bias towards Western Europe and North

America in interest group research, but hopefully also provide a solid foundation for scholars of post-communism to build on in the future and better understand a region which has captivated and will continue to captivate scholars for years to come.

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PART 1

Population ecology



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2

THERE IS NO TABULA RASA – THE EFFECT OF VARIETIES OF COMMUNISM ON ORGANIZATIONAL FORMATION RATES IN PRE- TRANSITION INTEREST GROUP POPULATIONS

Rafael Labanino, Michael Dobbins, and Rafał Riedel

1 Introduction

To what extent did organized interests operate in totalitarian societies? How do interest group populations existing before the democratic transition affect later interest group evolution? Is there a clean slate after totalitarianism, as Olson (1982) suggested? Or are organizations able to survive enormous political, social and economic transformations? On the one hand, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) experienced a gargantuan simultaneous economic, political and (in many cases, such as Slovenia) national “triple transition” 30 years ago (Offe & Adler, 1991). This undoubtedly unique historical experience was accompanied by a deep economic and societal crisis. Following the assumption of Olson (1982) of an organizational “tabula rasa” precisely after such events, one might contend that interest groups started out with a clean slate after 1989. On the other hand, communist regimes varied with respect to their level of oppressiveness and strategies towards civil society, while undergoing periods of relative openness and closure. Thus, there are grounds to assume that communist regimes did not fully oppress and perhaps may have even facilitated the mobilization of civic organizations. While communist regimes promoted a variety of civic organizations – from sports associations, labour unions, to youth movements – participation in these organizations was often mandatory and highly regulated by state authorities. Other independent alternatives were either marginalized or outlawed. As a result, the transition countries suffered from constrained “civic infrastructure”, including the healthy system of interest intermediation (Pop-Eleches & Tucker, 2013). In either case, in the symbolic year of 1989, civic society was transformed on the ruins of the communist past. Yet to what extent did legacies shape the evolutionary trajectory of societal organizations during and after transition?

In order to explore communist legacies and their implications for the associational life after 1989, we look at interest organization populations and densities during the pre-transition phase in CEE. In doing so, we deliberately take issue with Kopecký and Mudde (2003), who caution against focusing on organizational density as a reflection of civil society mobilization. While their advice should be headed by students of civil society understood broadly, for those studying organized interests the foundation and mortality rates of interest group populations and their density are among the theoretically most important variables. After all, organizational density, the number of associations and civil society activity are widely seen by social scientists as decisive factors determining economic growth, good governance and democratization in general (Olson, 1965, 1982; Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993). Thus, they have been addressed by many scholars as key factors driving post-communist democratization (Bruszt, Campus, Fidrmuc, & Roland, 2010; Ekiert & Kubik, 1998; Kopecký & Mudde, 2003). However, it is surprising that in contrast to a plethora of studies on civil society and industrial relations in post-communist CEE (e.g. Avdagic, 2005, 2006; Crowley, 2004; Crowley & Ost, 2001; Greskovits, 1998; Krzywdzinski, 2008; Ost, 2005), little attention has been devoted to organizational populations and the influence of specific organized interest groups, particularly in a comparative setting.

To address this gap, we draw on our dataset of interest organizations operating in the healthcare, energy and higher education sectors of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia. We show that variations in pre-transitional authoritarian governance and the nature of the breakdown of communism significantly impacted organized interest populations throughout the 20th century. In particular, we highlight how sizable organizational populations were already present when communism crumbled, which substantially varied in size across policy fields and countries though. Moreover, we show that not only a considerable organizational density was present during transition, but that organizations existing under communism constitute a sizable share of contemporary interest group populations. This observation goes against the assumption of a *tabula rasa* after precisely such historical events (Olson, 1982) and also has serious consequences for two major population ecology approaches to interest organizations: the theory of density-dependent vital rates (Hannan & Carroll, 1992) (see Chapter 3) and the energy-stability-area (ESA) model of interest organization density (Gray & Lowery, 1995, 1996; Lowery & Gray, 1995).

We first take a closer look at the assumptions regarding organizational density after a fundamental change in a given polity, such as foreign occupation or the collapse of a political and economic system in Olson (1982) and in the ESA model (Lowery & Gray, 1995). Then, we introduce a theoretical framework for the varieties of communist regimes based on Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski and Tóka (1999), which helps us to hypothesize how the differences in communist regimes and consequently in democratic transitions affect pre-transition interest organization density. In Section 4, we introduce the dataset, analyse the data and explain the differences based on the model. Looking at the Hungarian

sub-sample, we also explore the long-term effects of the pre-transition interest group density and diversity. The last section summarizes our findings and paves the way for some of the upcoming chapters.

2 The density of new interest organization populations

In his classic book, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities*, Mancur Olson states that “Stable societies with unchanged boundaries tend to accumulate more collusions and organizations for collective action over time” (Olson, 1982, p. 80). He contends that the accumulation of organized interests follows an exponential growth curve since the last major disruption in a country. That is, the number of interest groups is determined by the time since the formation of the political system, foreign occupation or some other fundamental political change. Lowery and Gray (1995) equate this view with the huge asteroid that wiped out the dinosaurs along with three-quarters of all life on Earth. A fundamental extinction-level change to a political system “resets the clock and group formation begins anew” (Lowery & Gray, 1995, pp. 3–4). Indeed, Olson (1982) lays out this argument analysing the differences between Britain, a country which did not experience any disruption to its political system since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, and continental Europe, where foreign occupation and radical political change occurred time and time again since the early modern age until the end of World War II. Olson (1982) considers totalitarianism a particularly disruptive force. His two examples, Germany and Japan, both experienced institutional change imposed violently by totalitarian governments and then by the occupying Allied forces. Olson cites from another study supporting his argument that while 51% of all associations existing in the UK in 1973 were founded before 1939, the corresponding numbers were 24% in West Germany, 19% in Japan and 37% in France, which also experienced foreign occupation and a fascist puppet government during World War II (Olson, 1982, p. 173). The question never arises, however, whether these numbers are as low as his theory would assume – namely a *tabula rasa* more or less – and what could this mean for interest group density and diversity.

As Lowery and Gray (1995) point out, despite the central importance of the number of interest groups for Olson’s theory of economic growth, his 1982 book includes no direct measure of it. In contrast, Lowery and Gray (1995) and Gray and Lowery (1995, 1996) introduced a theoretical model of interest group density. The energy–stability–area (ESA) model of population density builds on the population ecology studies in biology. That is, instead of looking at organizational-level variables in explaining organizational diversity and density, it sees these as being determined by the carrying capacity of the organizations’ environment. The model posits that “the diversity of a population is a summed function of how the environmental forces specified in the ESA model separately influence carrying capacities for each species or organization type” (Gray & Lowery, 1996, p. 105). The underlying theoretical assumption of the population ecology approach is

that the number of organizations is constrained by “the availability of organizational resources, relatively independent of mobilization rates and dependent on the pre-existing density of organizations” (Berkhout et al., 2015, p. 465).

In studies drawing on the population ecology approach to interest organization populations, the focus is usually on the energy and area terms of the model. The number of potential constituents corresponds to the latter, the “habitat” of the interest organization population, that is, the size of the potential constituency. In many studies, habitat is labelled as the supply side (population/membership environment). It is important to note that the existing density of organizations in a population itself is a supply side, membership environmental factor. Existing density is also of central importance in population ecology studies on the growth and mortality rates of interest groups (Hannan & Carroll, 1992; Hannan & Freeman, 1977, 1989). On the energy – or “demand” – side of the model are the interests of the constituents regarding the actual and potential government actions affecting them, as well as issue certainty, that is, the likelihood of policy change. These are “vital resources that interest organization entrepreneurs employ to secure sponsorship” (Gray & Lowery, 1996, p. 106). The stability term, that is, fundamental political, economic and institutional change of a polity, usually is only controlled for or left out completely though.¹

Our data on national-level interest group formation and dissolution in energy policy, healthcare and higher education in four post-communist countries, three of which were also under foreign occupation for 40 years, offer an opportunity to analyse formal organizational activities through the patterns of organizational formation and density. In other words, our data enable us to directly explore the stability term. We move beyond simply treating it as the time since the last major political disruption or the age of the political system. First, we theorize and systematically analyse the causes for the variance in density of pre-transition interest group populations. Then, in a second step, we examine the mortality rate of pre-transition organizations between 1990 and 2019.

3 Organizational density and varieties of communism in CEE

Several former studies on civil society during communism challenged the view of these societies as being bereft of genuine civil society activities (Bruszt et al., 2010; Ekiert & Foa, 2011; Ekiert & Kubik, 1998; Kopecký & Mudde, 2003). Ekiert and Foa (2011) emphasized that in CEE, there was more to civil society than forced mobilization by the state or their function as “transmission belt” between the society and the party state. They argue that even mass organizations underwent significant transformation towards genuine interest representation during the 1970s and 1980s, particularly in Poland and Hungary. Ekiert and Foa (2011) call communist countries “incomplete civil societies” with a large number of associations and a dense structure of organizations without “autonomy, a legally defined public space and enforceable rights and liberties” (2011, p. 12). These studies, however, do not deal with specific interest organizations.

Ekiert and Kubik (1998) and Bruszt et al. (2010) instead explore the size of civil society and dissident activity (demonstrations, strikes, etc.) between 1989–1993 and 1985–1989, respectively.² The authors reveal large differences between the different communist regimes regarding civil society and social movement activities during communism. East-Central Europe and Yugoslavia had a more robust and vibrant civil society than the Soviet Union or Romania and Bulgaria. Yet none of these studies theorize how the different communist regimes affect civil society development in general, and interest group density in particular.³ After all, these communist regimes differed in many important respects for organizational development: their level of openness to non-command economic activity, the opportunities for formal interest representation in decision-making, and the nature of their opposition and transition processes varied significantly.

In line with this non-homogeneity thesis, we opt for a comparative approach enabling the identification of main similarities and differences among the post-communist CEE interest organizations, representing an important part of civil society. We recognize that instead of a single, homogenous CEE civil society shaped by a shared communist past, civil societies in the region are largely determined by different national political contexts (Navrátil & Kluknavská, 2020), which along with the transition process itself created both conditions and the necessary impetus for the development of interest groups and other civil society organizations. As we will show, the differences between the respective communist regimes – the changes in their relative openness to societal interest articulation and intermediation – and the resulting transition processes – the level and nature of societal and political mobilization – are reflected in the pre-transition organizational formation rates.

All countries under the rule of Marxist–Leninist parties were indeed totalitarian societies. From a systemic point of view, communist rule, or as Kornai (2000) put it, “the socialist system” as the empirically existent political–economic system, just like the capitalist system shared common characteristics. All 26 countries that experienced communist rule had five common, observable traits: (1) undivided power of the Marxist–Leninist party, (2) dominant position of state and quasi-state ownership, (3) preponderance of bureaucratic coordination, (4) soft budget constraint; weak responsiveness to prices; plan bargaining; quantity drive, (5) chronic shortage economy; sellers’ market; labour shortage; “unemployment on the job”⁴ (Kornai, 2000, p. 29). However, just as there are varieties of capitalism (Hall & Soskice, 2001) or welfare capitalism (Esping-Andersen, 1990), there were varieties of “existing socialism”. Kitschelt et al. (1999) constructed a model describing this variety, which distinguished three regime archetypes: the bureaucratic-authoritarian, national-accommodative and patrimonial regimes.

Bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes evolved in countries characterized by already high industrialization, early secularization and a socioeconomic class divide (a strong and organized working class), as well as experiences with democracy in the interwar period, such as Czechoslovakia and East Germany. In these countries, communist parties had a strong base among organized industrial workers.

After the forced merger with the broader social democratic camp (with the help of Soviet pressure and outright violence), communists did not have to accommodate their opponents. Nevertheless, they were always aware of the threat of social democratic and “bourgeois” (Christian-democratic, conservative, liberal, religious) revival. These characteristics explain their repressive, orthodox Marxist nature, which relied on a professional and effective bureaucratic machine. In these regimes, the transition process came suddenly and they collapsed in weeks under the pressure of a unified anti-communist opposition movement and mass demonstrations.

In *national-accommodative regimes*, such as Hungary and Poland, the communists came to power in countries with a large agricultural sector, an influential Catholic Church, and in Hungary also a reformed (Calvinist) Church. There was considerable industrialization, but it was confined to a number of metropolitan and mining areas. Democratic legacies were weak or non-existent, but both countries experienced some form of a political pluralism in the interwar years (even if constrained and authoritarian). During this period, the communists did not play any significant role and the social democrats were only strong in the industrialized areas.⁵ After the Stalinist period, the communists in both countries eventually had to accommodate large segments of a hostile population. For example, in Hungary, the industrial workers were the base of the armed revolution against the Stalinists and the Soviet Army in October–November 1956. The opposition movement in Poland during the 1970s and 1980s led by Lech Wałęsa – a shipyard electrician – was similarly driven by industrial workers (Grodsky, 2017). Consequently, the communist regimes of these countries were characterized by technocratic experimentation with economic reform, and co-optation rather than full-blown repression. As János Kádár, Chairman of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party and father of “Goulash-communism”⁶ famously described this *modus vivendi*: “those who are not against us are with us”. These countries were characterized by a negotiated transition process between the communist party and the anti-communist opposition (Kitschelt et al., 1999, pp. 64–67).

Patrimonial regimes evolved in overwhelmingly agrarian countries with weak industrialization and secularization, such as Bulgaria and Romania. These regimes were characterized by a corrupt and unprofessional communist party state penetrated by clientelist networks, and a weak, disorganized, fragmented opposition, without any historical appeal to another form of modernization than communism. These regimes collapsed suddenly under popular pressure (and in case of Romania – armed struggle with the army siding with the revolutionaries against communist security forces). However, the transition was managed by the intransigent ruling parties with pre-emptive (partial) reform⁷ (Crowther & Suci, 2013; Karasimeonov & Lyubenov, 2013; Kitschelt et al., 1999, pp. 67–69).

While Kitschelt et al. (1999) applied this model of communist regime diversity to trace differences in post-communist party systems, we argue that their classifications are also relevant for our study of pre-transition interest group populations. Accordingly, we would expect the lowest level of interest group density in

the bureaucratic–authoritarian and patrimonial variety of communist rule, which is closest to the assumption of Olson (1982) about the effect of authoritarianism. However, in the bureaucratic–authoritarian regime, as it evolved in highly developed countries, we would expect a number of pre–communist–era organizations to be present and “survive” communist rule. We anticipate the highest interest group density in national–accommodative regimes, such as Hungary and Poland. Here, we expect to find a high share of communist–era organizational formation as the communist parties had to co–opt and accommodate large segments of society (see Figure 2.1). Although Kitschelt et al. (1999) did not include any former Yugoslav countries in their sample, Yugoslavia is categorized as a mixture of the national–accommodative and patrimonial variety in the literature, with Slovenia being rather the former (Meyer–Sahling, 2009).

However, there are also significant differences between the respective communist systems of the countries in our sample belonging to the *national–accommodative regime*: Hungary, Poland and Slovenia. Specifically, they differed in the relative and formal openness of the political system to social interests and the level of political and societal mobilization during the run–up to transition (1988–1989). We start by comparing Hungary and Poland, as these countries were in a very different situation – namely, under Soviet occupation, but with varying degrees of Soviet control and influence during communist rule – then Slovenia, which was a constituent republic of non–aligned Yugoslavia.

First, the outcome of the October 1956 protests, the starting point for moving away from Stalinism to the eventual national–accommodative model, was very different in Hungary and Poland. Whereas in Poland the moderate communist leader, Władysław Gomułka, was eventually tolerated in power by the Soviets and able to keep popular demands for reform at bay and implement relatively

		Prevalence of interest groups founded before communist takeover	Prevalence of interest groups founded after communist takeover
Interest group density in 1989 as a proportion of all interest group formations until 2019	High		National–accommodative regime (e.g. Hungary, Poland, Slovenia)
	Low	Bureaucratic–authoritarian regime (e.g. Czechia)	Patrimonial regime (e.g. Romania)

FIGURE 2.1 The expected effect of communist regime types (Kitschelt et al., 1999) on pre–transition interest group density in CEE.

incremental changes, in Hungary the events led to an armed uprising against Soviet occupation. Poland experimented with limited pluralism as early as 1957, allowing the participation of groups such as the United Peasant Party, the Democratic Party or the Catholic organization, Znak (Colomer & Pascual, 1994, pp. 277–278). In Hungary, mass imprisonment and hundreds of executions took place during this phase, and such experiments with pluralism were never even considered. The two countries, however, soon converged, and from the 1960s on both regimes implemented several waves of economic reform (Lutz & Krueger, 1995; Przeworski, 1993). After the 1963 amnesty, the Hungarian regime “consolidated” its rule and the communists tried to co-opt and accommodate Hungarian society (with success).

However, by the 1980s, the two countries diverged again: Poland was home to the only truly independent mass movement of the Eastern Bloc, the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union Solidarity movement (*Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy Solidarność*). Even after the implementation of martial law in December 1981, Solidarity was able to retain its 10 million members (Ost, 2005). Unable to solve the country’s deep economic crisis and having lost their legitimacy, the communist government entered into negotiations with Solidarity leaders in January 1989, which led to semi-free elections held in June 1989. The election marked the end of the regime, as all but one of the contested Senate seats were won by the opposition (Millard, 2010; Rose & Munro, 2009), whereas in the Sejm (the lower chamber of the Polish parliament) the democratic opposition won all 35% of the seats, which were subject to competitive electoral process, as the remaining 65% were guaranteed for the PZPR (*Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* – Polish United Workers’ Party) and its satellites. In Hungary, however, there was no mass opposition movement or protest until 1988–1989. The communist government had a firm grip on power until 1988, and the country did not experience the same level of shortages as in Poland (although the economic crisis also rapidly accelerated in Hungary). There were indeed organized dissident groups, but they were sharply divided along ideological lines. Moreover, in Hungary, there was never any unified front against the communists. During the 1989 Roundtable Negotiations with the communists, all opposition parties and “societal organizations” (both independent and loyal unions and interest groups) had their own representatives. By 1989, the Hungarian opposition was relying more on mobilization and confrontation. As Bruszt and Stark (1991) argue, this outcome can be explained precisely by the fragmentation and relative weakness of the Hungarian opposition. As there was no powerful, unified anti-communist movement, the reform faction of the communist party also had an incentive for confrontation and partisan competition. Eventually, the split in the opposition became official, when the liberal and agrarian parties refused to sign the September 1989 agreement with the communists and initiated a referendum on the four most important points they disagreed with (and won).⁸

Yugoslavia, which Slovenia was part of, was very different from both Hungary and Poland. As Stanojević (1999) emphasizes, communism resulted from the

military victory of the popular partisan movement over the German occupiers and the simultaneous civil war against their domestic allies. Hence, in contrast to Poland and Hungary, Yugoslav communism was endogenous (Stanojević, 1999, p. 42). Yugoslavia was never under Soviet military occupation, and after Tito's 1948 break with Stalin, it already embarked on a deregulation and decentralization process in 1951. Yugoslavia implemented industrial democracy with the so-called self-management of its enterprises: the elected workers' council was the highest decision-making body, which also nominated and fired directors. Thus, management was responsible for the workers of a company (Stanojević, 1999, p. 46).

Yet self-management did not stop at the company level. Based on social ownership, Yugoslavia had a unique socialist-corporatist system, a kind of social partnership that permeated the formal legislative structures of every republic (Lukšič, 1997). As Lukšič (1997) argues, this elaborate system of corporatism provided genuine interest intermediation mechanisms. The parliament in every republic comprised three chambers: the Chamber of Communes, the Chamber of Associated Labor and the Socio-Political Chamber. In addition, Self-Management Interest Communities were organized for important social interests with equal representation for consumers and producers. These communities also had the right to participate in parliamentary sessions on matters of importance to them. In the Chamber of Associated Labor, representatives of workers and managers were elected for different branches of the economy and social services. Through their respective trade union delegations, they also had the right to speak in the Socio-Political Chamber (Lukšič, 1997, pp. 106–107).

However, the Yugoslav system of self-management was in crisis by the late 1980s. The country could not continue to provide a high level of social security to the entire workforce. The restructuring and downsizing of Yugoslav companies were imminent, and the work councils increasingly lost power. Hence, the coalition between the communist party elite and industrial workers disintegrated (Stanojević, 1999, p. 46). In Slovenia, the reformist wing took over the communist party in 1986. First, there was political mobilization inside existing socio-political organizations, such as the Alliance of Socialist Youth (which later became the Liberal Democratic Party, the dominant party of the country during the 1990s) (Fink Hafner, 1997a). As Fink Hafner (1997a) describes, such "embryonic" political parties were first established in spring 1988. "Multi-partyism" was also legalized at the end of the 1980s, however, within the existing one-party framework (1997a, p. 142). Regime change in Slovenia was also a national question. After the Slovenian communists broke with their Yugoslav comrades in January 1991 by walking out of the 14th Congress of the Yugoslav League of Communists, the army was the only federal Yugoslav institution left in the country (Fink Hafner, 1997a, pp. 140–141).

Summing up the differences between the three national-accommodative regimes, we can conclude that the Yugoslav regime was the most open to social interests – at least in the formal decision-making process – and the Hungarian for

the most part the least open, although between 1981 and 1988, the Polish regime was more repressive than the Hungarian. Regime change also played out differently in the three countries. As Bruszt and Stark (1991) argued, the Hungarian regime change eventually relied more on political and societal mobilization than the Polish one, where the opposition struck an early compromise with the communists. The Slovenian regime change was also a much more managed process than the Hungarian, as the communists already allowed some form of pluralism within the one-party model, and the Slovenian regime was in general the least repressive of the three. It is equally important that in Hungary, there was true pluralism within the opposition. The opposition was fragmented and divided along ideological lines. Party competition already started during the round-table talks with the communists directly affecting the regime change process. Altogether, we expect these systemic differences – both among the national-accommodative regimes and with the bureaucratic-authoritarian Czech(oslovak) regime – to explain the relative importance of the different periods of communist rule for pre-transition interest organization formations.

4 Exploring the density and diversity of pre-transition interest group populations

To explore the expectation outlined above, we draw on our complete sample of active and dissolved Czech, Hungarian, Polish and Slovenian interest groups operating at the state level in three policy fields, energy, healthcare and higher education. As a rule, we collected data from public registries of civil society organizations. We cross-checked the data with Internet searches, lists from parliaments and different ministries that invited organizations to various committees, meetings and interest intermediation bodies. We used the same set of keywords in all four languages. As in healthcare and higher education there are highly specialized professional, patient and student groups, we also made a standardized list of medical professions and higher education disciplines to improve comparability. For Poland, we used the State Court Registry (*Krajowy Rejestr Sądowy* – KRS) as a starting point. Since the KRS database only indicates registrations from 2001 on, we checked for each organization whether it was founded before this period and systematically searched for organizations founded before 2001. Our main source for the Hungarian data was the court registry of civil society organizations. The Hungarian court registry starts in 1989; that is, organizations founded before nonetheless have 1989 as their founding date. In each case though, we checked for the actual foundation date. For Slovenia, our primary source was AJ PES registry (Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services). Our main source for the Czech data was the registry of the Czech Statistical Office.

With the exception of Hungary, these registries do not contain information on dissolutions.⁹ Therefore, we systematically checked whether organizations were active or inactive with Web searches and even by contacting them. In many

TABLE 2.1 The number of pre-transition interest groups per country (total: energy policy, healthcare and higher education)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Czechia	33	12.50
Hungary	95	35.98
Poland	83	31.44
Slovenia	53	20.08
Total	264	100.00

cases, we could not determine the exact date of dissolution, only the last date of activity or that the organization was active/inactive at the time of data collection (2019). The information on dissolutions in the Hungarian registry also has limitations. The unified court registry was established in 2011, and the courts started to dissolve inactive organizations effectively as of 2014. As a result, there has been a “mass dissolution” of civil society organizations since then, even though most of these organizations have been inactive for years if not decades (Sebestény, 2017). We followed Sebestény (2017) in considering any organization as still existent, which was listed in the record as existent, did not have any addition in its name field that indicated a dissolution procedure (e.g. under liquidation), and had at least one financial report in the records since 2011. In addition, we conducted Web searches for every Hungarian organization in the dataset.

We included 1,590 organizations in our sample from the four countries in the three policy areas, of which 264 (16.6%) were founded before 1990. As shown in Table 2.1, with 95 interest groups in total, Hungary has the highest number of pre-transition organizations, followed by 83 in Poland, 53 in Slovenia and 33 in Czechia (Czechoslovakia until 1992).

4.1 Explaining the founding rates and density of pre-transition interest groups

The order of the relative size of the 1989 density of the three populations as a proportion of all formations as of 2019 seems to be independent of regime type. With a 5.25% average across the four countries, the formations in the energy policy population up to 1989 constitute the smallest share of all formations. The corresponding proportions are 24.9% and 20.8% in higher education and healthcare organizational formations, respectively. However, among higher education and healthcare policy interest groups, the variance in formations is greater between countries than among populations across countries (see Figures 2.1–2.4). To test the differences between the bureaucratic–authoritarian Czech, and the national–accommodative Hungarian, Polish and Slovenian regimes, we sorted the organizations into three groups based on foundation period: organizations founded before 1946, between 1947 and 1987, and in 1988–1989.

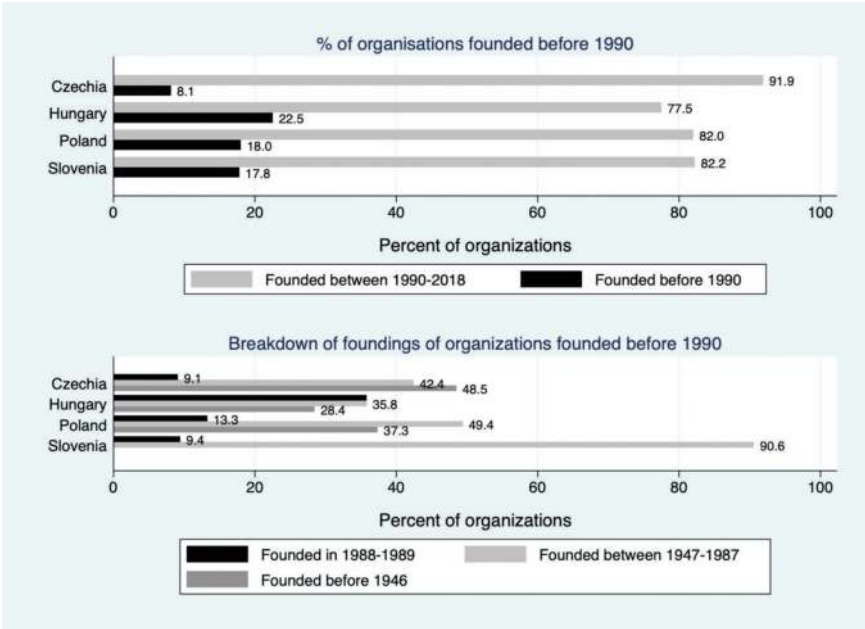


FIGURE 2.2 Percentage of organizations founded before 1990.

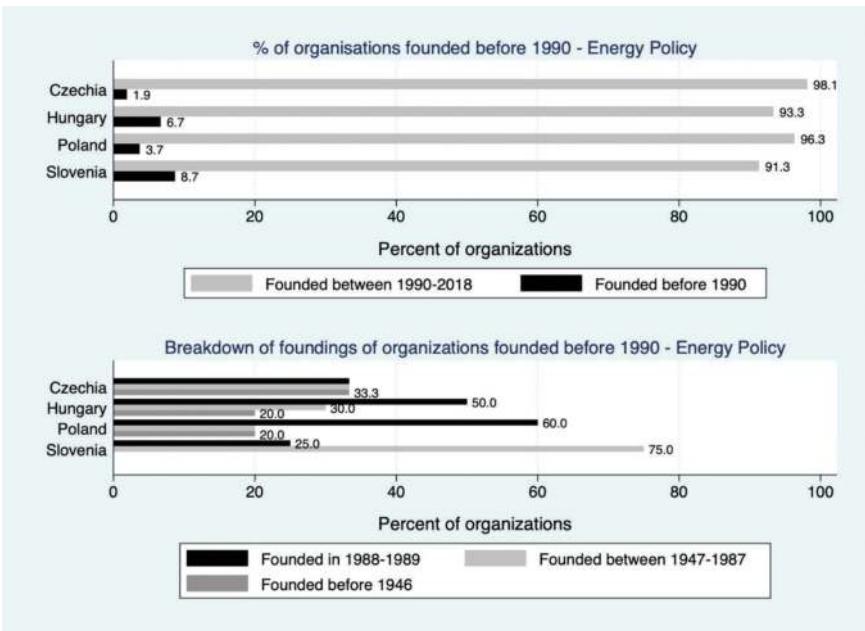


FIGURE 2.3 Percentage of organizations founded before 1990 – energy policy.

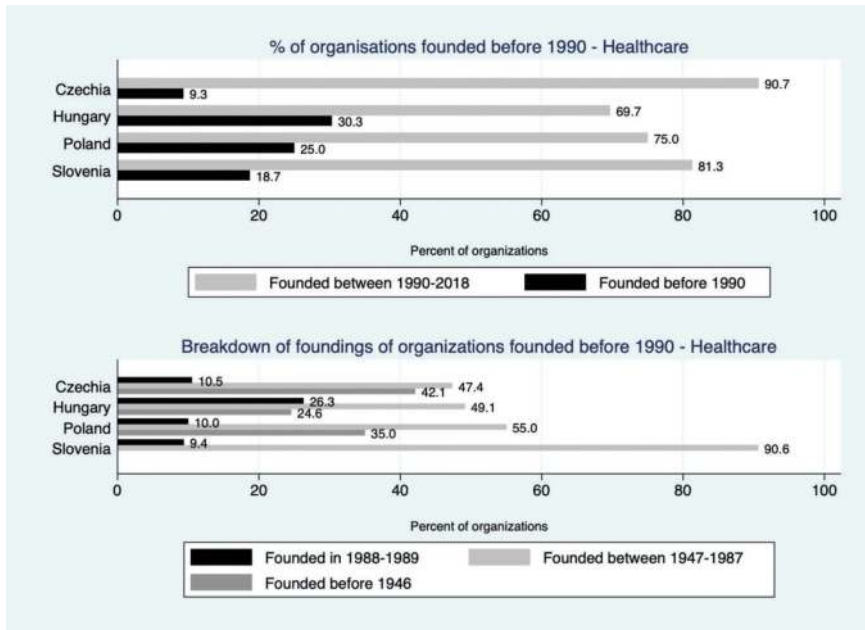


FIGURE 2.4 Percentage of organizations founded before 1990 – healthcare.

As we expected from our theoretical model, Czechia has by far the smallest pre-transition density: as of 2019, a mere 8.1% of active interest organizations in the three policy areas were founded before 1990 (generally as Czechoslovak federal organizations, which we counted as Czech organizations). This is less than half of the other three countries. The corresponding number is the highest in Hungary (22.5%), followed by Poland and Slovenia (18% and 17.8%, respectively). Czechia has also the highest proportion of pre-transition organizations that were founded before the communist takeover (48.5%), followed by Poland (37.3%) and Hungary (28.4%) (in Slovenia we found no such organizations) (Figure 2.2). A small number of professional and scientific organizations as well as unions were incorporated into the communist party state, but no genuine interest intermediation was possible in an orthodox Marxist–Leninist regime.

Differences between the accommodative regimes are also clearly visible in the data. Among pre-transition organizations, Slovenia has the highest share of interest groups founded during the communist era (i.e. between the communist takeover and 1988), namely 90.6% of all organizations in 1989, which is expected considering the Yugoslav system of socialist corporatism. The share of such organizations among pre-transition interest group formations is less than 50% in the other two countries: 49.4% in Poland and 35.8% in Hungary. The almost 15 percentage point difference between Poland and Hungary is, however, indicative of the relatively more pluralist nature of communist rule in Poland (i.e. between 1957 and 1981). With 35.8%, Hungary has the highest proportion of organizations

founded in 1988–1989 among its pre-transition organizations compared to only 13.3% in Poland, and a mere 9.4% in Slovenia (Figure 2.2). This again reflects that Hungary had the most dynamic process of regime change with an opposition strategy of increasing mobilization and confrontation (Bruszt & Stark, 1991). In absence of a united, anti-communist mass movement, with a fragmented, but rapidly growing anti-communist opposition characterized by partisan competition and increasing political mobilization, interest organizations proliferated along ideological and professional lines in Hungary in the last two years of communist rule. This finding is also predicted by population ecology theory. In the ESA model of organizational density, the level of issue certainty, that is, the likelihood of policy change, is part of the energy term, i.e. the demand side of the model. Constituent interest and issue certainty are perceived as “vital resources that interest organization entrepreneurs employ to secure sponsorship” in the model (Gray & Lowery, 1996, p. 106). Political mobilization, the dynamic political confrontation and competition between various opposition parties, the reform communists and the hardliners, as well as the withering away of the party state in a rapidly worsening economic situation is certainly such a resource-rich environment for organizational formations.¹⁰ The first truly independent organizations were founded already in 1988 (e.g. the Democratic Union of Teachers in November 1988 or an independent youth movement in March 1988 called the Alliance of Young Democrats, better known by its Hungarian abbreviation FIDESZ). The initial high fragmentation of the Hungarian interest group landscape was already observed by scholars of industrial relations (Avdagic, 2005, 2006), whereas in Poland there was a sharp initial ideological divide between Solidarity and the successor union confederation, OPZZ. However, after 1989, the union landscape also became increasingly fragmented in Poland too (Guardiancich, 2013, p. 149).

Our finding that Slovenia has by far the most organizations founded during the communist era is also supported by Fink-Hafner (1997b). Although we had a much narrower definition by only including national-level interest groups in three policy fields, whereas she included all organizations (voluntary, social and self-management organizations with no restriction to specific policy fields), we found similar patterns. As she shows, organizational foundations boomed during the 1980s, but slowed down in 1988 and 1989 (Fink-Hafner, 1997b, p. 115).¹¹ In our sample of Slovenian pre-transition interest organizations, 56.6% of organizations were founded before 1980, 34% between 1980 and 1987, and 9.4% in 1988 and 1989, which is similar to the patterns observed by Fink-Hafner (1997b).

Regarding the three policy fields, we find roughly the same patterns, with Hungary having the largest proportion of pre-transition organizations except for energy policy, where Slovenia has a slightly larger share of 8.7% compared to 6.7% in Hungary (Figures 2.3–2.5). The ranking based on the periods when pre-transition organizations were founded also stays the same, with the exception of energy policy, in which pre-transition population in Poland has more organizational formations in 1988–1989 (60%) than in Hungary (50%) (Figure 2.3). However, energy policy interest groups comprise just a fraction of the sample.

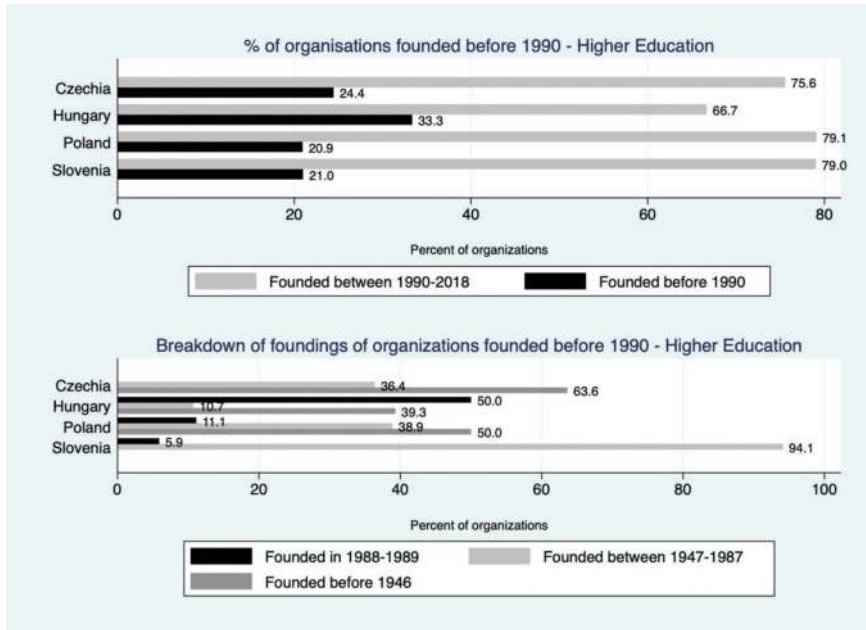


FIGURE 2.5 Percentage of organizations founded before 1990 – higher education.

Our model explaining the variance in organizational formation rates in communist dictatorships can be summed up and formalized as follows:

- In general, more accommodative regimes are more open to societal interest representation and intermediation. In such regimes, a higher number of communist-era interest organizations outside the formal party state structure (i.e. typically professional, scientific and leisure in nature) are expected.
- However, even in more accommodative regimes, there is a variance in formation rates over time. Periods of technocratic experimentation with economic reforms (economic liberalization) and/or of political accommodation (political liberalization) are associated with higher organizational formation rates. Periods of increasing political repression are associated with lower formation rates.
- The nature of regime change makes a difference in formation rates during this period. Whether a transition process is negotiated, or it is the “Velvet Revolution” type (when street protests and civil disobedience force the communists to abandon power in a matter of weeks) does not seem to matter. The decisive factor is the level of political mobilization. An environment of political fragmentation, partisan competition and increasing political mobilization (e.g. Hungary) is associated with higher formation rates than either a managed transition process (e.g. Slovenia) or when a united opposition faces the communist party (e.g. Poland).

4.2 *Analysing the vital rates of Hungarian pre-transition interest groups after democratic transition*

How did pre-transition organizations fare after the democratic and economic transition? We already analysed the proportion of pre-transition organizations among active organizations (as of 2019) in our sample of four countries (Figure 2.2). However, the proportion of pre-transition organizations among active interest groups in 2019 is not necessarily indicative of their survival rates. Did these organizations dissolve during the years after the first democratic elections because they could not cope with the new political and economic context? A recent survey of Hungarian national-level interest organizations found that this might not be the case. On the contrary, organizations founded during the communist era can enjoy an advantage over newer organizations. Gallai, Döme, Molnár and Reich (2015) determined that there is a difference in the frequency of advocacy strategies used by organizations based on the period of founding. Formation during communism had a significant and positive effect on governmental and civil relations over pre-communist-era and post-communist-era organizations. Interest groups founded before 1948 tend to resort to mobilization, demonstrations and non-conventional instruments less frequently than those founded later (Gallai et al., 2015, p. 1474).

As already noted, the Hungarian court registry of civil society organizations is the only one that contains every organization founded before and after 1989, including the dissolved ones. Therefore, for illustration, we restrict our analysis of the mortality rates of pre-transition organizations to the Hungarian sub-sample. It turns out that such pre-existing organizations have a much lower mortality rate than those founded after 1990 in the three policy areas. On average, only 6.3% of pre-transition groups dissolved as of 2019 compared with 27.8% of interest groups founded after 1990. Among the pre-transition organizations, those founded in 1988–1989 have the highest mortality rate (11.8%), followed by organizations founded between 1947 and 1987 (5.9%). The organizations founded before the communist takeover exhibited the highest degree of longevity and were all still active in 2019 (Figure 2.6). The latter are mostly renowned – historic – organizations in higher education and healthcare, representing large and influential professional groups. There are also differences between dissolved organizations based on both their policy area and founding period. 56.8% of the dissolved organizations that were founded after 1990 are energy interest groups, 27.3% healthcare policy groups and 15.8% higher education organizations. The order is different, however, among the dissolved organizations founded before 1990: 50% are higher education groups, whereas energy and healthcare policy groups are both 25%, respectively.

5 Conclusion

This study is the first to our knowledge to explore interest group populations in the communist era and their post-communist survival rates. While exploring three salient policy areas, we showed that pre-transition organizations constitute

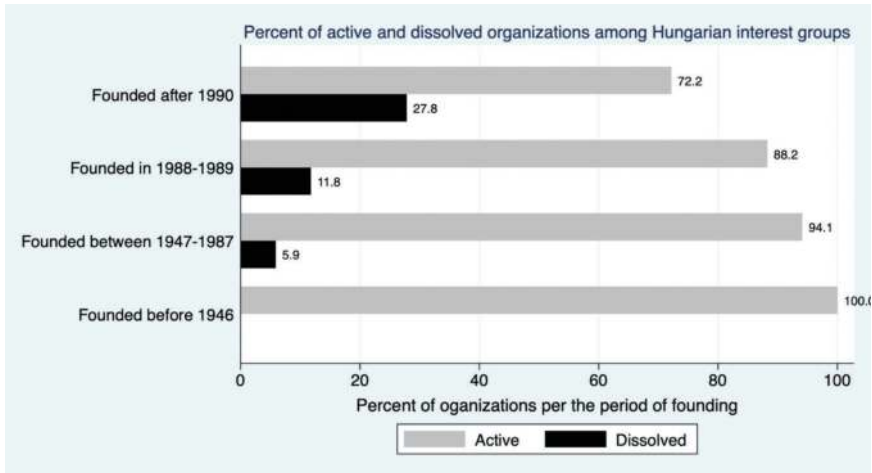


FIGURE 2.6 Percentage of active and dissolved organizations among Hungarian interest groups.

a significant proportion of contemporary interest group populations in four CEE countries. However, the relative size of pre-transition densities and their share among organizations still active in 2019 varies significantly: they comprise 22.5% of the three contemporary policy-specific populations in Hungary, 18% and 17.8% in Poland and Slovenia, respectively, but only 8.1% in Czechia (Figure 2.2). The respective size of pre-transition density (Table 2.1) also reflects the same order. We linked these differences in organizational density between the four countries to differences in their respective communist regime types: the orthodox Marxist-Leninist and repressive bureaucratic-authoritarian type in Czechoslovakia, and the national-accommodative type in Hungary, Poland and Slovenia (Figure 2.1). However, we also found considerable variation between the major foundation periods of the latter three countries: the Slovenian pre-transition populations are dominated by communist-era interest groups, whereas the Polish ones are more balanced, and Hungary has the most interest groups founded in the immediate run-up to transformation (1988–1989). We explained this variance among the three formerly national-accommodative communist regimes by their relative openness to societal interests in the formal decision-making process and the nature of the opposition and regime change. Regarding the sub-sample of Hungarian interest groups – for which we fortunately have data on organizational dissolutions – we found that a much lower proportion of pre-transition organizations dissolved (6.1%) than organizations founded after 1990 (27.8%). This gives credence to the argument that organizational longevity and organizational survival under vastly different political and economic circumstances may be correlated.

The results, which point to at least a moderate level of organizational activity under communism and organizational longevity after communism, contrast with Olson's assumption (1982) on the effect of totalitarianism on organizational density and development. It is beyond dispute that a totalitarian dictatorship (which

in three of our cases was combined with four decades of military occupation) is hostile towards any independent organizations, even if they are as harmless as a choir. However, the view that the development of interest organizations starts mostly anew after the crumbling of a totalitarian regime is oversimplified. The relative size of pre-transition organizations is a factor in the political and societal developments during the totalitarian regime and varies significantly between countries. As we showed, even communist regimes, which all shared a number of fundamental characteristics and most of which were under Soviet control, exhibited a significant degree of variance.

Returning to the energy–stability–area model of organizational density, our analysis also draws attention to the importance of the proper conceptualization of the stability term (Lowery & Gray, 1995). The stability term, that is, a fundamental disruption of the political system, is usually neglected in the literature, which even today mostly has a US focus. As far as the post-communist countries are concerned, where the democratic transitions are relatively recent, we believe that the pre-transition density should be explored in quantitative or qualitative analysis alike, as legacies are essential for understanding the development of interest organizations in the present.

Moving beyond population ecology analysis, the question also emerges whether pre-existing organized interests are more influential nowadays than those founded in the post-communist era (see Horváthová & Dobbins in this volume), as organizational longevity may impact organizational resources (financial, personnel and logistical) in the present. Moreover, the degree to which the organizational population “survived” or was “de-communized” after 1989 also may affect the position of individual groups in interest intermediation systems as well as their ability to forge alliances with other interest groups.

Our findings are also relevant for the debate on the legacy of communism on civil society development and democratization. The scholarly consensus is that in post-communist countries, civic society revival still lags in many respects due to the erosion of civic norms and low social capital due to communist rule. As Putnam et al. (1993) wrote

(...) the formerly Communist societies had weak civic traditions before the advent of Communism, and totalitarian rule abused even that limited stock of social capital. Without norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement (...) amoral familialism, clientelism, lawlessness, ineffective government, and economic stagnation – seems likelier than successful democratization (...).

(1993, p. 183)

Other scholars, however, question the weakness of post-communist civil society thesis. They assert that the CEE civic societies are not as feeble as assumed. In their opinion, many post-communist societies possess vigorous public spheres and active civic society organizations, strongly connected to transnational civic networks

able to shape domestic policies (Foa & Ekiert, 2017, p. 419). Communist regimes accordingly did not simply repress independent social and political organizations, but actively built their own associational structures, which are relevant for the following development of civic life. This perspective on civic organizations as mechanisms of democratic socialization, where citizens are socialized into the basic democratic norms of “debate, negotiation, compromise or consensus” dates back to Alexis de Tocqueville. Whereas communist systems were indisputably deeply repressive, the micro-level of associational life can be treated as offering some space for civic engagement. Foa and Ekiert (2017) argue that the associational structures of the communist era have indeed somewhat weakened, but they are still there, and they are being supplemented by new organizations, networks and ties.

In the light of our findings, future studies should explore the effects of communist-era interest organization density and diversity, and interest intermediation structures on post-communist civil society and interest intermediation development. Building on our work and Gallai et al. (2015), the differences between the vital rates and strategies of communist-era and post-communist interest organizations should be examined comparatively across interest group populations and countries. Whether and how these legacies affected democratization could be re-examined based on such empirical work.

The considerations above pave the way for the upcoming chapters. In Chapter 3, we explore how individual organizational populations developed in the post-communist period with a focus on major reform activity and processes of Europeanization, while also introducing the concept of density dependence. We then move on to empirical analyses of the influence of interest groups, in which we also assess the viability of pre-transitional organizations in the policy process.

Notes

- 1 Lowery and Gray (1995) include in their study on US state-level interest group density a control for the interest-group-system age following Olson (1982). However, they note that Olson’s hypothesis probably does not apply to the USA, “unless one assumes that there is a century-long time lag in reaching equilibrium or that population growth is open-ended and unconstrained” (Lowery & Gray, 1995, p. 12).
- 2 The terminology used by Ekiert and Foa (2011) is somewhat unclear: they explicitly write about individual organizations, but then also add civil society networks and social movements to their analysis.
- 3 Bruszt et al. (2010) include the distance from Vienna as a control variable in their regression analysis of the average number of dissident activities per year in communist countries between 1985 and 1989.
- 4 That is, superfluously employed people.
- 5 In Hungary, there was a 100-day communist rule in 1919, but it was eventually crushed by Romanian and Czech forces, and a restorationist right-wing authoritarian regime was imposed by the Entente powers.
- 6 Or the “happiest barrack” as Hungarians used to refer to their own country’s relatively less oppressive (after the 1963 amnesty, that is) “welfare communist” regime.
- 7 More so in Romania than in Bulgaria, where the opposition was stronger and the communist party more divided (e.g. in Bulgaria one of the main players of the regime change was an independent trade union movement, see Iankova (2002)).

- 8 For an analysis of the differences in the strategies of the opposition and the reform communists in Poland and Hungary (with a focus on the latter case), see Bruszt and Stark (1991).
- 9 The Slovenian registry only contains active organizations, whereas in the Czech and Polish registries one cannot be sure whether the organizations listed there are still active.
- 10 Furthermore, the last communist government introduced significant economic and social policy reforms between 1987 and 1989 (e.g. price liberalization, privatization, establishment of a two-tier banking system, easing of wage regulation and introduction of unemployment benefits) (OECD Hungary, 1991).
- 11 Fink-Hafner (1997b) also included profit-oriented enterprises in her organizational count. On this measure, again, Hungary would fare better than Czechoslovakia or Poland, as the Hungarian economy was the most liberalized by 1989 among communist countries except for Yugoslavia. Private activity in the agriculture and small private enterprises mostly in the service sector were tolerated (these entrepreneurs were called “maszek” in Hungarian, an abbreviation of “magán szektor”, private sector).

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3

EXPLORING POPULATIONS OF ORGANIZED INTERESTS IN POST-COMMUNIST CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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1 Introduction

How have populations of interest organizations developed in the post-communist era? While scholars have focused on “births” and “deaths” of interest organizations in the USA and the European Union (EU) (Berkhout et al., 2015; Gray & Lowery, 1996), we still have little knowledge on how interest group landscapes are developing in post-communist democracies. The very particular context of the abrupt collapse of command economies and authoritarian regimes followed by a fast-paced transition to democracy and market economy is likely to have fundamentally impacted interest group populations. This unprecedented trajectory of simultaneous economic, political and social transformation, often combined with nation-building, offers a unique chance to assess changes and stability in populations of organizations.

After having looked at organizational development under communism and post-transition survival rates in Chapter 2, a series of new questions arise. First, how radically were interest group populations transformed by the transition to a market economy, democracy and in some cases nation-building? To what extent did EU accession, full membership and the integration into trans-European structures reshape the organizational landscape? To what degree have organizational populations been affected by internal reform processes? And, at what point did populations of organizations become “saturated”?

We address these questions by exploring the formation and density rates of organized interests in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovenia – the latter two of which became independent countries and all of which joined the EU in 2004. We again focus on energy, healthcare and higher education (HE). All three policy areas have concentrated interests (e.g. energy producers, university professors, the medical profession) and more diffuse interests (environmental groups,

students, patients) and, importantly, are currently subject to strong, but varying degrees of reform and harmonization pressures reinforced by Europeanization.

To track changes over time, we compiled databases of all nationally operating interest groups in these three policy areas based on court registries, while also checking whether the organizations existed during communism. This enables us to assess the volatility and continuity of each different interest group system from a cross-country and cross-policy perspective. In doing so, we broke down organizations into specific types (e.g. patients vs. medical profession, students vs. academic profession, energy producers vs. consumers, clean vs. dirty energy, see below) to gain a clearer picture of “birth” and density rates within individual policy areas.

First, we briefly review some existing research on organization ecology. We then discuss the specific post-communist context, while deriving numerous working hypotheses on external and internal processes, which may affect organizational populations. Against this background, we present descriptive statistics reflecting population developments, while discussing change and stability based on our theoretical framework. The conclusions summarize our findings and offer ideas for future research.

2 Theoretical background and working hypotheses

As outlined in Chapter 2, population ecology studies the founding, mortality and density of organizations on the aggregate level. Hannan and Freeman (1977) emphasized that the ability of organizations to adapt to environmental changes is limited. Organizations are characterized by structural inertia stemming from both internal pressures (material and human resources are not easily transferable, lack of information, *status quo* bias within organizations) and external pressures (legal and fiscal barriers to entry or exit, cost of information, legitimacy constraints, problem of collective rationality). They defined populations as aggregates of organizations (rather than members) that are “relatively homogenous in terms of environmental vulnerability” (1977, p. 934). The question is then not how individual organizations adapt to changes in the organizational environment, but how change impacts the “size distributions” and “the diversity of organizational forms within broadly defined areas of activity” (1977, p. 957). In other words, organizational selection happens at the level of populations and not individual organizations.

Another key theoretical concept is density dependence. It explains “the variation in founding and mortality rates as functions of organizational density” (Hannan & Carroll, 1992, p. 15). Organizations initially struggle to legitimize their existence. With the gradual legitimation of an organizational form, the need for justification decreases (Hannan & Freeman, 1989), thus reducing the cost of organizing. However, as density grows, the “supplies of potential organizers, members, patrons and resources become exhausted” (Hannan & Carroll, 1992). Subsequently, the competition for resources also increases, potentially resulting in a saturation effect, which may inhibit new foundations. Thus, organizational populations are expected to evolve as an inverted “U-shaped” curve, i.e. \cap .

Another well-known theory of interest group formation and stability is the political opportunity structure (POS) approach (Meyer & Imig, 1993; Meyer & Minkoff, 2004), which focuses on the political and economic environment. Meyer and Imig (1993, p. 255) argue that “external political circumstances set the context in which the calculus of participation takes place, determining the urgency of particular issues, and the scope and intensity of conflict”. Thus, any type of system-level crisis or transformation may induce opportunities for mobilization. Yet not only political crises, but also changes in the balance of power or major policy reforms may induce new interest groups to jump into the playing field. POS theory differentiates both between structural changes and signals, and issue-specific versus general openings in the polity. Structural changes are profound changes in political alignments and policies, whereas visible signals in the political environment are rather symbolic in nature (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004, p. 1464).

Drawing from these two schools of thought, we formulate several working hypotheses to grasp developments in four post-communist democracies. Based on density dependence theory, we first explore whether there are “saturation effects” in our populations of post-communist organizations. In other words, do we first observe a phase of gradual growth as organizations struggle to legitimize themselves and then a “flattening out” before organizational births decline as the playing field becomes crowded out?

Hypothesis 1: Interest group formation in CEE is density-dependent, characterized by gradual growth, then a plateau and decline.

Based on POS theory, we also explore how critical junctures in post-communist trajectories impacted organizational formation. Although there were interest organizations in communist states representing genuine interests, few organizations independent of the communist party and state control existed. As shown in Chapter 2, the 1989–1990 critical juncture did not wipe the field clean. There were new, independent organizations or splinter groups of larger, hitherto official ones that started to form in the 1980s in relatively “liberal” countries such as Hungary or even long before in Slovenia. However, rapid and simultaneous transition from totalitarianism to liberal democracy, from command to market economy, and in many cases to regained or new nationhood is a unique historical experience (Offe, 1994) likely to stimulate organizational population growth:

Hypothesis 2: The period of immediate transition (and statehood in Slovenia and the Czech Republic) positively affects interest organization formation.

EU accession in 2004 constitutes another critical milestone. According to Grabbe (2001), accession led to processes of diffusion, learning and adaptation to European models for interest representation, which potentially may have

created new POS for CEE organizations. Various authors (e.g. Carmin, 2010; Hanegraaff, van der Ploeg & Berkhout, 2020) have shown that membership in EU umbrella organizations and transnational networks may positively affect the material and non-material resources of interest groups. Hence, we hypothesize that

Hypothesis 3: EU accession and the run-up to it positively affect interest organization formation.

According to POS theory, legislative activity may also stimulate interest group formation (Meyer & Imig, 1993; Meyer & Minkoff, 2004; Nownes, 2004). It not only sends signals to individuals about the importance of an issue, thereby providing them incentives to form organizations, but also may affect the core interests of existing organizations and their constituencies. Reform activity also may generate higher levels of interest intermediation and/or protest.¹

Hypothesis 4: We expect major reforms and reform attempts to positively affect interest group formation in CEE.

Following POS theory, we additionally provide some preliminary insights on the impact of neo-authoritarian-style governments on organizational ecologies. The trend towards “democratic backsliding” (Bermeo, 2016) and/or national conservatism most notably in Hungary, but arguably also in Poland (Sata & Karolewski, 2020) with accompanying widespread civic opposition may jump-start counter-movements. This may boost organizational populations. However, as Greskovits (2020) emphasizes, the illiberal Fidesz party reinvented itself by heavily investing in grassroots, civil society networks after their surprise electoral defeat in 2002. This civic activism of educated middle-class supporters has transformed Hungarian civil society and served as an important factor not only in Viktor Orbán’s second, landslide victory in 2010, but contributes to the remarkable political resilience of his regime. Indeed, Orbán’s subsequent governments systematically realigned state funds supporting civil society and cultural institutions towards openly right-wing, nationalist and loyal religious organizations (Hungarian Network of Academics, 2020). Ekiert has referred to a similar phenomenon in Poland, namely the emergence of a “dark side of civil society”, i.e. new organized interests with illiberal and nationalist objectives (Ekiert, 2019).²

Therefore, we assume that:

Hypothesis 5a: “Democratic backsliding” will jump-start civic counter-mobilization in the form of new organizational foundations.

Hypothesis 5b: Illiberal governments will cultivate alternative “ecosystems” of supporter organizations, leading to an increase in organizational foundations.

Yet national-conservative governments also may be keen on centralization and authoritarian-style governance, thus cracking down on hostile civil organizations and reducing their means for influence.

Hypothesis 6: “Democratic backsliding” has a negative impact on organizational foundations.

3 Case selection and methodology

As outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, we focus on organizations operating in energy, higher education and healthcare in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia between 1990 and 2018. While transformation and Europeanization processes are more or less restricted to a particular timeframe, grasping the impact of policy reforms on organizational populations (H4) poses some – arguably unsurmountable – challenges. For example, major reforms were often a direct result of the 1989/1990 transformation process itself (H1), making it difficult to disentangle their effects. EU accession poses the same challenge, as national reforms were often direct reactions to Europeanization processes (H3). Moreover, we may observe long-term reform attempts (e.g. in Czech HE; see Vlček, Dobbins & Riedel in this volume), which never materialized as intended, but perhaps triggered new organizational formations.

Nevertheless, in line with POS theory, we do our best to differentiate between general structural changes such as the breakdown of communism (H2) or EU accession (H3), and issue-specific changes, that is, major reforms or reform attempts (H4). We opted for a pragmatic approach to pinpointing major reform (attempts) by first drawing on Peter Hall’s “three orders of policy change” (1993). “First-order” policy changes aim to readjust existing policy instruments (e.g. university tuition increase, expansion of medical coverage). “Second-order” changes generally introduce new policy instruments (e.g. tuition fees, private health insurance, carbon taxes), while “third-order” changes usually entail a full-scale paradigmatic shift in policy goals (e.g. large-scale privatization of a state-run healthcare or HE system; energy market liberalization). For example, in HE systems, the reinstatement of academic autonomy in 1989/1990 was a third-order change. Poland (and later the Czech Republic) then experienced second-order policy change with the introduction of private universities in the 1990s without dismantling the public system.

Baumgartner (2013) argues, however, that first- or second-order reforms may also trigger significant policy change. For example, a large university tuition increase, major healthcare funding cuts or major increase of carbon taxes (i.e. technically first-order change) may generate large-scale political and organizational mobilization. Therefore, Baumgartner (2013) suggests assessing policy changes based on whether they substantially break up the status quo or not. While this criterion is admittedly softer and more qualitative, we keep it in mind when assessing policy reforms. Thus, for every policy field and country, we identify the four to five most important reforms or reform attempts, many of which

were triggered by the transformation and Europeanization processes. While we mostly focus on third-order changes, we also include some second- and first-order reforms, which shook up the political status quo.

Regarding HE, essentially all CEE countries underwent third-order policy change with the quick reinstatement of university autonomy and academic freedom as a cornerstone of democratization. Most CEE countries, including the four analysed here, also experienced massification, i.e. rapidly increasing student numbers. The Bologna Process initiated in 1999 was arguably the largest external reform stimulus in CEE. Driven by Europeanization through transnational “soft governance” and multilateral learning, the process has in some countries resulted in third-order changes such as mass privatization or the fundamental redesign of university governance (Dobbins & Knill, 2014). Other countries, e.g. the Czech Republic and Poland, underwent more sluggish post-Bologna reforms, resulting in the recalibration of existing institutions or introduction of new structures into existing paradigms (e.g. quality assurance bodies, new forms of student representation) (see Vlk, Dobbins & Riedel in this volume). Hungary’s HE policy pathway has been less consistent. Like the other CEE countries, it first focused on restoring academic self-governance in the early 1990s and then later accountability and market orientation under the Bologna Process (Kováts, Heidrich, & Chandler, 2017). In 2012–2013, a first-order policy change, namely harsh austerity and cuts in state-funding study places, triggered strong counter-mobilization by the academic community. The recent crackdown on Central European University (CEU) and seizure of the research institute network of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences arguably are third-order policy changes accompanied by mass protests. The new Polish HE Act (2018) also is regarded by observers as a mass overhaul provoking support and opposition from the student and academic community (see Vlk, Dobbins & Riedel in this volume).

Unlike in HE, CEE countries altogether did not experience major, i.e. third-order or large second-order, change, in energy and environmental policy in the early 1990s. Generally, they were regarded as environmental laggards as the political-institutional and economic transformation was prioritized (Skjærseth & Wettstad, 2007). However, EU integration brought numerous stimuli for changes of all orders. Specifically, the EU’s energy *acquis* prescribes the liberalization of gas and electricity markets (arguably third-order change), as well as major pollution restrictions. Europeanization pressures were reinforced with the European Energy Strategy of 2007, which called for increasing energy supply and security and ensuring the availability of affordable energy, while promoting environmental sustainability. The common energy policy consists of a mixture of both binding measures and softer coordination of energy supply issues and regional markets (Szulecki, Fischer, Gullberg, & Sartor, 2016). This has prompted all four CEE countries to draft new wide-ranging energy strategies in the past ten years (see Table 3.1).

As laid bare by the coronavirus crisis, healthcare policy generally remains outside the direct orbit of the EU. Nevertheless, European legislation has resulted in numerous, primarily first-order policy changes, including obligations for member states to integrate foreign suppliers into domestic healthcare (Vrangbæk &

TABLE 3.1 Major policy-specific reforms in CEE

	<i>Higher education</i>	<i>Energy</i>	<i>Healthcare</i>
Hungary	1990: Restoration of autonomy and academic freedom 2012: Major funding cuts; strengthening of chancellor; appointment by Prime Minister 2014: National HE strategy: stronger performance orientation; strong focus on utilitarian knowledge 2017/2018: Governmental infringements on CEU and Academy of Science	1996–2003: Energy Saving Action Plan and National Energy Saving Programme 2004–2006 and 2007–2013: National Development Plans (NDP-I and NDP-II) 2007: Strategy on Renewable Energy Sources 2007–2020 2008–2009: National Energy Conservation Programme (NEP 2008 and 2009); National Climate Change Strategy 2008–2025 (NCCS) 2011: National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP) 2012: National Energy Strategy 2030	1988–1989: Compulsory social insurance established; private healthcare providers permitted 1990: Ownership of primary care, polyclinics and hospitals devolved to local governments 1992: The Social Insurance Fund is divided into separate Health and Pension Insurance Funds and made self-governing 1998: Self-government of the Health Insurance Fund is abolished 2006–2008: Failed reform attempt to introduce managed competition under multiple insurers with partial private ownership 2012–2017: Re-centralization of governance and hospital ownership 1995: (Failed) attempt to regionalize state hospitals 1998: Introduction of region-based insurance funds and mandatory insurance contributions; free choice of doctors 2003: Re-centralization into National Health Fund
Poland	1990: Restoration of autonomy and self-governance; privatization 2002: Introduction of accreditation body 2005 and 2011: Introduction of restrained performance-oriented mechanisms; centres of research excellence 2018: Transfer of authority to rectors; weakening of stakeholder mechanisms; creation of flagship universities	1998–2002: Major reform to increase coal efficiency and disburden coal mines in high debt 2006: Consolidation of energy market into five providers; de-monopolization; freedom of choice of provider 2009 – Approval of Polish Energy Policy until 2030	

(Continued)

	<i>Higher education</i>	<i>Energy</i>	<i>Healthcare</i>
Czech Republic	1990: Restoration of autonomy and self-governance 1998: Authorization of private universities 2008: White Paper reform proposal leading to 2016 HE Act	1988: Act on the protection and exploitation of mineral resources (Mining Act) 1997–2000: Atomic Act; Emergency Oil Stocks Act; Energy Act; Energy Management Act 2004: State Energy Concept 2006–2017: Numerous acts targeting renewables and energy efficiency as well as policies targeting climate change; nuclear energy action plans (e.g. NAP NE 2014, Atomic Act 2016) 2015: State Energy Policy 2015 (SEP)	1991–1992: General Health Insurance Act and other reforms that replaced Semashko model with statutory health insurance (SHI) 1994–2005: Consolidation phase and shift of healthcare to regional governments 2005–2012: Risk adjustment and equalization among insurances; regulations on public budgets – payment schemes for hospitals; merging and reorganizing regional public health authorities and the health system 2019: Strategic Framework for Health Care Development in the Czech Republic by 2030
Slovenia	1993: Restoration of autonomy and self-governance 1999: Consolidation of student rights; transfer of personnel autonomy to universities 2005: Implementation of Bologna study structures 2009: Introduction of quality assurance body	Energy Act 1999; <i>National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2008–2016</i> 2014: Adoption of Energy Act: market liberalization; simplification of start-up activities; introduction of energy audit obligations and efficiency certificates	1992: Creation of Single National Social Insurer 1998 onwards: Gradual privatization of certain services

(Sources: Alexa et al., 2015; Dobbins, 2015; Gaál, 2004; Gaál et al., 2011; IEA Czech Republic, 2010, 2016; IEA Hungary, 2006, 2011, 2017; Kováts et al., 2017; OECD Hungary, 2019).

See also the *Database of Strategies of the Czech Republic*, online: <https://www.databaze-strategie.cz/cz/mzd/strategie>; and *OEnergetice.cz*, online: <https://oenergetice.cz/>.

Sindbjerg Martensen, 2008). In specific areas, such as medical trials, data protection and pharmaceuticals, EU regulations also provide common standards and rights, which may exceed those granted by domestic rules. Numerous regulations and directives regarding the movement of medical professionals, patients' rights³ and social security also target the sector.

Our countries of analysis experienced large-scale healthcare reforms at different phases of post-communism. The Czech Republic already underwent third-order change early by turning the previously state-run system into a competitive fee-for-service system with numerous private insurers (Roberts, 2009). In Poland, by contrast, pre-existing structures initially were preserved. However, the late 1990s heralded several major changes, including the diversification of funding, a new payment concept and the establishment of general practitioner institutions (Grzeskiewicz, 2015; Hellich & Wierzowiecka, 2017). While funding was initially transferred from the central government to multiple healthcare funds, in 2003 one centralized insurance fund (*Narodowy Fundusz Zdrowia*) was created.

Hungary introduced a Social Insurance Fund already in 1989 to manage healthcare costs. Between 1988 and 1994, several key reforms introduced decentralization in healthcare provision and self-governance in social insurance. However, from 1994, the direction of reforms was towards re-centralization and cost-cutting (particularly between 1994–1998 and 2005–2008). After 2012, the subsequent Orbán governments completed re-centralization in both healthcare governance (the National Health Insurance Fund Administration was dissolved into the Ministry of Human Capacities) and ownership (hospitals were transferred from municipalities to the central government in 2012) (Gaál, 2004; Gaál, Szigeti, Márton, Gaskins, & Panteli, 2011; OECD Hungary, 2019). Yet despite extreme underfunding, weak performance by international standards, the migration of medical personnel, Hungarian healthcare has not undergone radical transformational change in the post-communist period. In 1992, Slovenia created a Bismarck-type social insurance system based on a signal national insurer and uniform national legislation. These foundations have essentially remained in place ever since. Nevertheless, gradual privatization occurred over the late 1990s and early 2000s, as various services were supplemented by independent providers by means of contracts with public funds (Albrecht & Klazinga, 2009).

Fully aware of the difficulties in grasping the magnitude of individual reforms, we present a small overview (see Table 3.1) of major reform initiatives and outputs in CEE. We also bear in mind that frustration with the lack of reform despite problem pressure may also stimulate organization population growth.

After compiling lists of organizations and their foundation/dissolution dates (see Chapter 2 for data compilation and limitations), we broke down our organizational populations by type. For HE, we coded each organization as either “student interest”, “teacher/employee interest” (typically trade unions), “professional/scientific associations” (e.g. geographical, mathematical society) and “institutional” (e.g. conference of rectors, deans). Regarding professional/scientific associations, we applied strict criteria and only included larger disciplines listed

in Wikipedia’s outline of academic disciplines.⁴ All national-level student associations from all disciplines were included because they are explicitly involved in and affected by HE policy.

For healthcare, we cross-checked whether every specific medical specialization (e.g. immunology, radiology, diabetes) actually exists and coded them by constituency, that is, the professional and/or societal groups they represent: “medical doctors or healthcare professionals”, “other employees”, “patients”, “employers/institutional” and “business”.

We coded energy organizations according to sectors, that is, “fossil energy and general energy policy groups”, “renewable energy”, “nuclear energy” and “green civic organizations/nature protection”. Environmental organizations were also included if they express a preference for certain sources of energy (generally renewables, but potentially also nuclear).⁵

4 Empirical analysis

We first present some general data on country- and policy-specific population sizes. Table 3.2 shows the frequency of organizations (with an identified foundation date). Altogether, we identified 1,590 organizations across the three policy fields in the four countries, of which a total of 264 (16.6%) were founded before 1990 (see Chapter 2). The data reveal that a country’s (human) population size does not necessarily correlate with organizational population sizes, as Czechia’s and Hungary’s organizational ecology is nearly as large as Poland’s with four times as many inhabitants.⁶ Slovenia (population approx. 2 million) exhibits an organization ecology approx. two-thirds the size of Poland’s (with 38 million inhabitants).⁷

As for specific policies, healthcare populations are unsurprisingly the largest due to the many specific medical disciplines (e.g. dentistry, immunology, paediatrics) represented by organized interests. In energy, Czechia and Hungary have the largest populations.

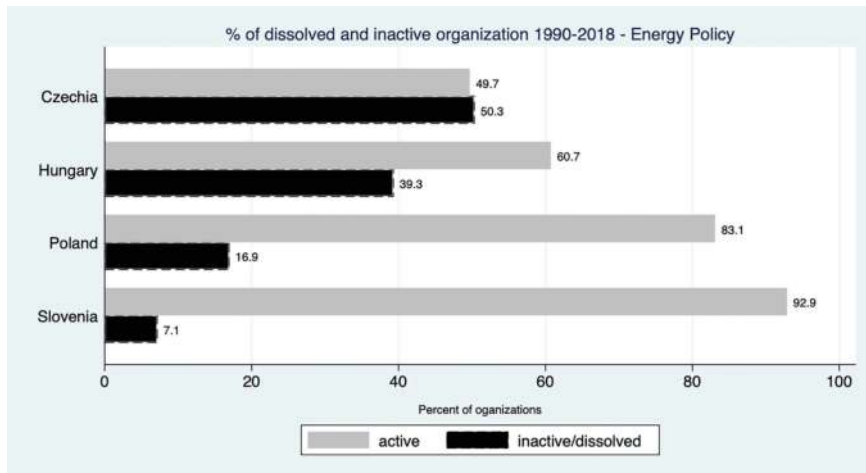
As already discussed in Chapter 2, we unfortunately do not have reliable data on “organizational mortality”, in particular exact dissolution dates.⁸ Nevertheless, it is worth reporting that we found by far the highest mortality rates in the Czech and Hungarian energy populations, which amount to 50.3% and 39.3% of all organizations founded between 1990 and 2018, respectively⁹ (Figure 3.1).

TABLE 3.2 Size and relative size of all interest organizations populations combined (three policy areas)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Relative size (%)</i>
Czechia	409	25.72
Hungary	422	26.54
Poland	461	28.99
Slovenia	298	18.74
Total	1590	100.00

TABLE 3.3 Breakdown of all covered organizations by policy area and country

<i>Policy field</i>	<i>Country</i>				<i>Total</i>
	<i>Czechia</i>	<i>Hungary</i>	<i>Poland</i>	<i>Slovenia</i>	
Energy	158	150	135	46	489
Healthcare	204	188	240	171	803
Higher education	47	84	86	81	298
Total	409	422	461	298	1,590

**FIGURE 3.1** 1% of dissolved and inactive organizations – energy policy.

The Hungarian court registry has reliable data on dissolution and inactivity – just not on the real dates, as the courts started to legally dissolve inactive organizations as of 2013–2014 – and in the other cases, we systematically checked online whether an organization shows any sign of activity (we double-checked the Hungarian data as well). Thus, we can tentatively conclude that this significantly higher mortality rate among Czech and Hungarian energy policy groups is indicative of the relative differences between the mortality rates of energy policy, HE and healthcare populations in these two countries. In Czechia, more than 51% of all general/fossil groups dissolved (38/74), whereas in Hungary only 40% (33/82). Among renewable groups, the proportions are 54% in Czechia (23/42) and 38% in Hungary (19/50). The dissolution rates are also high in the smaller nuclear energy and environmental protection populations. Three of seven and two of eight nuclear groups dissolved in Czechia and Hungary, respectively. 40% (14/35) of the Czech and 30% (3/10) of the Hungarian environmental protection groups dissolved.

4.1 Post-communist organizational foundation rates: energy

Let us now look at foundation rates in energy policy. For all four countries, populations changed dramatically after 1990. Other than some four or five organizations, Polish energy basically started with a clean slate and then saw an immediate post-communist bump (see Figure 3.3). This was followed, however, by relatively low foundation activity in the 1990s. The run-up to EU accession in 2004 gave a strong boost to energy organization formation, followed by somewhat of a slowdown.

From 2005 to 2007, the national-conservative PiS had a governmental majority. Then, the liberal *Platforma Obywatelska* (Civic Platform) regained control of the parliament until late 2015. We see renewables and general/fossils groups essentially following the same foundation patterns regardless of governmental coalitions, which can arguably be attributed to heated ideological battles over the direction of Polish energy policy (pro-coal/fossil vs. renewables). The adoption of the 2007 European Energy Strategy and 2009 Energy Strategy until 2030 also coincided with this phase of heavy formation activity, whereas since 2016 we observe a decline in foundation rates, lending some preliminary support to hypothesis 6 (i.e. a slowdown in formations under national-conservative governments).

As shown by Labanino, Dobbins, Czarnecki and Železnik (2020), the founding rates of Polish energy policy organizations do not seem to be density-dependent. Renewable energy organizations proliferated after 2005, but the formation of

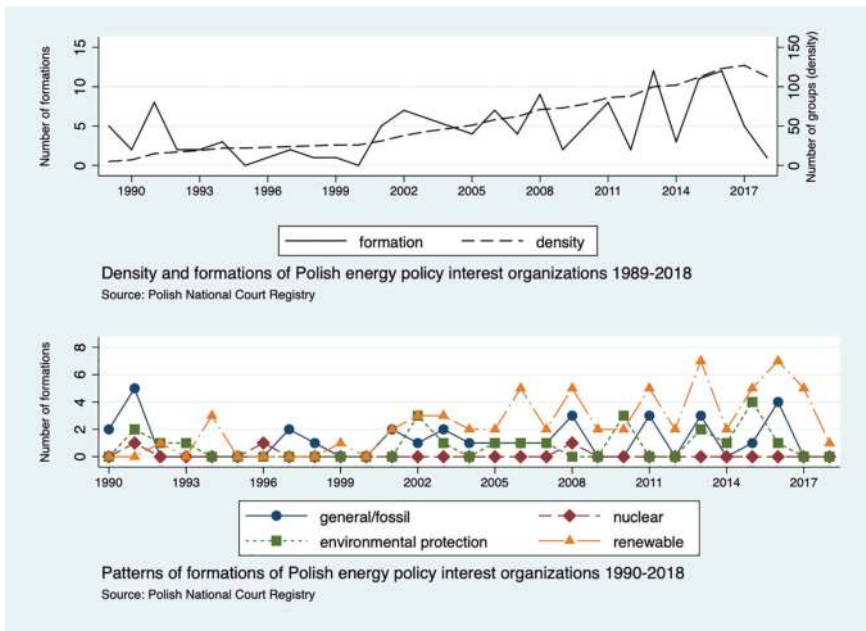


FIGURE 3.2 Polish energy organizations: formation rates and density, and formation rates by type.

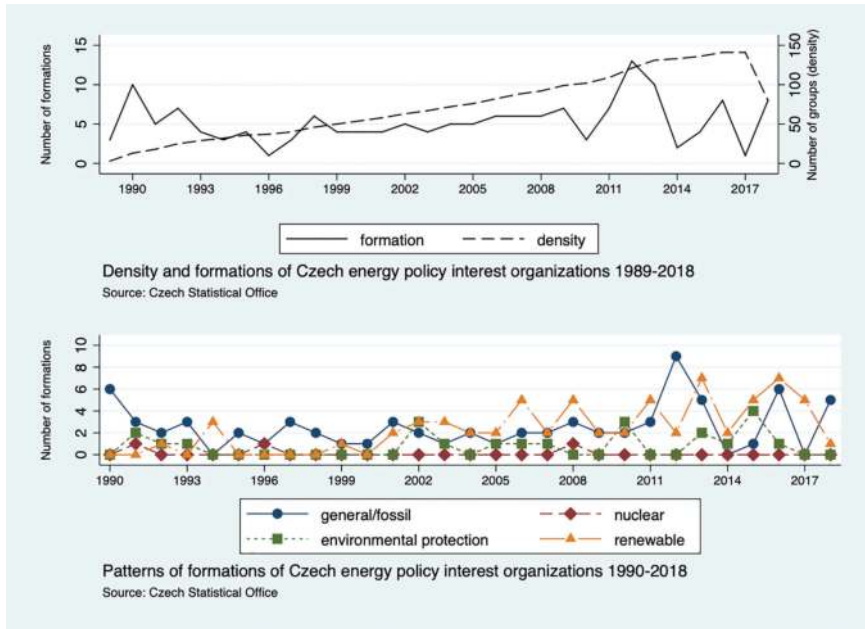


FIGURE 3.3 Czech energy organizations: formation rates and density, and formation rates by type.

general/fossil as well as environmental protection groups also has several peaks from 2009 on. Perhaps we do not see any saturation yet, because the formation of energy organizations seems to really only “take off” after 2000.

The development of Czech¹⁰ energy organizations is roughly similar. After starting with a more or less clean slate in 1989, the new opportunity structure gave a moderate thrust to organizational formation, thus lending moderate support to hypothesis 1.

In line with hypothesis 2, we observe a steady foundation rate during the EU accession process and then indeed a boom in foundations around the 2010 period, which can be attributed to the 2007 European Energy Strategy. In reaction, the Czech Republic approved its own State Energy Policy in 2015, which outlines the state’s energy-related priorities and strategic intentions. Again, here we see a chronological overlap between major reform projects and organizational formation.

The Czech energy formation rates also do not seem to be density-dependent. However, as already discussed, half of all Czech energy organizations are inactive or dissolved (Figure 3.1), and in most cases, the exact date of dissolution (or last year of activity) could not be determined. That is why we see a steep decline in density at the end of the timeframe because we could only be certain that as of 2018–2019 these organizations were inactive (Figure 3.4). Nevertheless, this high mortality rate should make us cautious in making inference about density dependence in this population.

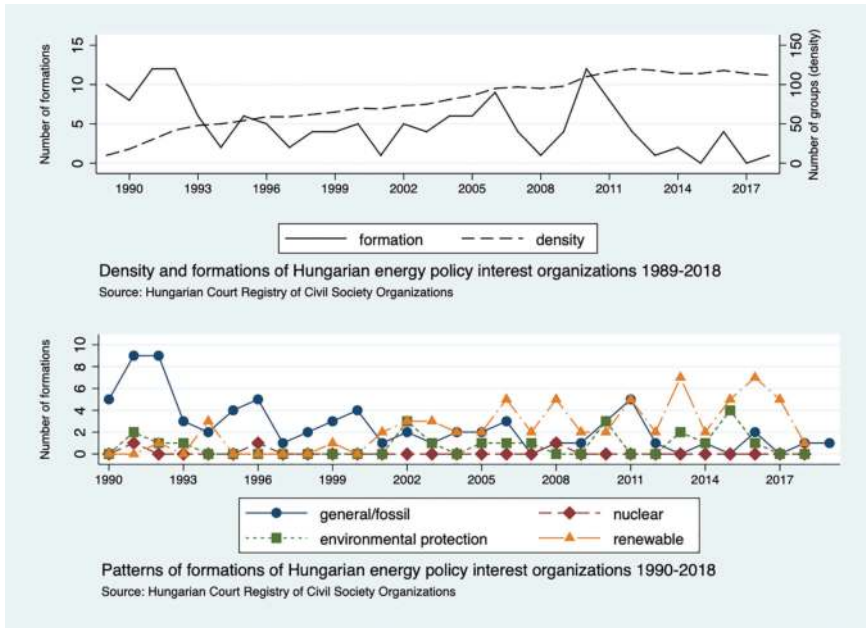


FIGURE 3.4 Hungarian energy organizations: formation rates and density, and formation rates by type.

The Hungarian data almost mirror those of the Czech Republic and Poland, with one major difference being the noticeably weak foundation rates since the takeover of the national-conservative Orbán government in 2011, again lending some credence to hypothesis 6 that democratic backsliding may stunt organizational population growth. This observation is further compounded by the fact that Hungary also adopted a major National Energy Strategy in 2012 (Horváthová & Dobbins, 2019), which seems to have little to no impact on organizational formation.

The Hungarian population also seems more density-dependent than both the Polish and the Czech populations. There are relatively high initial formation rates between 1989 and 1992 along a low initial pre-transition density. As density grows, first there is a 13-year ebb in formation rates, as predicted by the theory. However, between 2005 and 2009, there are three years with high formation rates with a peak in 2009 (which is on par with the new foundations in the transition years). These foundations are mostly all renewable energy interest groups except for 2011, when five new general/fossil energy groups were founded (Figure 3.5). Then, from 2011 on, energy policy formation rates decline to a historic low though. We would argue that Figure 3.5 shows a legitimacy process at relatively low density and an increasing competition process as density grows, thus supporting the density-dependency hypothesis. Around the middle of the timeframe, we see a temporary uptick in formations as renewable energy groups gained legitimacy from 2001.

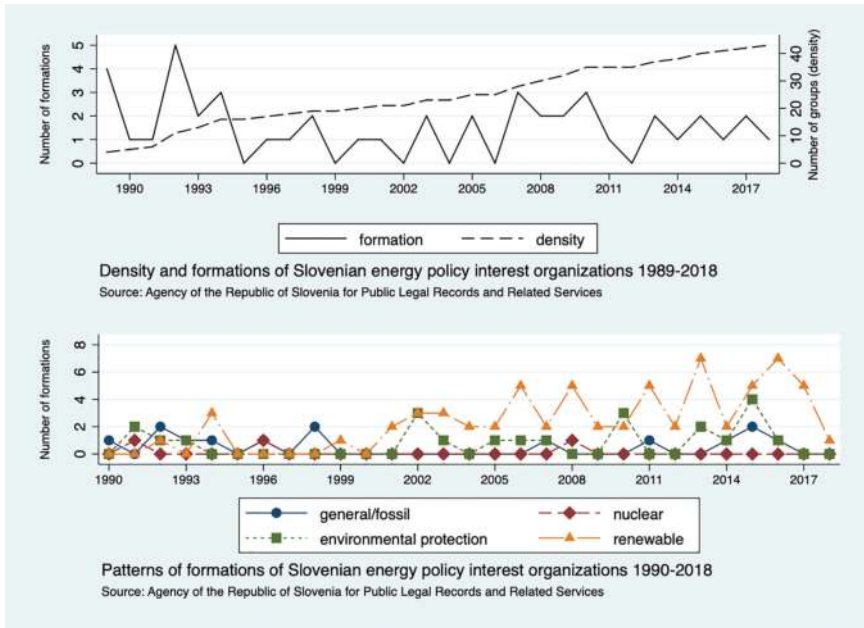


FIGURE 3.5 Slovenian energy organizations: formation rates and density, and formation rates by type.

What first catches the eye regarding Slovenia is the smaller energy policy population in contrast to HE and healthcare.

Hence, the figures require caution, as two or three foundations per year seem to strongly impact the population. Nevertheless, we see a similar effect of the transition phase (despite the considerable number of foundings in 1989) and EU integration. First, there is a bump, then a slowdown and again a strong increase during the EU accession process. The European Energy Strategy (2007) that inspired the first National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (2008) and second long-awaited National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2014–2020 also coincide with a major push in foundations (Figure 3.6).

The formation rates here are closest to a clear density-dependent process. However, as a post-communist characteristic, we also witness the importance of the immediate transition years, then foundations ebb, and as density grows, formation rates peak again around the half of the timeframe, only to decline steeply again for the third decade.

4.2 Post-communist organizational foundation rates: higher education

As discussed in Chapter 2, in the four countries on average one in five HE groups active in 2018 was founded before 1990 (ranging from 33% in Hungary to 21% in Czechia). This is a crucial point because organized interests in HE played a key

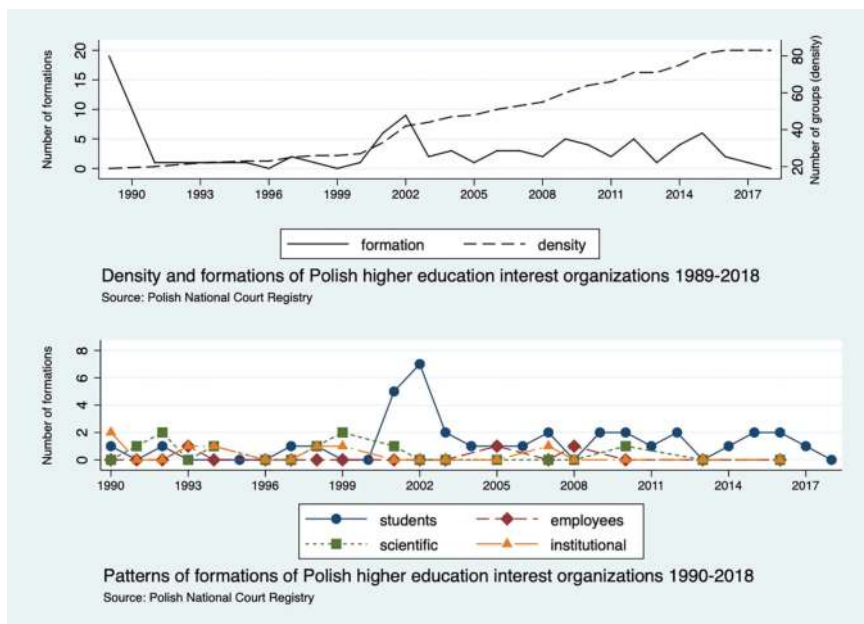


FIGURE 3.6 Polish HE organizations: formation rates and density, and formation rates by type.

role in bringing down communism and institutionalizing democracy. Thus, we can expect a strong mobilization to defend intellectual integrity and university autonomy after communism.

For Poland, where about one-fifth of organizations were founded before or under communism, our graph essentially reflects the immediate massive push to represent university interests in 1989/1990 by means of the establishment of student and academic organizations (e.g. rectors' conferences).

The early authorization of private universities in Poland in the 1990s seems to have not affected the formation rates, whereby Poland – along with Slovenia (see below) – indeed experienced a “Bologna boom” in student organizations. We again see some moderate activity around the 2010s, likely stimulated by efforts to promote a more market-oriented approach to HE with greater stakeholder engagement (see Dobbins, 2015). Interestingly, one of the largest public consultation processes in modern Polish history, i.e. the deliberations over the 2018 HE law (see Vlk, Dobbins & Riedel in this volume), apparently did not stimulate a substantial number of organizational formations.¹¹

Just as Labanino, Dobbins, Czarnecki and Železnik (2020) found, density dependence seems to hold, but again is heavily affected by the post-communist context. There is a high initial density and founding rate in 1990 and, consequently, a quickly declining founding rate with minimal or no activity during most of the 1990s. As density slowly grows, there is a peak in formations around

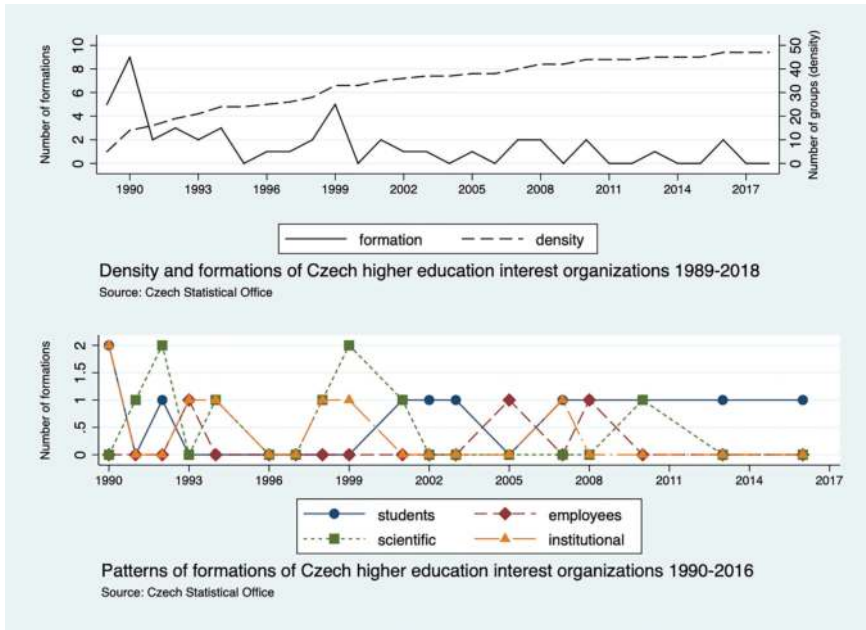


FIGURE 3.7 Czech HE organizations: formation rates and density, and formation rates by type.

the turn of the millennium, followed by lower formation rates, which are nevertheless higher than during the 1990s.

In the Czech Republic,¹² we also observe large-scale mobilization after the collapse of communism, and then a pre-Bologna “spike” in formations. However, as Bologna did not fundamentally transform Czech HE, we would attribute this growth in organizations to the late authorization of private universities in 1998. Indeed, Figure 3.8 shows a peak in foundations of organizations representing specific (private) institutions between 1999 and 2005. Czech HE has changed little since the fundamentals of university autonomy, self-governance and internal stakeholdership were set in 1990/1991 (see Vlk, Dobbins & Riedel in this volume). Thus, we also see very little subsequent formation activity. Or, expressed differently, (frustration with) the lack of reform also did not seem to generate organizational births.

Czech HE formation rates do not seem to follow the classic density dependence curve. Nevertheless, high density seems to inhibit the formations of new organizations. Although the pre-transition density is low – as in Czechia in general (see Chapter 2) – no subsequent period matches the importance of the first three years of transition. As already mentioned, mostly due to HE business groups, there are two to three “busier” years around 2000 but then the formations return to one, two or zero formations a year. That is, we did not witness a steady increase and decline as the density dependence theory would assume.

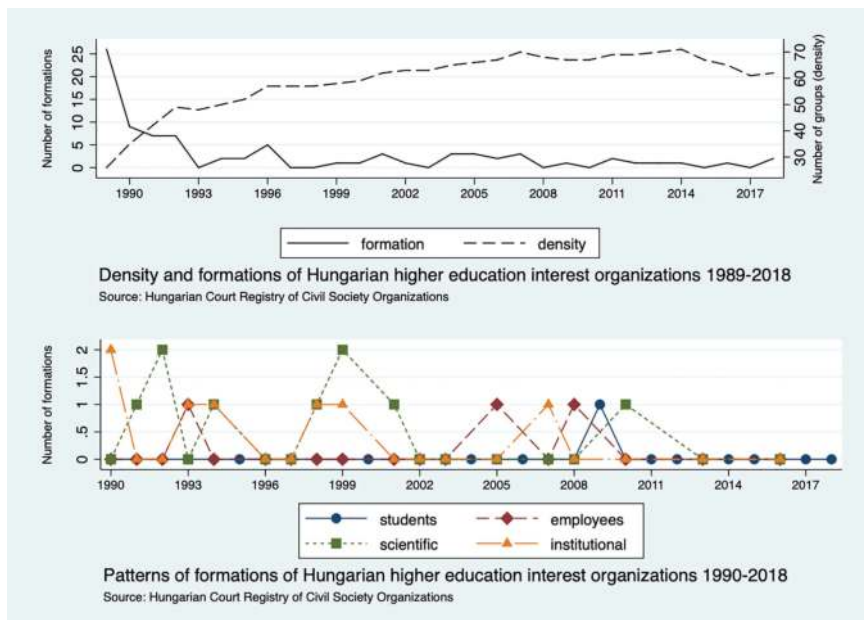


FIGURE 3.8 Hungarian HE organizations: formation rates and density, and formation rates by type.

We can nevertheless conclude that the first ten post-communist years are the busiest with relatively high formation rates at the end of the decade: more than half of all organizations were founded by 1999.

Hungary is the country with the second highest number of academic organizations – again with 1990 being a landmark year without any notable activity afterwards. Unlike the other countries, we observe – at best – a very weak “Bologna boom” in the late 1990s and early 2000s. What is also striking is that mobilization among academics against intrusions by the Orbán government on internal university workings (e.g. law requiring Hungarian students in state-funded places to remain in Hungary; decreases in university funding; 2012–2013) did not generate new organizational formations.¹³ The same holds with the measures taken against CEU and the Academy of Sciences. In fact, we see almost no new student organization formations in the post-communist phase. In line with our parallel finding for Hungarian energy, this seems to – at least preliminarily – confirm hypothesis 6, which hints at suppression of organizational foundations by national-conservative governments (Figure 3.8).

The reason could also be, however, that just as the Czech formation process, the Hungarian national-level HE interest group population reached saturation very early. Hungary starts with a very high pre-transition density of 26, out of which 14 were founded during 1988–1989 (and only three in the entire period between the communist takeover in 1948 and 1987). To put this into perspective, these

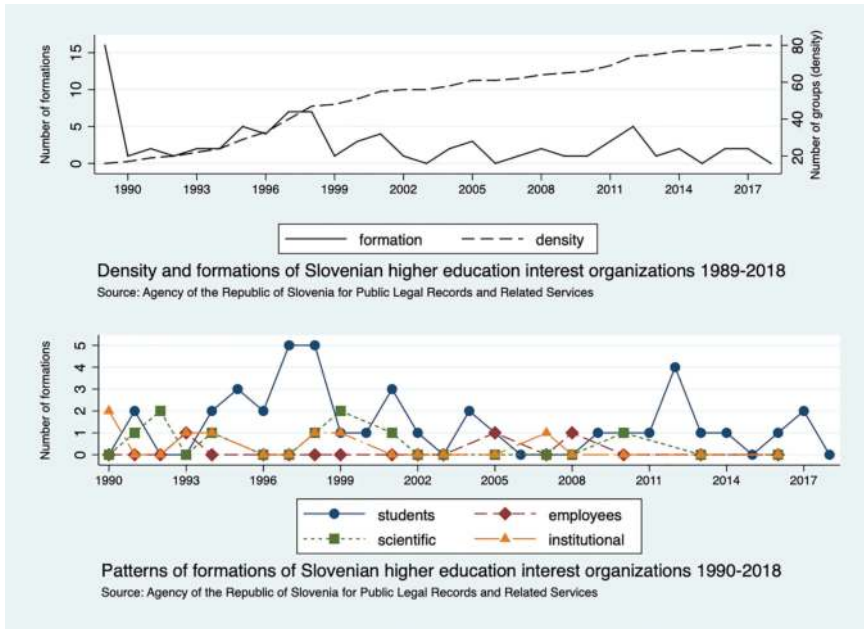


FIGURE 3.9 Slovenian higher education organizations: formation rates and density, and formation rates by type.

26 interest groups correspond to 41% of the HE interest group density in 2018 of 62 organizations (although only 33% of these 2018 active organizations were founded before 1990). After 1990, formation rates immediately decline steeply to none in 1993, and apart from 1996, it never reaches five organizations a year again. That is, we cannot observe a slow increase with a legitimacy process and a gradual decline with a competition process, but rather that high density affects the formation rate profoundly by keeping it low. In Hungary, density reached 62 in 2001, peaked at 71 in 2014, then declined again to 62 in 2018. Since we had data on dissolutions for Hungary (even if exact dates were sometimes missing), we could also observe that at high density mortality increased (as of 2004).

Slovenia is an outlier regarding the sheer number of organizations, considering the significantly smaller size of this sector (four public universities). We would attribute this to the country's strong tradition of student democracy (Novak & Fink-Hafner 2019). Student groups have historically represented the multitude of political divisions and social movements in Slovenian society spanning from Catholicism, nationalism, communism, pan-Yugoslavianism, anarcho-liberalism, to market socialism and beyond (Plut-Pregelj & Rogel, 2007). Hence, we find (often long-standing) professional organizations for nearly every academic discipline and sub-discipline (not counted here), as well as a strikingly large number of student organizations. As for formation rates, Slovenia is in line with the other three countries, having experienced a boom in 1989 and then a

drop, only again to experience a “Bologna boom” before the field levelled out in the 2000s (Figure 3.9).

The HE formation rates (like in the Czech Republic) are closer to a “textbook case” of density dependence than the Polish and the Hungarian cases. Despite relatively high initial density, the foundation rate increases gradually during the late 1990s, and the saturation seems to decrease foundings as density reaches around 60% of the density in 2018 (around 2000). However, there are a few more active years later as well (2011 and 2012).

4.3 Post-communist organizational foundation rates: healthcare

Unlike energy and similarly to HE, between 10% and 30% of organizations active in 2018 were founded before 1990. While the lion’s share of these pre-existing organizations emerged under communism (in Slovenia all of them), between 25% and 40% were founded before communist takeovers and hence survived communism and its collapse. This pertains, in particular, to numerous organizations representing individual medical specializations (see Chapter 2).

In line with hypothesis 1, the immediate transformation period in Poland heralded a major boom in formations, which immediately slowed down from 1990 to 1998. This trend also lends support to hypothesis 4 (reform activity). While the pre-existing fundamentals of the Polish healthcare system were essentially left in place in the early 1990s, thus negatively affecting the formation rate, the first major post-communist reform passed in 1997 and implemented in 1999 (see Table 3.1) boosted the formation rate (Hellich & Wierzowiecka, 2017). When the government replaced multiple health funds with one, centralized National Health Fund in 2003 with regional branches, we again see a “mini-boom” in foundations, while patients’ organizations, in particular, have proliferated in this period.

Despite the high pre-transition density, Polish healthcare organizations seem to follow the classic density dependence curve (Figure 3.10). Their number more than doubled in the first ten years after 1990. There is a peak in foundations at a relatively high level of density (60% of the 2018 density in 2002), followed by a decline in formations. Most new organizations are organizations of medical professionals, which are driven by the increasing specialization in healthcare and medicine. However, even this seems to be density-dependent. From 2002, an increase in patients’ organization formations also occurs for several years.

Czech(oslovakia) also experienced a very strong spike in foundations in the 1989–1992 phase. After the 1993 split-up, many previously Czechoslovak organizations became exclusively Czech organizations, which we counted as pre-existing organizations. Altogether, our data reveal that there is no major increase in foundations in 1993, which supports hypothesis 2 that the immediate transition period (but not statehood in the Czech case) was the main catalyst behind organizational formation.

We also see a drastic spike in formations coinciding with the transformation and de-monopolization of the previous Soviet-style system into a more privatized

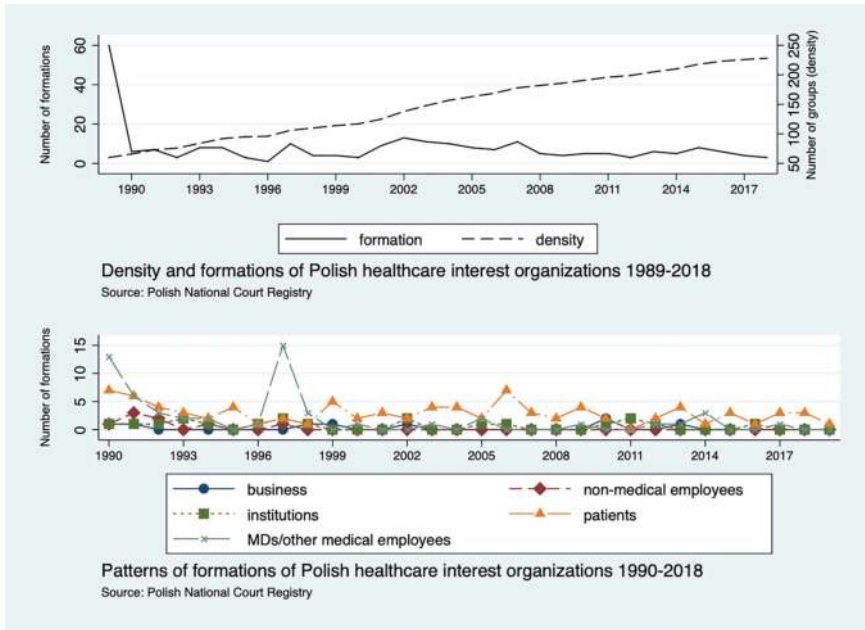


FIGURE 3.10 Polish healthcare organizations: formation rates and density, and formation rates by type.

system in the mid-1990s (Kinkorová & Topolčan, 2012; see Horváthová et al. in this volume). Considering that healthcare remains more or less outside the orbit of the European integration process, we would also attribute the strong organization population growth around 2006 to the domestic reform, which shifted hospital ownership to regional management. Thus, along with the immediate transformation process, major reform activity (hypothesis 3) appears to be more decisive for organizational formations than other factors (EU accession, Czech statehood).

As for density dependence, the Czech formation rates, due to the generally low pre-transition density, are closer to the classic density-dependent process than the Polish or Hungarian rates (see below). However, as already noted, the immediate transition years have the highest formation rates. Nevertheless, after a decline – but still at a high level – formation rates then increase again significantly in 1997, only to gradually decline again for the remainder of the timeframe (from 1998, see Figure 3.11). It is also telling that although domestic reform activity affected foundation rates at relatively high density (in 2006), it had a much smaller effect than at relatively low density (in 1997).

Hungary entered the 1990s with a relatively high pre-existing organizational population, and like the Czech Republic and Poland, it experienced a swift increase in 1989 and then a dramatic drop.

In contrast to the other countries, reforms do not seem to have significantly driven organizational foundations in Hungary, other than a few smaller waves

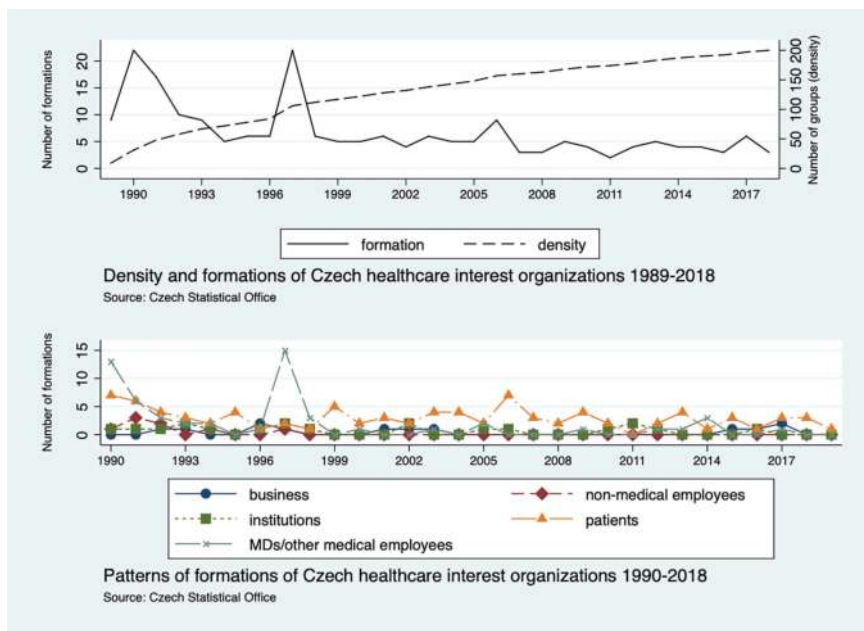


FIGURE 3.11 Czech healthcare organizations: formation rates and density, and formation rates by type.

of foundations during the 1990s, and the mid-2000s and early 2010s. However, organizational formation rates were exceptionally high during 1988–1989 (15 foundings) when the reform communist government introduced a series of systemic reforms.¹⁴ Formation rates also remained high between 1990 and 1993 (32 formations) when the first democratic government continued the reforms: it decentralized the ownership of hospitals to local governments, and separated the Social Insurance Fund into a Health Insurance Fund and a Pension Insurance Fund and made them self-governing (Gaál, 2004, pp. 102–104). From 1994 on, Hungarian healthcare reforms moved towards cost containment and gradual re-centralization. Between 2006 and 2008, a failed attempt at partial health insurance privatization took place (Gaál, 2004; Gaál et al., 2011; see also Table 3.1). Thus, the data tend to support hypothesis 1 and – to a somewhat lesser extent than Poland and the Czech Republic – hypothesis 3 (Europeanization). Also noticeable is the marked drop in formations under Orbán (2011 to present). The second Orbán government transferred hospital ownership from municipalities to the central government in 2012. This made it much easier to effectively silence hospital directors and doctors, as their employer is directly the government (OECD Hungary, 2019) and did not stimulate any noteworthy foundation activity.

In Hungary, no other period can compete with the first two years (1990–1991) in formation rates with a very high pre-transition density of 57 (of which 15 groups were formed during 1988–1989 as mentioned above). Although the

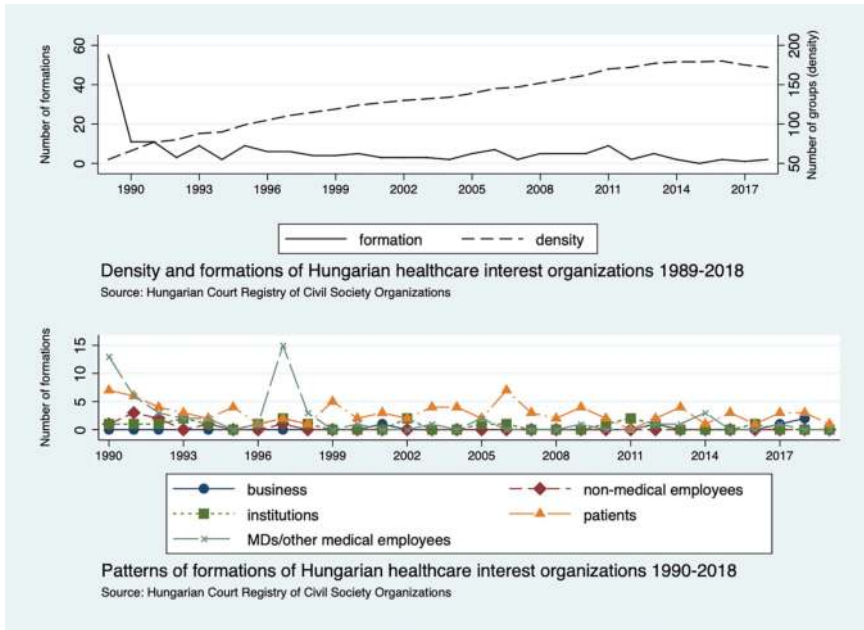


FIGURE 3.12 Hungarian healthcare organizations: formation rates and density, and formation rates by type.

formation rates then are similar to the Polish and Czech ones, with some upticks during the 1990s, the interest group density seems to have reached saturation earlier, perhaps due to the earlier start of the transition phase (including 1988 and 1989) (Figure 3.12). Already in 1994, there were 90 national-level healthcare interest groups. Hence, it took four years after transition for the organizational density to reach 50% of the peak density of 180 groups in 2018. We can therefore conclude that the Hungarian healthcare interest group population density reached saturation very early on. Just as the theory predicts (Hannan & Carroll, 1992), high organizational density meant increased competition for scarce resources (whether financial, network or organizational), which kept formation rates low. This is exacerbated by the fact that Hungarian healthcare organizations are also remarkably stable with only 9.6% of them having been dissolved or inactive as of 2018 compared with a 38% and 26.2% dissolution rate among energy policy and HE groups, respectively.

While around 20% of Slovenian healthcare organizations were founded during the socialist period, the immediate transformation again drastically increased the population. Remarkably however, the switch to Bismarck-type social insurance only resulted in a handful of new foundations. These foundations have essentially remained in place ever since, with Slovenia exhibiting a lower level of reform activity. Nevertheless, moderate privatization has gradually occurred over the late 1990s and early 2000s. Our graphs show that this gave an

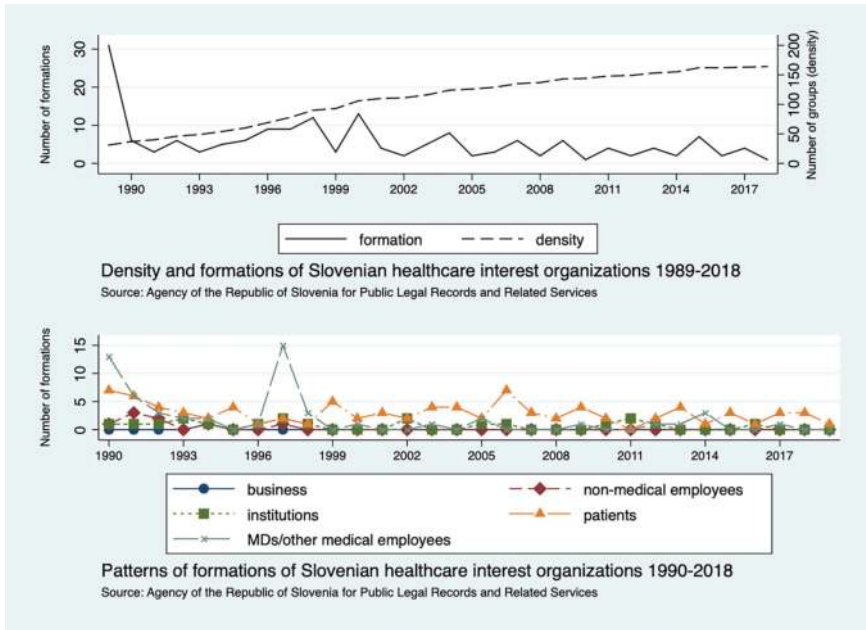


FIGURE 3.13 Slovenian healthcare organizations: formation rates and density, and formation rates by type.

impetus to organizational formations, in particular those representing the medical profession.

These formation rates are similar to the Czech and Polish ones. As noted above, Slovenia had a relatively high density in 1990, but nowhere near the Hungarian levels. Consequently, there was a more gradual saturation around 2000, followed by a slow decline in formation rates just as in the Czech and Polish cases (Figure 3.13). Bearing in mind that the Slovenian records only contain active organizations, we can tentatively conclude that the formation rates follow a density-dependent process.

5 Discussion

In this chapter, we explored the formation of interest organizations in four post-communist countries from a policy-specific angle, while testing several assumptions on the factors driving organizational “births”. While our approach does not enable us to identify the exact motivation for establishing an interest group in each individual case, the aggregate data highlight some clear trends. Most notably, the various hypotheses regarding the political opportunity structure were largely confirmed. The transformation and democratization process provided a gigantic stimulus for organizational formation in essentially all

countries and policy areas, whereby Slovenia and Hungary, in particular, had larger pre-existing populations already. For all countries, we subsequently saw a swift decline in foundations after 1992/1993, followed by a re-acceleration in the late 1990s or early 2000s, fuelled either by national reforms (in healthcare particularly), European integration or a combination of both (e.g. the national implementation of the Bologna Process).

Our data also show that “democratic backsliding” and illiberalism are detrimental or at least not conducive to organizational foundations, in particular in Hungary under Orbán (2010 to present). Except for a spike in foundations of renewable energy organizations in the 2000s, Hungary seems to show the lowest foundational activity in the past 20 years, which we attributed to a combination of the already relatively high density of organizations in the late communist phase (Chapter 2) and the unfavourable climate for interest organizations. For Poland, it is still premature to assess whether the low formation rates since the national-conservative PiS party has ruled (2015 to present) are the result of density dependence effects or a crackdown on civic organizations, but our data do point in the latter direction.

On a positive note from a civil society standpoint, our data also reveal that the past 10–15 years (and 2000–2010 in Hungary) were favourable to the foundation of “diffuse/civic interest groups” (Olson, 1965). We see high birth rates of organizations representing patients, students as well as renewables and green energy groups, all of which typically face structural disadvantages and are attributed to weaker mobilization capacity. Whether such organizations are formally integrated into the decision-making process, how they interact with political parties and whether they actually have clout over policy outcomes remain to be seen in the upcoming chapters.

As mentioned above, we found evidence for density dependence in all 12 national-level populations. The differences between policy fields also seem to be independent from the national contexts. Energy organization populations had the smallest pre-transition density everywhere (see Chapter 2) and hence do not seem to have reached saturation yet. However, we also found the highest mortality rates in the energy populations. HE and healthcare populations reached saturation in every country around 2000 at the latest. How closely the formation rate curve resembles the classic inverted U-shape \cap of increasing formations at growing density and decreasing at high density depends on the size of the pre-transition interest group populations. The bigger the pre-transition density, the earlier an interest group population reaches saturation. That is why Hungarian healthcare and HE populations, which were the biggest of all national populations, show decreasing formation levels already in the late 1990s. Moreover, as shown in Chapter 2, pre-transition organizations have much lower mortality rates than those founded after 1990, which exacerbates this effect. Our data also showed that the effect of both general, structural-level changes (such as the political and economic transition or the EU accession) and major issue-specific changes (policy reforms) is contingent on the level of population density. That is,

policy reforms and structural political changes do have a positive effect on formation rates *ceteris paribus*, but the size of this positive effect depends on population density: at low density, openings in the POS increase interest group formations much more significantly than at high density.

Despite these clear findings regarding our theoretical assumptions, our approach still bears some limitations. In the future, researchers should aim for a clearer operationalization of reform dynamics. This could be done, by means of analysis of media coverage or the frequency of parliamentary hearings or the intensity of legislative activity (Labanino et al., 2020; Nownes, 2004). Other factors potentially affecting interest group growth or decline such as the stability or volatility of the party system or the evolution of lobbying regulations over time lend themselves to empirical analysis. Finally, future research should focus on the long-term impact of national conservatism on organizational populations, as well as attempts by such political movements to cultivate alternative (illiberal) interest group landscapes from a more micro-perspective.

Notes

- 1 In line with POS theory, it would also be interesting to look at how (changes in) lobbying regulations or electoral campaign finance legislation affect organizational foundations and/or mortality. Numerous researchers indeed have highlighted differences in the stringency of regulations in our four countries, with Poland and Hungary generally considered to have stricter lobbying regimes with public funding of elections and Slovenia and the Czech Republic more liberal regimes with a larger role of private money in elections (Šimral, 2015; Vargovčíková, 2017). However, lobbying reforms in the region have often been watered down and the ultimate impact of such reforms has been largely viewed as ineffective (Bauer, Pielucha, & Thiel, 2016).
- 2 It is an open question whether Czech democracy is also “backsliding” (see Hanley & Vachudova, 2018).
- 3 For example, the European patient’s cross-border mobility directive.
- 4 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outline_of_academic_disciplines; for example, general historical or philosophical associations were included, but not specific organizations such as “The Association of Eastern European Historians” or “The Association of Platonic Philosophy”. Moreover, we narrowed down the population to organizations with active university personnel and mentions of HE and science policy or university research on their website.
- 5 Environmental organizations focusing on biodiversity or animal protection were excluded, except for groups opposing wind energy due to its impact on birds and insects.
- 6 This may be compensated by more regionally operating organizations in Poland, which is larger and more administratively decentralized. We did not include regionally active organizations.
- 7 See Novak and Fink-Hafner (2019) or Fink-Hafner (1997) for more data on Slovenian interest groups.
- 8 We can only be sure to have found all previously existing – at least legally founded – but since dissolved organizations in Hungary, as the court registry of the country reliably contains all of them.
- 9 In Hungary, the proportion of dissolved higher education organizations comes close to the level of energy organization dissolutions but is still lower with 6 percentage points.

- 10 This comprises Czechoslovak organizations up to 1993, most of which then split up into Czech and Slovak organizations.
- 11 However, the court registry does not include the newly emerging protest committees (see Vlček et al. in this volume).
- 12 Including Czechoslovak organizations up to 1992.
- 13 See Labanino and Dobbins (2020), who show that academic dissidents have instead opted for non-formalized civic mobilization.
- 14 Financing was switched from tax-based insurance to compulsory social insurance, the Social Insurance Fund was established, and full private healthcare entrepreneurship was legalized. These reforms were an outcome of a longer process led by the Reform Secretariat at the ministry, which also launched pilot projects. The head of the reform secretary remained in a key position in healthcare policy as a secretary of state along with other technocrats from the pilot projects after 1990 (Gaál, 2004).

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PART 2

Interest intermediation



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4

IN SEARCH OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Advocacy tactics in the energy and environmental sector in post-communist Europe

Szczepan Czarnecki

1 Introduction

After the fall of communism, a body of literature emerged focusing on the transformation of CEE. Since CEE countries share a legacy of environmental neglect and highly inefficient energy usage, their energy and environmental policies were a frequently discussed topic. The transition heralded different sets of reforms with different degrees of success. The transformation of the energy sector resulted in steps to use less energy and cut emissions, which was partially facilitated by mass bankruptcies of energy-intensive industries. Yet energy dependency and the low diversification of energy supplies constituted significant obstacles. Common to our three analyzed countries, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia, are limited deposits of natural resources, increasing energy competition and prices as well as dependence on energy imports. Against this background, they are pursuing multiple goals aimed at diversified energy sources, increasing energy efficiency and forming regional energy markets (Sprüds, 2010).

As a result, energy advocacy interest groups have proliferated in the region, opening up many new fields of action – and research. Despite the difficult legacy of interest groups in CEE (Kubik, 2005), environmental groups soon would become integral to the democratic process by engaging in decision-making and policy implementation in different arenas. Simultaneously, the growing importance of energy security (often based on fossil fuels) and the strong position of organizations associated with the production of fossil fuels shaped different levels of policy-making. This has significantly enhanced our possibilities to explore interest groups in CEE. In this chapter, I focus on the wide range of interest groups (IG) lobbying strategies that are being used to achieve political results in line with the groups' preferences.

2 Background

In the political context, there are many paths to influence the policy-making process, from which we can distinguish direct (administrative or parliamentary) or indirect (media and mobilization) forms of advocacy to maximize political influence. Taking into account the diversity of goals and advocacy strategies, I explore how lobbying strategies of interest organizations vary by type (sectional and cause groups), strategic goals regarding environmental and energy policy, and the country of origin. The literature on interest groups indicates that organization type is an important determinant of lobbying behavior. Various classifications have been provided, for example, “concentrated vs. diffuse” interests based on Olson’s collective action theory (Olson, 1965) and “sectional vs. idealistic”, groups with “corporative resources versus public interest groups” (Binderkrantz, 2005, 2008). Despite terminological differences, these classification schemes largely correspond to each other.

Interest groups included in this study operate in two “combined” policy areas, energy and environment, but also display diversity in other ways. The first difference refers to the structure and focus of the groups. Some groups are idealistic organizations with individual membership working toward idealistic goals such as environmental protection, while other IGs representing business groups formed to obtain material benefits for specific groups of people (Binderkrantz, 2005). These differences put these groups in different situations during the advocacy process.

Interest group activity is always affected by the political environment in which groups operate. As a result, the effective study of public interest groups must situate them in a larger political context (Meyer & Imig, 1993). It has to be outlined that the three countries analyzed in this study are significantly different due to their level of political coordination as well as their energy sectors. Poland constitutes a relatively liberal market economy with a weak degree of coordination, thus providing the foundations for a more pluralist interest group landscape. However, elections are publicly funded and extensive lobbying regulations exist, which may stymie the influence of interest groups (McGrath, 2008). The Czech Republic is also a highly open market economy with privately funding elections and weaker lobbying regulations (McGrath, 2008; Šimral, 2015) and thus potentially more penetrable by organized interests. Slovenia is the most coordinated market economy in CEE (Avdagić & Crouch, 2006; Bohle & Greskovits, 2012), and as an ex-Yugoslav country, the Slovenian economy has historically been highly decentralized and enjoyed considerable autonomy from the state.

Despite similar attempts at energy supply diversification, the energy and environmental policies of Poland, Czechia, and Slovenia also substantially vary. According to the European Environment Agency (EEA), Poland has one of the highest levels of contamination by carcinogenic benzopyrene among all EU countries (Skoczkowski et al., 2018). Excessive atmospheric air pollution occurs on over 20% of Polish territory due to its power industry based on coal and lignite, wood, and litter for energy production in households, the limited number of waste gas

purifying installations, and automobile traffic (see Chapter 10 in this volume). The spatial distribution of pollutant emissions is very uneven – the highest level is found in areas of large urban agglomerations and major industrial districts, e.g., the Silesian Voivodeship, where 20%–25% of national emissions of sulfur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen oxides, and dust are concentrated or Lesser Poland (*Małopolska*), one of the most polluted EU regions. Dependence on Russian energy supplies has greatly shaped Polish energy policy and the direction of its implementation. As with other CEE countries, Poland faced issues regarding energy security. In 1997, an Energy Law Act was presented, in which energy security was defined as an aim of the state economy to meet the demands of citizens as recipients for energy, taking into account environmental or economic requirements. The newest strategic plan for energy by 2040 assumes that the Polish energy mix will be still based on coal (50%–60%), renewables (21%–23%), and planned nuclear power.

In contrast to Poland, nuclear energy accounts for approx. 40% of Czech energy production. It is also well known for its extensive surface mining of brown coal in the Sokolov and Most Basin. The coal mined in these quarries supplies coal-fired power plants, which are the source of approximately 40% of the electricity produced in the Czech Republic. According to the EEA Report No. 12/2018, the northeastern part of the Czech Republic is more affected by air pollution than the rest of the country, but Southern Moravia is also struggling with a high degree of air pollution despite the absence of the coal industry. Moravia-Silesia is the traditional industrial center specialized in metallurgy and black coal mining and has the highest degree of air pollution. However, the governmental strategy is to phase most of it out over the next 20 years, replacing part of it with new nuclear power plants as well as gas, renewables, and energy imports.

The Slovenian energy sector is comparatively small, with oil constituting the main energy source (45%). Electricity generation is equally divided between hydropower (36.5%), nuclear energy (36.5%), and coal (21.6%). Trends in energy policy go in the direction of maintaining the status quo (Živčič & Tkalec, 2019). Renewables still contribute a limited share of electricity generation, with solar accounting for less than 2%, and wind energy even less (0.02%), which makes Slovenia the EU country with the smallest forecasted concentration of wind power in electricity consumption in 2020 (Živčič & Tkalec, 2019). Slovenia's vision for the energy sector is gradually to transition to low-carbon energy sources by focusing on efficient energy consumption, renewables (RES), and the development of active electricity distribution networks. This strategy will likely lead to a strong reliance on nuclear energy and further development of hydroelectric power (see Czarnecki, Piotrowska, & Riedel in this volume).

3 Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Interest groups rely on a wide repertoire of tactics for influencing public policies. They may coalesce with other like-minded actors, employ inside or outside

tactics, target specific institutional venues at multiple levels of government, and employ different types of information (Binderkrantz 2005, De Bruycker, 2014). While tactics may be conceptually classified as belonging to either an inside or outside strategy, it is an empirical question whether they coalesce into more overarching strategies in the behavior of NGOs (Dellmuth & Tallberg, 2017). Efforts to influence policy-making through the media or public support are referred to as outside lobbying (Binderkrantz, 2005). Inside lobbying, by contrast, refers to attempts to influence policy-makers through direct interaction, e.g., by means of advisory boards, consultations, or personal contacts (Beyers, 2004, p. 213). The literature suggests that group type is an important determinant of organizations' lobbying behavior (Maloney et al., 1994). There is a common distinction between groups depending on whether they work to obtain goods that will selectively and materially benefit group members or not (Berry, 1977). According to Jeffrey M. Berry, a public interest group is one that seeks a collective good, which will not selectively or materially benefit the membership or activists of the organization (Berry, 1977, p. 7). This allows us to divide the studied groups into groups with a broader idealistic character and groups working to meet the needs (certain goods) of their members. Binderkrantz (2005) emphasizes that interest organizations drawing their members from particular groups of people often will find themselves in a monopoly situation when it comes to supplying these people with certain goods. Organizations with idealistic goals more often will attract their members from different parts of society; the welfare of the members will not depend directly on the success of the group, and competition between groups will occur more often (Binderkrantz, 2005; Dunleavy, 1991). For groups working on such issues, it is particularly important to constantly mobilize their membership base and to inform the public regarding the disputed issue (Binderkrantz, 2005; Gais & Walker, 1991; Streeck & Kenworthy, 2005). Only constant debate and the buildup of peer pressure can solve the collective action problem (Brennan, 2009). Binderkrantz points out that idealistic groups are thus in a situation, in which they need to continually reinforce the loyalty of their members. They are therefore expected to more often pursue outside lobbying tactics (e.g., protesting, holding press conferences, making public speeches, and organizing petitions), because the visibility of such strategies signals to members and potential members that the group is effective and worth supporting (Binderkrantz, 2008). Thus, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: Idealistic interest groups are more likely to rely on outside lobbying tactics than sectional interest groups.

Advocacy organizations can strategically select one or more venues for lobbying in a system providing multiple access points to lawmakers in both national and local governments. However, the specificity of the advocacy goals itself cannot be neglected either. Wilson (1973) argued that when the debated issue is divisible, groups are more likely to seek direct interaction with policy-makers. By

contrast, when pursued goals are non-divisible, organizations are more likely to use outside lobbying tactics. I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2: Groups pursuing a non-divisible goals are more likely to “go public”, while groups lobbying for divisible goals are more likely to use direct lobbying techniques.

Moreover, the goals organized interest groups pursue may also shape their lobbying strategies. Baumgartner et al. (2009) argued that a determinant of success is whether the group goal is to change the policy or rather to keep the status quo. Groups protecting the status quo benefit from the existence of a so-called coalition of the status quo, which prevents change by controlling access to the political system (Binderkrantz & Krøyer, 2012). Therefore, I distinguish between groups pursuing to uphold or change existing policies and argue that groups seeking to protect the status quo will mainly approach bureaucrats and politicians, while groups seeking to dismantle the status quo seek to widen the scope of the policy conflict by going public (Schattschneider, 1960) and engaging in various forms of public protest (Grant, 2000). Therefore:

Hypothesis 3: Groups seeking to protect the status quo will more likely approach bureaucrats and politicians, while groups seeking to dismantle the status quo are more likely to go public.

Finally, lobbying regimes and thus the broader political environment in which they operate may also shape strategies (Meyer & Imig, 1993). Here, I assume that privately funded elections (Czechia) may give more space to the business groups, while in the case of Poland and Slovenia, where elections are publicly funded, groups will choose outsider strategies more often to foster stronger links between society and political parties.

Hypothesis 4: Privately funded elections are more likely to give more space to business groups, while publicly funded elections will more likely result in outsider strategies to foster stronger links between society and political parties.

4 Methods

To gather data suitable to the research question, I drew on population ecologies of energy and environmental groups in the three selected countries. Using the official registries published by the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, Ministry of Justice of Poland, and Ministry of the Interior of Slovenia, searches were conducted with every combination of words for organizations related to the third sector categories in the three countries.¹ Based on our survey methodology

outlined in the Introduction and Annex, survey responses were collected from organizations which met three criteria: (1) they are officially registered, (2) they are non-profit and non-governmental, and (3) they deal with energy or environmental policy. Organizations received a set of questions regarding lobbying and access as well as their internal structure, professionalization, and resources. The sample for this specific analysis includes 132 organizations.

Referring to the wide range of lobbying strategies used to achieve political results in line with their preferences, I analyzed and described specific lobbying tactics. As there are various ways to influence the policy-making process, from which we can distinguish direct or indirect forms of advocacy, the dependent variable is divided into eight variables covering parliamentary, administrative, media, and mobilization strategies. For the purpose of this specific analysis, groups were asked, e.g., to indicate if they used the specific tactics in energy policy in terms of direct, e.g., contacts with political parties and government and indirect: a) media (using traditional media as TV, radio and newspapers, social media) and b) mobilization strategies such as protest, petitions, and common positions or initiatives. Positive responses for a given form of lobbying were coded as 1, and negative answers were coded as 0.

Group type. According to the literature, many variables, such as institutional structures, group characteristics, and issue-specific factors, can condition IG tactics (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007). Some scholars differentiate organizations with corporative resources from public interest groups, NGOs, and business interests (Beyers et al., 2008; Binderkrantz et al., 2015). Others distinguish sectional from cause groups (Stewart, 1958). However, these type classifications largely overlap. This chapter employs a typology differentiating groups as sectional organizations that are formed to obtain material benefits for specific groups of people and represent special interests that create concentrated costs and benefits for their supporters, e.g., business groups, trade unions and cause groups that are more idealistic, while acting for the public interest and public goods, e.g., energy consumers, environmentalists, and ecologists (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013). To measure which organizations are idealistic or sectional interests, I created a dichotomous variable that takes the value 0 for public interest idealistic groups and 1 for sectional organizations (see Table 4.1).

Group policy goals may also vary considerably. To measure whether organization goals are divisible or non-divisible, I conducted qualitative textual analysis based on the highlighted expectations of the IGs and the degree of change

TABLE 4.1 Cause and sectional groups

Cause groups	Sectional groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • civic IGs promoting clean, sustainable, renewable energy • civic IGs promoting energy efficiency • civic IGs representing energy consumers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • energy producers • associations of energy suppliers

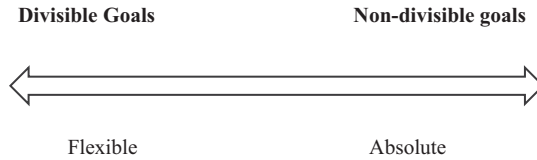


FIGURE 4.1 IG goals division

sought. The analysis was conducted using websites of the organizations (status and goals sections). If organizations emphasized an absolute goal such as the need for a complete change of the implemented policy, total reduction of fossil fuels use, or, by contrast, maximization of the use of fossil fuels in terms of electricity production, the goals were coded as non-divisible with a given value 1. In cases when groups emphasized the need for reduction instead of, e.g., absolutely urgent decarbonization, goals were coded as divisible with a given value of 0. Applying the same logic as previously, IGs focusing on change were coded with 1 and those aiming to keep the status quo were given the value 0.

In order to measure lobbying tactics, I conducted a binary logistic regression. The most important feature of logistic regressions is that the predicted variable is dichotomous; that is, it takes two values 0 and 1 for the occurrence or absence of a certain phenomenon. Binary logistic regression is used to predict the odds of being a case based on the values of the independent variables. The odds are defined as the probability of comparing the odds of the two events. The odds of an event are the probability that the event occurs divided by the probability that the event does not occur. I used the value 0 for the absence of the predicted variable and 1 for its presence (e.g., if the organization applies protest tactics, I added 1, if not 0). Collinearity was tested by checking the pairwise correlation of the independent variables, thus providing no evidence of collinearity. To test whether specific lobbying regimes result in different lobbying strategies, I conducted Pearson's chi-square test of independence to determine whether there is a significant association between the two variables.

5 Data analysis

The dependent variable(s) are forms of lobbying by IGs operating in energy and environmental policy. To avoid a simple dichotomous division between insider and outsider groups, while measuring direct (inside) and indirect (outside) lobbying strategies, I divided lobbying tactics into eight different forms of lobbying. The division is related to the direct strategies: a) parliamentary lobbying when certain lobbyists contact directly political representatives (politicians and parties), b) administrative: when lobbyists contact relevant ministries and public servants (indicated as government) and indirect strategies when lobbyists use media strategies such as c) social media, d) traditional media, and e) PR campaigns and when implemented strategies are based on mobilization as f) petitions,

g) protests, and h) common positions. In accordance with the hypotheses, I start with a short reflection of different dimensions of lobbying strategies. The first step in the analysis of group strategies aims to gain a clear picture of the extent to which different tactics are deployed by IG due to the group type, their goals, and countries of origin.

As shown in Figure 4.2, differences exist between specific lobbying tactics among two indicated groups. The most visible difference concerns protests and conducting petitions. Only 7.83% of the sectional IGs reported protest as part of their advocacy strategies, while idealistic IGs indicated protest much more often (67.63%). This means that almost two out of three idealistic groups operating in energy and environmental sector use protest to influence the political debate. Public interest groups are also much more active in holding petitions, as 73.10% of the idealistic IGs indicated using petitions as an advocacy strategy. Like in the previous case, specific interest groups are much less involved in this form of activity, as only 10.67% of specific groups from the three analyzed countries indicated petitions as their preferred form of advocacy. Direct forms of lobbying commonly are used in both analyzed groups. 57% of analyzed idealistic groups reported that they contact political parties, and 60.1% the government. It seems that the governmental and parliamentary strategy is popular among public interest organizations. However, these forms are used even more often by the sectional interest groups. 88.6% of sectional IGs reported using administrative strategies and 90.77% indicated using the parliamentary strategy. The media strategy seems to be more popular among public interest groups. 86% of idealistic groups use social media, 69.7% traditional media, and 69.7% public relations campaigns when trying to influence the policy process.

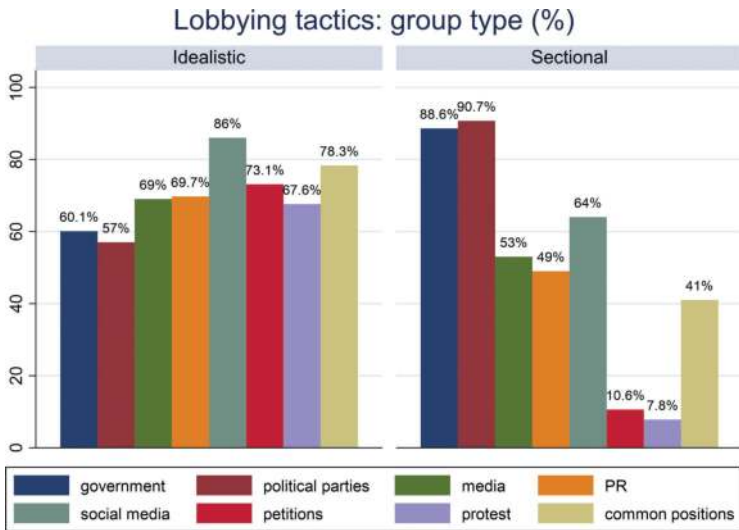


FIGURE 4.2 Lobbying tactics: group type (%)

When it comes to strategic goals, the analysis shows that interest groups with absolute, non-divisible goals attach much more importance to indirect forms of lobbying than groups with divisible goals (Figure 4.3). The data reveal that groups with the non-debatable goals understood as “all or nothing” use outside strategies more often than groups with more divisible goals. “Absolute goals groups” more frequently hold petitions (46.6%) and protests (43.7%) than groups with more debatable “more or less” goals. However, for both analyzed types of goals, direct strategies are used often. Even as groups with divisible goals more frequently reported parliamentary (89.41%) and administrative (86.2%) strategies, it is visible that these strategies are still important and often used by “non-divisible goals” groups (66.1% parliamentary) and (62.13% government).

As shown in Figure 4.4, the lobbying strategies moderately differ between countries. The data show that IGs from the Czech Republic indicated indirect strategies less frequently than groups surveyed in Poland and Slovenia. Also, the governmental strategy seems to be less attractive for Czech IGs (64.6%) than for their counterparts in Poland and Slovenia. By contrast, groups in Czechia reported contacting political parties more often (75%) than groups from Slovenia (69.5%), but less than Poland (79.45%).

Applying a chi-square test, I analyzed whether there is a significant relationship between the types of groups in the three countries and the usage of specific lobbying tactics as expected in hypothesis 4. In the case of Poland, the p-value in two cases of indirect tactics, i.e., protest and petitions, is lower than our chosen

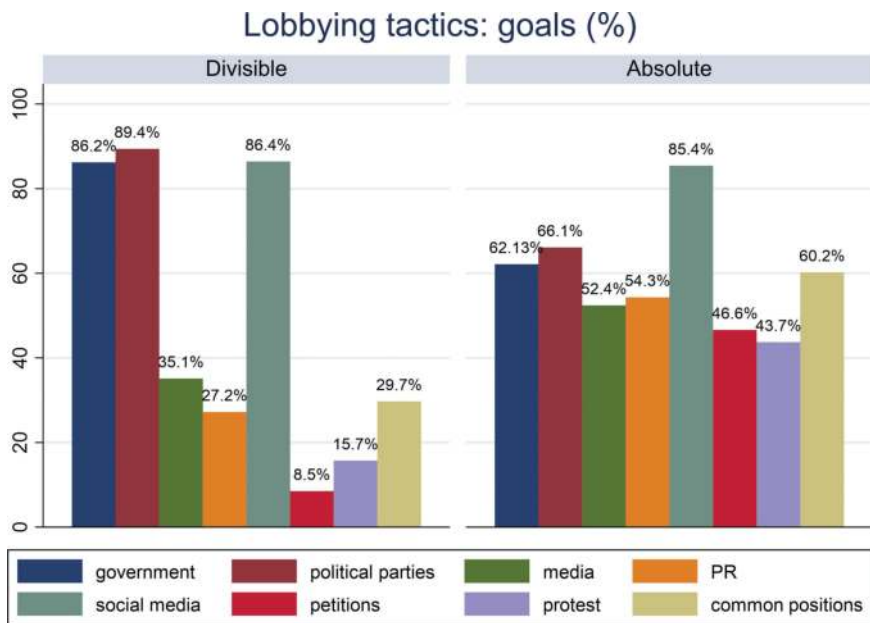


FIGURE 4.3 Lobbying tactics: goals (%)

Lobbying tactics: countries (%)

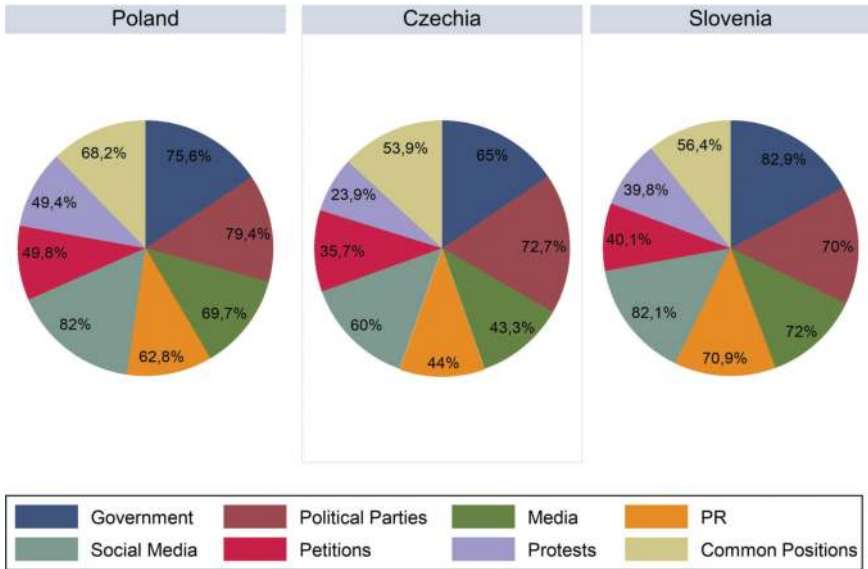


FIGURE 4.4 Lobbying tactics: country (%)

significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). I conclude that there is an association between organization type and outside lobbying tactics. There is a stronger tendency for idealistic groups to organize petition campaigns and protest. I also found that both traditional tactics and social media are favored by idealistic groups compared to sectional organizations. Direct lobbying tactics seem to be less dependent on group type. However, in the Polish case, contacting the government and political parties is more common for sectional IGs. The results for Czech organizations are somewhat different from those in Poland. Data suggest stronger intergroup differences than in the Polish case. Sectional groups are more focused on direct lobbying tactics, i.e., contacting political parties and government, while idealistic groups are more geared toward outside activities such as protest, petitions and common positions. Yet again, for Slovenia, I found that idealistic organizations, like in Poland, more frequently use outside lobbying methods, while sectional groups prefer contacting politicians. However, in this case, the p-level is higher than the chosen significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). Thus, the results partially confirm hypothesis 4. Indeed in the Czech case, where elections are privately funded, sectional groups have more space to use direct lobbying strategies. Yet in each case, the distinction between groups by type suggests that even in Poland and Slovenia, where elections are publicly funded, sectional groups are more focused on direct lobbying, while indirect activities such as protest and

TABLE 4.2 Pearson's chi-square test results for lobbying tactics by group type in countries

	<i>Value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>% Idealistic</i>	<i>% Sectional</i>
Poland					
Government	1.625	1	0.336	61.3	89.9
Political parties	1.926	1	0.165	71.6	87.3
Mass media	4.523	1	0.033	86.4	53
Social media	4.788	1	0.029	100	80
Public relations	1.915	1	0.166	72.7	53
Protest	20.442	1	0.000	86.4	12.5
Petitions	19.6	1	0.000	85.7	14
Common positions	5.639	1	0.018	86.4	50
Czechia					
Government	26.705	1	0.000	41.7	87.40
Political parties	21.565	1	0.000	48.4	97
Mass media	0.066	1	0.798	40.6	44
Social media	3.715	1	0.054	65.6	40
Public relations	2.523	1	0.112	54.8	33.3
Protest	11.437	1	0.001	43.8	4
Petitions	13.291	1	0.000	59.4	12
Common positions	7.336	1	0.007	71.9	36
Slovenia					
Government	0.97	1	0.755	77.3	88.5
Political parties	1.912	1		51	88
Mass media	0.697	1	0.404	80	64
Social media	1.262	1	0.261	90.9	73.3
Public relations	1.418	1	0,234	81.8	60
Protest	15.758	1	0,000	72.7	7
Petitions	14.973	1	0,000	74.2	6
Common positions	4.547	1	0,033	76.8	36

petitions seem to be more common for idealistic organizations in every country. In every analyzed case, the results for the “protest” and “petitions” variables are statistically significant.

In the next step, I conducted a logistic regression (Table 4.3) to model the probability of a certain event for eight selected lobbying tactics models referring to direct and indirect lobbying strategies. Each object was assigned a probability between 0 and 1, with a sum of one. In the multivariate analysis presented in Table 4.3, coefficients are expressed as the odds ratios of a specific type of lobbying tactic to the comparable odds of the reference category for each variable. Odds ratios above 1 indicate that the particular category is associated with

TABLE 4.3 Logistic regression model for IG lobbying strategies

	<i>Model I</i> <i>Government</i>			<i>Model II</i> <i>Political Parties</i>			<i>Model III</i> <i>Uses Mass Media</i>			<i>Model IV</i> <i>Social Media</i>	
	B	S.E.	Odds rat.	B	S.E.	Odds rat.	B	S.E.	Odds rat.	B	S.E.
Sectional IGs	1.532*	0.681	4.628	1.581 ⁺	0.785	4.858	-0.224 ⁺	0.541	0.799	-0.403	0.706
Country											
Slovenia (ref. cat.)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Poland	0.481	0.813	1.627	0.259	0.560	0.772	0.121	0.758	1.129	-0.300	1.315
Czechia	-0.664	0.791	0.515	0.063	0.535	1.065	-0.921	0.743	0.398	-2.715	1.183
Non-divisible Goal	-1.482	0.933	0.227	-0.475	0.988	0.609	0.015	0.684	1.015	0.582	0.747
Status Quo	0.285	0.889	1.330	1.085	1.224	2.959	-0.516	0.654	0.597	-0.233	0.759
Constant	1.542	1.224	4.674	1.213	1.131	4.215	0.671	1.072	1.956	1.555	1.082
Nagelkerke's pseudo R		0.327			0.383			0.121		0.117	
Log-likelihood		92.934			77.782			117.739		115.723	
Observations		132			132			132		127	

Columns show beta coefficient, standard error and odds ratio. Levels of significance: + = 5%, * = 1% and ** = 0.1% significance.

higher chances than the reference category, whereas values below 1 indicate the opposite. The analysis included the following reference categories: group type (sectional IGs), IG country of origin (Slovenia ref. cat.), goal characteristic (divisible goal ref. cat.), and the status quo.

The group type appears to be the most robust predictor in every tested model of lobbying tactics. In Models I and II, it is visible that sectional groups are several times more likely to use direct lobbying tactics (governmental and parliamentary) than idealistic interest groups. Opposite results were obtained in terms of indirect lobbying tactics, especially in the probability of protest actions (Model VI) and petitions (Model VII). In both models, odds ratios are lower than 1, which means that protest and petitions correspond with lower odds for sectional groups. These activities can be expected more frequently of idealistic organizations. Also, organizations that represent public interests more often encourage other organizations to engage in common actions. Regarding media strategies, our data are also significant for the traditional media variable (Model III) and public relation campaigns (Model IV). Idealistic groups are less likely to use direct lobbying tactics (governmental and parliamentary). The analyzed models suggest in line with hypothesis 1 that idealistic groups indeed rely more intensively on outside lobbying tactics than specific interest organizations, especially in terms of mobilization strategies.

Regarding specific organizational goals, I found significant results in terms of protest activities of the groups. In Model V, groups representing absolute, non-divisible goals are several times more likely to protest than groups that are more able to negotiate the final results. The data also show that groups pursuing divisible

<i>Model V</i> <i>Public Campaigns/PR</i>			<i>Model VI</i> <i>Protests</i>			<i>Model VII</i> <i>Petitions</i>			<i>Model VIII</i> <i>Common Positions</i>			
Odds rat.	B	S.E.	Odds rat.	B	S.E.	Odds rat.	B	S.E.	Odds rat.	B	S.E.	Odds rat.
0.699	-0.511 ⁺	0.533	0.600	-3.756**	0.870	0.231	-3.743*	0.890	0.024	-1.676*	0.578	0.187
0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
0.741	-0.501	0.737	0.606	0.382	0.801	1.465	0.224	0.955	1.252	0.451	0.754	1.570
0.665	-0.753	0.716	0.471	-1.521	0.924	0.212	-1.008	0.947	0.365	-0.588	0.758	0.555
1.790	0.965	0.673	2.626	1.567 ⁺	0.709	4.791	1.923	1.195	4.957	0.225	0.697	0.555
0.792	0.263	0.655	1.288	-0.788	1.006	0.455	-0.639	0.978	0.528	-0.15	0.669	0.985
4.734	0.269	1.026	1.270	-0.113	1.460	0.893	-0.281	1.463	0.755	1.453	1.110	4.227
		0.119			0.376			0.304			0.266	
		118.478			72.212			71.658			103.733	
		131			131			129			124	

goals can be expected to seek direct interactions with decision-makers. The results in Models I and II suggest that groups with non-divisible goals are less likely to use direct lobbying tactics, but they are statistically insignificant. Interestingly, I found no significant evidence that status quo groups are more likely to use direct lobbying strategies. The analysis indicates that groups pushing to keep the status quo are more likely to use the administrative and parliamentary strategy and less likely to go public. However, all the results are insignificant. Both analyses partially confirm our second hypothesis that the orientation of IGs goals may influence their lobbying strategies. Groups preferring to keep the status quo or groups with more divisible goals are expected to be more interested in personal contacts with governmental and parliamentary decision-makers, while groups pursuing change and with absolute goals will go public using both mobilization and media strategies.

I also hypothesized (H4) country-specific variations in lobbying strategies. As Poland, Czechia, and Slovenia differ regarding lobbying regimes and election funding, I expected Czech IGs to employ more direct lobbying strategies and Polish and Slovenian groups more diversified approaches. I found little support for this hypothesis. Indeed, it is visible that IGs from Czechia are more likely to lobby political parties than their counterparts from Poland and Slovenia (see Chapter 5 in this volume). Also in terms of mobilization, Czech groups are less likely to protest or conduct petitions and encourage the other groups in their strategies. However, the results are not statistically significant in any of the models. Hence, our theoretical expectations cannot be conclusively confirmed by the data, but they do suggest a tendency in line with hypothesis 4.

6 Conclusions

This chapter explored various strategies of energy and environmental interest groups in Czechia, Poland, and Slovenia. Addressing a major previous research gap, I focused on three group-related categories such as the group type, goal specificity and country-related factors and analyzed how they affect lobbying behavior. The most important finding is that group type is an important factor determining lobbying strategies (see also Dür & Mateo, 2013). Idealistic, or public interest, groups much more frequently pursue outsider strategies to impact the policy-making process. This includes protests, petitions and encouraging other actors active in the relevant policy area. However, it has to be emphasized that public interest groups pursue both parliamentary and governmental (inside) strategies as well. Thus, public interest organizations display a broader range of lobbying tactics.

I also found that goals may impact lobbying behavior. Although the evidence is limited, there is a visible trend toward outsider tactics for groups pursuing non-divisible goals such as environmental groups lobbying for a total reduction of fossil fuels. Groups advocating absolute goals more frequently use outsider tactics than groups with more divisible or negotiable goals, which partially confirms the hypothesis regarding goal diversity and lobbying strategies.

In addition, more country-specific differences are also apparent in terms of lobbying strategies among IGs in the three analyzed countries. In the Czech case, there is a slight orientation toward insider tactics. The analyzed sectional groups prefer parliamentary contacts, and there are more pronounced differences in strategies based on group types. In Poland and Slovenia, by contrast, tactics are more spread between group types, with a visible orientation toward inside strategies among sectional IGs. Additionally, it is visible that Polish groups lobby the government more often than groups from Czechia and Slovenia. In every country, public mobilization strategies are more common for idealistic environmental groups.

The present findings offer numerous avenues for future research. For example, it would be interesting to investigate whether there is a relation between the groups' levels of professionalization, longevity, internal resources, and their applied lobbying strategies (see Chapter 7). It would also be very exciting to explore whether differences in lobbying strategies continue to exist between CEE and Western Europe or whether the variations between CEE countries are larger than those between the eastern and western parts of the continent.

Note

- 1 e.g., *Spolek, Nadace, Nadační fond, Ústav, Obecně prospěšná společnost* in Czech; *Stowarzyszenie, Fundacja, Związek Zawodowy* in Polish; and *Društvo, Zavod, Združenie* or *Ustanova* in Slovene and all the words potentially pertaining to the energy and environmental issues in the three languages in all declinations, in the singular and plural (see also Chapters 2 and 3).

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5

EXPLORING INTEREST INTERMEDIATION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN HEALTHCARE

Persistent statism, unfettered pluralism
or a shift to corporatism?

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Maximilian von Bronk*

1 Introduction

How is interest intermediation organized in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)? Unlike Horváthová and Dobbins (see Chapter 7) who show how interest group-specific factors such as professionalization and expertise help interest groups access policy-makers, we explore the aspect of political coordination and deliberation between the state and organized interests. Also focusing on healthcare, we are interested in whether corporatist-like structures have evolved to balance rivalling interests in Poland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. This question is of great importance because most CEE countries continue to stand out with their overall weak healthcare performance and low life expectancy in European comparison (OECD, 2019). While this clearly also can be attributed to low funding levels, dysfunctional governance structures may negatively impact healthcare outcomes, as reflected in a very critical evaluation by patients themselves (Euro Health Consumer Index, 2019).¹ Moreover, the support of major interest organizations may also be a crucial prerequisite for passing and implementing successful reforms.

Against this background, we address the following questions: Have corporatist platforms emerged to promote social partnership in CEE healthcare? Do rivalling interest groups consult regularly with the state and one another? To what extent do governments systematically integrate groups with structural disadvantages (e.g. patients or people with disabilities) into decision-making? We first introduce our theoretical framework derived from three ideal types of state-interest group relations – corporatism, pluralism and statism – and discuss existing analyses of state-interest group relations in the region. We then briefly explore the growing literature on corporatist arrangements in healthcare, before deriving a series of indicators to better understand interest intermediation in

CEE. Based on a large-scale standardized survey, we present our results in Section 4. Drawing on our survey findings, secondary sources and interviews, we conclude with a healthcare “corporatism score” for all countries in Section 5.

2 State of the art

Corporatism is a standard analytical paradigm in political science, which aims to grasp systematized negotiations between major social partners. Corporatist systems generally enable the institutionalized integration of privileged organized interests in policy-making and implementation (Christiansen et al., 2010). The term originally emerged from the idea that society should be organized by corporate groups and associations (e.g. agricultural, scientific, economic) to promote social harmony. Ideas based on corporatism became prominent in Fascist Italy and Southern Europe. This “authoritarian corporatism” aimed not so much for social representation and harmony, rather “productivism” to boost industrial production with state–industry pacts (Gagliardi, 2016). After World War II, Western European Christian and social democrats, in particular, pushed for policies based on institutionalized tripartite negotiations between the state and employers’ and employees’ associations. These emerging forms of “neo-corporatism” (Schmitter, 1985) often resulted in the partial self-management of social spheres by social partners. Such systems strongly contrasted with pluralist systems traditionally characterized by diverse and competing interests, which purportedly bring about a democratic equilibrium (Dahl, 1967).

Targeted efforts to balance socio-economic interests increasingly attracted the interest of political scientists (Korpi, 1983). Schmitter (1974), for example, defined corporatism as a system of interest representation for linking organized interests of civil society with state decision-makers. This coincides with other interpretations highlighting the consensus orientation of corporatist arrangements. For example, Woldendorp defines corporatism as “any form of cooperation between the state and socio-economic interest groups aimed at forging consensus over socio-economic government policies” (1997, pp. 49–50). Along these lines, Müller-Jentsch (1991) understands corporatism as a conflict partnership, whereby the state aims to facilitate compromises by intervention between rivalling organizations. Therefore, neo-corporatism can be any structured relationship between interest groups and public authorities, combining values of cooperation over competition, hierarchy over horizontal social structure (Jacek, 1986, p. 421). Yet, seen critically, neo-corporatist arrangements may also result in the marginalization of social groups and issues, which are poorly organized or not represented by major interest organizations. Schmitter (1989) later addressed this point himself. He highlights that representation monopolies for certain interest organizations are generally crucial ingredients of corporatism, which often goes in hand with official recognition by the state and/or a semi-public status.

Siaroff (1999, p. 177) was arguably the first to lay out concrete indicators to measure corporatism. Defining corporatism as the “[...] co-ordinated, co-operative,

and systematic management of the national economy by the state, centralised unions, and employers [...], presumably to the relative benefit of all three actors”, he spells out 22 components of corporatism in economic policy. These span from strong unionization (with relatively few unions), institutionalized business and labour input into policy-making, their mutual recognition as social partners, to the prevalence of tripartite agreements and consensus-oriented policy-making.² However, Jahn (2016) points out that Siaroff (1999) somewhat convolutes the characteristics of and/or outcomes of corporatism (e.g. small open economies, high social expenditures and successful economic performance). Jahn not only aimed to remedy these deficits, but also included – for the first time – numerous CEE countries in his “corporatism” ranking. He outlines three components: *structure*, i.e. peak organizations negotiating for their members; *function*, i.e. arrangements where governments intervene in wage bargaining, whereby unions are heavily involved in governmental decision-making; and *scope*, i.e. the coordination of wage bargaining and applicability of collective agreements to wider spheres of society. Based on these indicators, Poland and Hungary (along with slightly more corporatist Romania and Bulgaria) received low “corporatism scores”, albeit somewhat higher than the United States, Canada and United Kingdom.

2.1 Post-communist corporatism?

Aside from the special case of Slovenia (see Stanojević, 2011), the collapse of communism generally heralded the at least partial collapse of trade unions. In the turmoil of the unprecedented political and socio-economic transformation process, trade unions were generally unable to mobilize public support. Other interest groups, many of which were appendages of the communist party, were often viewed with mistrust, resulting in comparatively low associational membership and political participation (Kostelka, 2014). In this regard, Ost argues that trade unions sometimes tended to side with government parties over their own members, because their operations were partially managed by governments (2000). The collective organizational dilemmas of post-communist trade unions and other interest organizations were further compounded by the neoliberal political environment of the 1990s and 2000s, leaving organized labour little room to assert its demands. At least in Hungary and Poland, the 2000s additionally heralded the decline of social-democratic parties, which are generally vocal supporters of corporatist arrangements.

Nevertheless, even in the immediate aftermath of communism, reform-oriented governments endeavoured to promote social dialogue, appear more responsive to civil society and more effectively manage social divisions. According to Ost (2000), multiple new platforms for tripartism and civil society engagement emerged in CEE, a trend likely reinforced by the desire to conform with Western European norms (Falkner, 2003). However, Ost shows that such consultative institutions generally failed to fulfil their intended function and instead evolved into informal “pseudo-corporatist” meeting places for social partners. Labour unions were often affiliated with state-owned enterprises, many of which

underwent privatization, while others proved unable to adapt to the new service economy. Ost goes on to argue that workers often shied away from collective organization out of fear that it would undermine their chances to benefit from the new capitalist economic system (*ibid.*, p. 111). Thus, instead of a functional Scandinavian or Western European-style corporatism, CEE interest intermediation systems – at least in economic policy-making – were characterized by “illusorily corporatist” structures, which often merely served to justify (neoliberal) governmental policy, instead of effectively balancing social partners’ rivaling interests. Ost (2011) later re-examined this claim, concluding that tripartism in CEE still produces meagre results and that most of what labour has gained came not from tripartism, rather results from better organization and smarter use of resources.

Olejnik (2020) took Ost’s argument a step further with regard to the current “illiberal governments” of Poland and Hungary (see Sata and Karolewski, 2020). He classifies them as “patronage corporatist” to the extent that they actively divide organized interests into allies required for reaching their political objectives and hostile organizations who purportedly lack the “necessary moral authority to advocate for the interests of the citizenry” (*ibid.*, p. 184). Accordingly, governments tend to only engage in political consultations and exchange with social partners with coinciding interests, many of which often directly receive subsidies from the government, while rivaling organizations are actively discredited and combatted. Hence, obedience is rewarded and dissent is sanctioned (Olejnik, 2020).

However, we see two weaknesses in the pre-existing literature on post-communist corporatism. Aside from Jahn (2016), most pre-existing research remains descriptive and is often not backed up by concrete empirical data. Second, essentially all previous studies are restricted to economic policy (for energy policy, see Horváthová and Dobbins, 2019), a policy area arguably too vast and multifaceted to be fully grasped with existing concepts and typologies. After all, public–private interactions and arrangements may vary not only between policy areas, but also within societal sectors depending on the specific issue or decision process. Thus, in this chapter, we build on and apply various assumptions and concepts put forward in the previous literature to healthcare. Just like the economic sector, healthcare systems may equally be characterized by corporatist social pacts and institutionalized consensus-making.

2.2 Healthcare interest representation in CEE

Corporatist traditions historically are directly linked to social and health insurance systems. In fact, the first Bismarckian welfare insurance scheme was devoted to healthcare and aimed to secure social peace based on the idea of transition from “peasants to patients”. It is therefore not coincidental that the size, power resources and mobilization of trade unions and patients’ organizations are often key variables in explaining the existence of universal health insurance systems. Gerlinger (2009) defines healthcare corporatism as the institutionalized integration of conflicting interests in decision-making, while highlighting the role of

private interest groups in the formulation and implementation of binding collective rules. In his understanding, healthcare corporatism is based on the relative parity between representatives of the insurance industry, medical profession and patients organized in centralized administrative bodies. Such systems generally are characterized by the co-management by the state, medical profession, patients' organizations, as well as the insurance and pharmaceutical industries. Not least because the globally top-performing healthcare systems exhibit corporatist features (e.g. Norway, Netherlands, Switzerland), scholars have also explored interest intermediation in this area (Zimmer, 1999; Hunter, 2013).

However, interest intermediation in CEE healthcare remains largely unexplored. Initial steps towards healthcare corporatism were taken in the early 1990s in order to secure social peace and amortize transition costs (Ząbkowicz, 2014, p. 12). Post-communist reforms aimed at abandoning the integrated, tax-based Semashko model of state control and establishing Bismarckian-like, compulsory health insurance systems. In addition, those reforms were aimed at decentralization, reducing the size of the hospital sector, introducing private providers, corporatizing public healthcare facilities and improving the quality of care (Rechel & McKee, 2009; Sześciło, 2017). The birth of health insurance systems in CEE also heralded the emergence of institutions essential for social dialogue and a shift from "governing" into institutionalized "governance". Different countries chose different pathways. Bohle and Greskovits (2012) differentiate between neoliberal arrangements of the Visegrád countries and more neo-corporatist settings in Slovenia. Other scholars argue that CEE countries developed a statist health insurance type, in which state actors are predominant in regulation and governance, while financing is organized by societal actors, and provision delegated to private entities (Böhm et al., 2013). Against this background, we now address to what extent and which organizations are heavily integrated into CEE healthcare policy-making, whether the systems are gravitating towards the corporatist paradigm and how interest intermediation arrangements vary by country (see also Kaminska, 2013).

3 Methodological approach

To develop an integrated framework for exploring interest intermediation in CEE healthcare, we first analytically distinguish corporatism from two contrasting concepts: *pluralism* and *statism*. Pluralism is characterized by the existence of diverse and competing interests which operate in organizationally fragmented and less integrated interest intermediation systems (Truman, 1951; Dahl, 1967). Instead of power being vested in "peak associations", heterogeneous organizations compete to effectively articulate their demands towards the state (Streeck, 1983). Interests are brought to bear by unstable and fleeting alliances between advocacy groups. While pluralist systems may offer numerous avenues for interest group participation, there are generally few institutionalized consultation platforms with the specific aim of balancing rivaling interests. Thus, interest groups usually operate outside the government through political pressure, personal contacts with actors or

by parliamentary lobbying (Wilson, 1983, p. 897). In statist systems, by contrast, private interest and advocacy groups are mainly viewed as a disturbance. Instead, a strong, technocratically operating executive generally dominates the policy process without regularly consulting non-governmental stakeholders (Woll, 2009).

To demarcate corporatism from contrasting paradigms, we bind together the above-mentioned concepts and define several “ingredients” of corporatism. In economic policy and beyond, corporatism generally entails the transfer of policy-making away from parliament and the concentration of self-management capacities in “peak organizations”. Streeck and Kenworthy (2003) refer to this as the **structural** aspect of corporatism. Second, the **functional** dimension (ibid.) sees for strong political coordination and exchange between the state and organized interests. As shown above, corporatist arrangements are also characterized by a distinct consensus orientation and relatively equal representation of diffuse (e.g. patients) and concentrated interests (e.g. medical chamber, hospitals associations). Fourth, corporatist constellations exhibit mechanisms for policy coordination between rivalling interests.

To grasp these aspects, we designed an online questionnaire and contacted all national-level healthcare organizations in Poland, Hungary, Slovenia and the Czech Republic. The survey included numerous open and closed questions regarding their interactions with political parties, governments, regulatory authorities as well as policy coordination with the state and rivalling organizations. The advantage of the survey is that we can gather insights and authentic opinions from interest organizations themselves. National governments or ministries may be inclined to exaggerate the democratic quality and consensus-oriented nature of their political institutions. We received approx. 200 responses from healthcare organizations in the four countries (Czech Republic N = 68, Hungary N = 38, Poland N = 45, Slovenia N = 48), and from nearly all major players (e.g. larger patients’ groups, medical chambers, healthcare employees). We also conducted numerous interviews with interest groups and analysed official data on existing institutionalized tripartite dialogue bodies as well as unionism in general.

We identify two main ingredients of the functional dimension: institutionalized inclusion of organized interests into policy-making, reflecting a strong culture of consultation and deliberation with the state, as well as consensus-oriented relations between organized interests themselves.

Addressing the first dimension, we asked all organizations about their perception of policy coordination:

How would you rate the level of policy coordination/political exchange between the state and your interest group? (1 – very weak, 2 – weak, 3 – moderate, 4 – strong, 5 – very strong)

We then asked a series of questions about their inclusion into consultations:

Approximately how often does your organization consult with political parties? (1 – never, 2 – approx. annually, 3 – approx. biannually, 4 – monthly, 5 – weekly)

Approximately how often does your organization consult with regulatory authorities in your field of activity? (1 – never, 2 – (approx.) annually, 3 – (approx.) biannually, 4 – monthly, 5 – weekly)

Furthermore, we are interested in the stability of interest intermediation constellations over time:

Approximately how many times does the (present) government consult interest groups in your field of activity? (1 – never, 2 – (approx.) annually, 3 – (approx.) biannually, 4 (approx.) monthly, 5 (approx.) weekly)

Approximately how many times did the previous government consult interest groups in your field of activity? (1 – never, 2 – (approx.) annually, 3 – (approx.) biannually, 4 – monthly, 5 – weekly)

A high degree of continuity spanning beyond different governing coalitions would indicate relatively stable interest intermediation arrangements and that the government is not just consulting its temporarily preferred interest groups. This aspect comes into play, in particular, with Hungary and Poland, but arguably also with the Czech Republic (Hanley & Vachudova, 2018), which, according to various observers, have been affected by “democratic backsliding” in the 2010s (Sata & Karolewski, 2020). This also enables us to explore Olejnik’s (2020) argument about “patronage corporatism” under “populist” governments.

To address the second ingredient of functional dimension, namely consensus-oriented relations between organized interests, we first asked two questions:

Do you think that opportunities for participation in the policy process are equally distributed among interest organizations? (1 – very much to the favour of other organizations, 2 – somewhat to the favour of other organizations, 3 – equally distributed, 4 – somewhat to the favour of our organization, 5 – very much to the favour of our organization)

To what extent do you assess the ability of your organization to assert its interests? (1 – very low, 2 – low, 3 – somewhat, 4 – high, 5 – very high)

As corporatism generally entails a strong degree of political exchange and co-ordination between rivalling interests instead of open political competition, we asked:

Approximately how often does your organization consult with interest groups representing opposing interests in your area of activity? (1 – never, 2 – (approx.) annually, 3 – (approx.) twice a year, 4 – (approx.) monthly, 5 – (approx.) weekly)

We identified three main “ingredients” for the **structural dimension**: the transfer of policy-making away from parliament, existence of a regular interest intermediation body with a platform devoted to healthcare issues, a representation

monopoly for certain encompassing organizations, and the existence of self-managed, peak organizations of capital and labour (see below).

4 Empirical analysis

We broke down all responding healthcare organizations into subgroups based on structural features and focus of activity. We divided the organizations into “small organizations” (fewer than 500 members or 50 member institutions), “large organizations” (500 members or more and 50 institutional members or more), “umbrella organizations”, “non-umbrella organizations”. In pluralist constellations, one would normally expect smaller organizations to have relatively equal access to decision-making bodies, whereas corporatist structures are generally characterized by representation monopolies of larger, encompassing “umbrella” organizations. Regarding their focus, we divided the organizations into “medical profession”, “patients’ groups”, “health employees” and “employers’ and employees’ organizations”.³

We also engage with the scholarly debate on public and state funding of interest groups. Some scholars argue that public funding negatively influences interest groups’ autonomy, while others contend that it boosts their access and participation (Crepaz et al., 2019). We therefore created a list of state-subsidized organizations. This also includes EU funds for healthcare, which are generally managed and distributed by the member states themselves (Nicolaidis, 2018). In fact, Crepaz and Hanegraaff (2020) argue that many organizations would cease to exist without the EU funding.

Our survey respondents provide data on both national government subsidies and EU funds (allocated via national governments) which we both treat as state subsidies. We therefore set a threshold of at least 20% of organizations’ budgets (both from national governments and EU subsidies)⁴ to classify them as the “subsidies group”. This enables us to test Olejnik’s (2020) argument that illiberal governments are giving incentives and privileges to certain organizations in exchange for political support.

4.1 *Functional dimension of corporatism*

All countries reported a low policy coordination and exchange with the state, especially Slovenian organized interests. Hungarian organizations, in general, report a somewhat higher level of political coordination than their Polish and Czech counterparts.

We would interpret the low aggregated score for Slovenia potentially as a reflection of corporatism, as the scores for the many responding smaller organizations likely watered down the overall score. Looking at umbrella organizations, we see a significantly higher score pointing to the existence of steady representation arrangements.

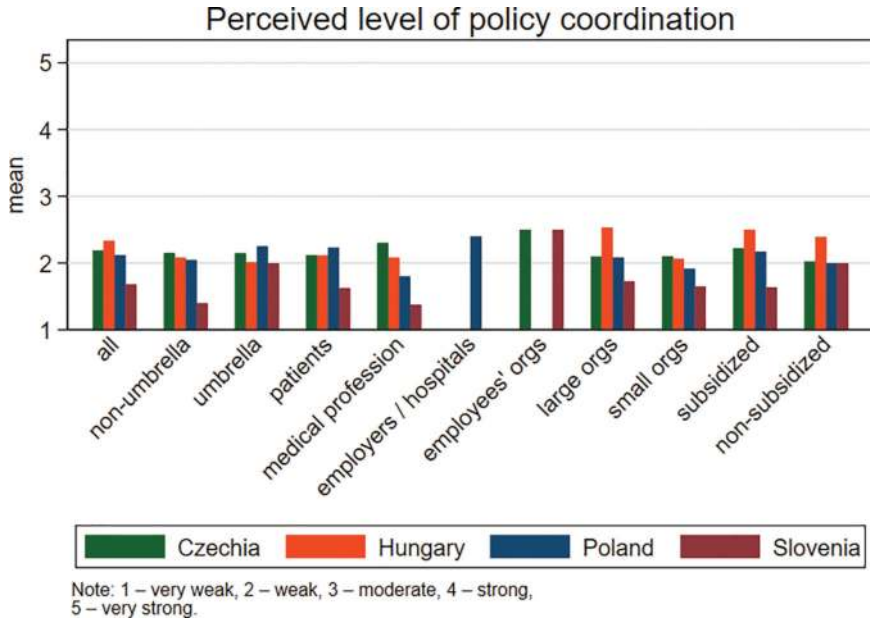


FIGURE 5.1 Perceived level of policy coordination.

We then measured the intensity of consultations between groups of interest associations and political parties in general. For Hungary, we observe an extremely low level of interactions with political parties. Not even umbrella, large or employers' organizations reported consulting with parties more than once annually. Polish organizations report more frequent political consultations, with a clear bias towards employers' associations. In Slovenia, umbrella, large employees' organizations (trade unions) report relatively frequent consultations with political parties from once to twice a year, while non-umbrella, employers' and medical organizations almost never consult with parties. The reason could be that many Slovenian medical profession organizations view themselves as "apolitical organizations", as reflected in numerous survey responses, whereas larger umbrellas and employees' organizations consult with parties more often. The Czech situation is markedly different, where at least large umbrella organizations, employers'/hospital organizations and employers relatively frequently engage with political parties.

As an indicator for the corporatist self-management of the healthcare sector, we measured the intensity of consultations with regulatory authorities. In all respective countries, both large and umbrella organizations consulted with regulatory authorities more frequently than others. Poland reported the most frequent consultations, together with Hungary exhibiting a small bias towards umbrella organizations and employers' organizations, whereas patients' organizations and the medical profession score rather low. In the Czech Republic, large groups

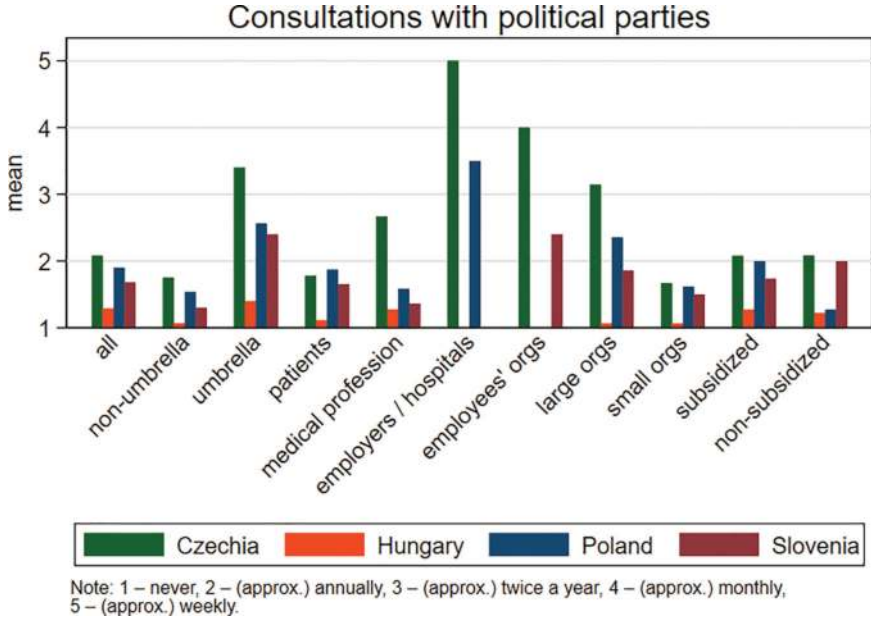


FIGURE 5.2 Consultations with political parties.

demonstrated the highest score. Slovenian organizations again seem to exhibit an aversion to the political process. Instead of regularly consulting parties, employees’ organizations (trade unions) consult with regulatory authorities on a monthly basis, while large organizations indicate a moderate level (at least twice a year). Small and medical profession organizations rarely consult them though.

Assuming that corporatist arrangements remain stable over time, we compared the intensity of consultations between the present governments (Poland = the moderately national-conservative PiS government, 2015–present; Hungary = the strongly national-conservative Fidesz government, 2010–present; Slovenia = the centre-left LMŠ (Lista Marjana Šarc), 2018–March 2020; Czech Republic = the liberal Ano / Social Democratic ČSSD government, 2018–present) and previous governments (Poland = Civic Platform (PO) (2007–2015); Hungary = socialist MSZP – liberal SZDSZ (2004–2010); Slovenia = centre-right SDS (2014–2018); Czech Republic = ČSSD / Ano & Christian Democratic KDU–ČSL (2014–2018)).

For Poland, we observe no change in policy style between the liberal PO government (2007–2015) and the national-conservative PiS government (2015–present). If anything, the current PiS government appears slightly more open to consultations with organized interests than the previous government, especially towards employees’ and umbrella organizations. In fact, we even see – at least for this indicator – a slight advantage for patients’ organizations, which are traditionally more difficult to organize than professional interests. This was confirmed by one large umbrella patients’ organization in an interview (July 2019) which cited the PiS government as being very open to consultations. Figure 5.4 only

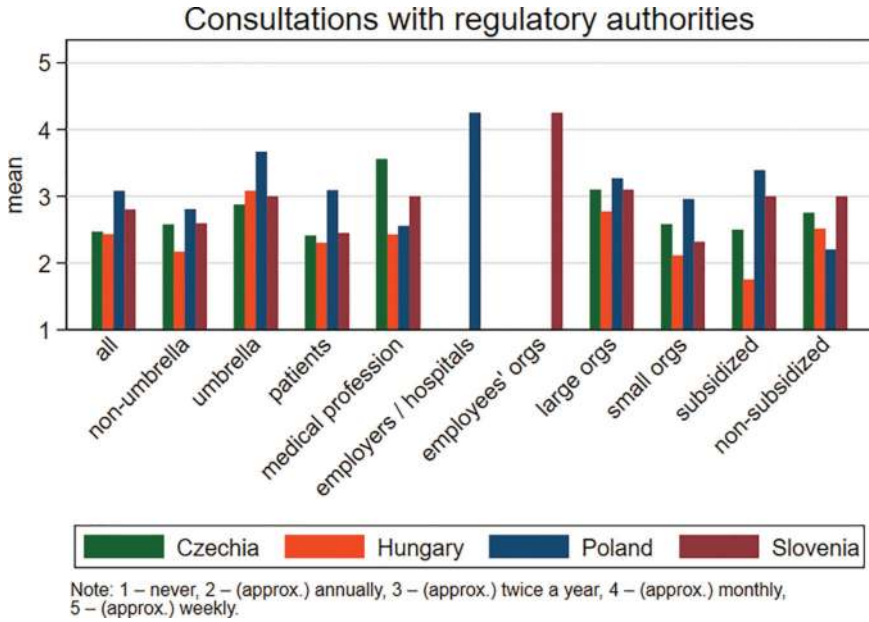


FIGURE 5.3 Consultations with regulatory authorities.

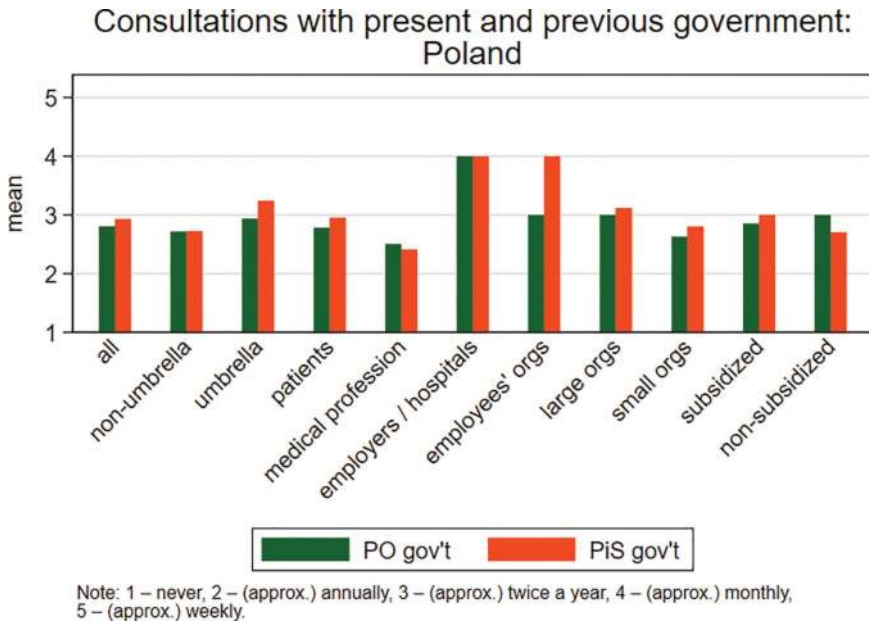


FIGURE 5.4 Consultations with present and previous government: Poland.

lends very slight evidence to Olejnik’s “patronage corporatist” argument that national-conservative governments give preferential treatment to organizations, which they subsidize.

For Hungary, our findings also reflect stability. However, we do see a slight decline in consultations with patients and increase with the medical profession, a finding also confirmed by respondents’ comments. Returning to Olejnik’s argument, we see at best a minimal difference between subsidized and non-subsidized organizations.

Slovenian healthcare associations more frequently consult with the present government than the previous (centre-right) government.

For the Czech Republic, we see slightly more frequent consultations with the present Babiš government than before, especially for patients’ organizations, and also slight preferential treatment of organizations receiving state subsidies.

Our next illustrations reflect the views of interest organizations on their opportunities for political participation and their perceived influence. Apart from few exceptions, such as Polish small and large organizations, we see no major difference in perceived equality of opportunity for political participation regarding concentrated and diffused interests. All Czech groups of organizations reported being disadvantaged. In Hungary, government-subsidized organizations also seem themselves at a clear advantage over non-subsidized organizations, lending some evidence to Olejnik’s claim (2020). In Slovenia, healthcare organizations, in particular, employees’ and umbrella organizations, generally perceive their opportunities for political participation as relatively equally distributed, whereas patients report being disadvantaged in comparison with both other domestic organizations and their counterparts in the other CEE countries. Interestingly,

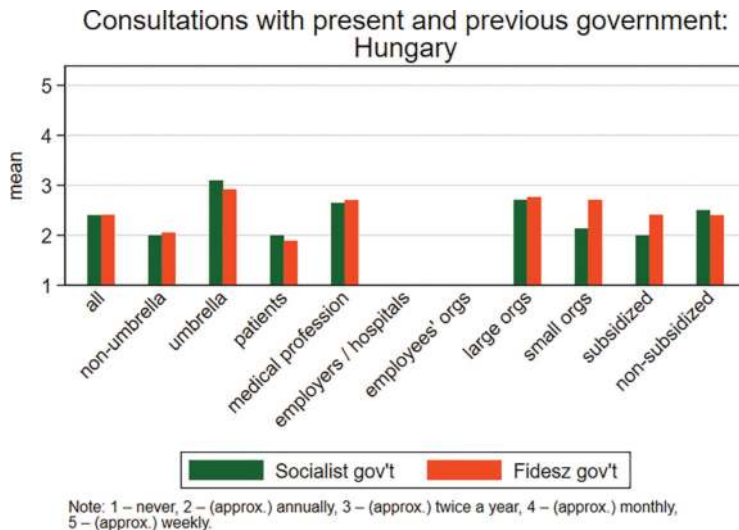


FIGURE 5.5 Consultations with present and previous government: Hungary.

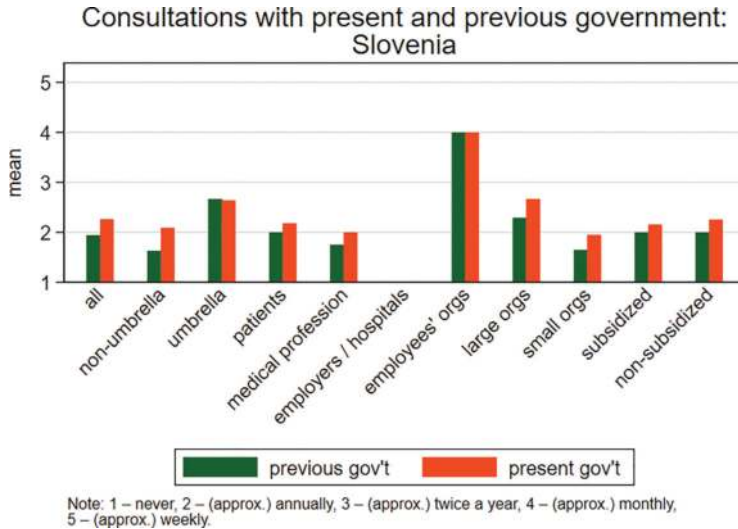


FIGURE 5.6 Consultations with present and previous government: Slovenia.

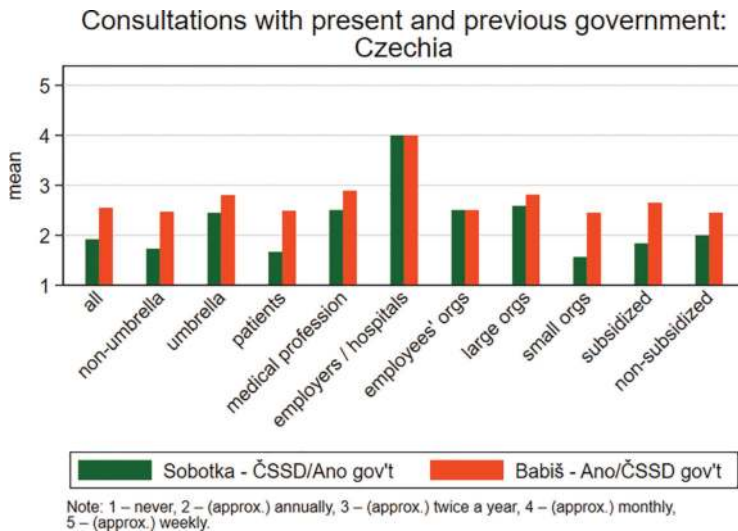


FIGURE 5.7 Consultations with present and previous government: Czechia.

non-subsidized organizations assess their opportunity structures more favourably than government-funded organizations.

Figure 5.9 offers a mixed bag of partially eye-catching findings. In Poland and the Czech Republic, no group of organizations viewed its ability to assert its interests as low. In fact, in all four systems, patients see themselves as equally or even more assertive than medical organizations. The Polish system seems to

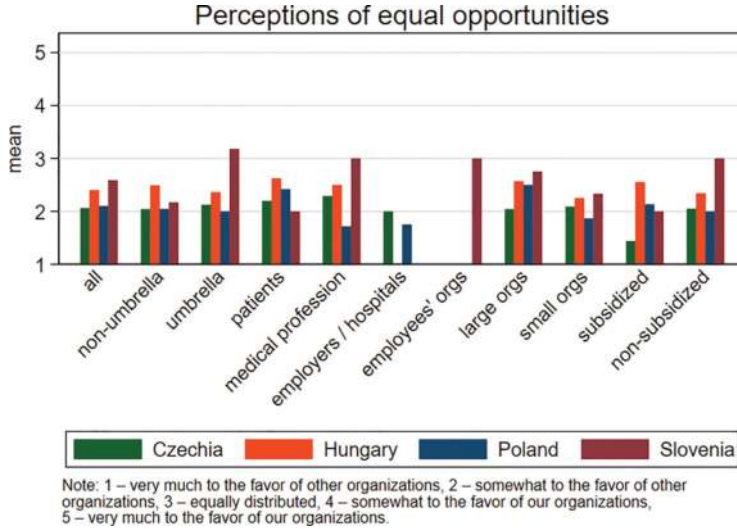


FIGURE 5.8 Perceptions of equal opportunities.

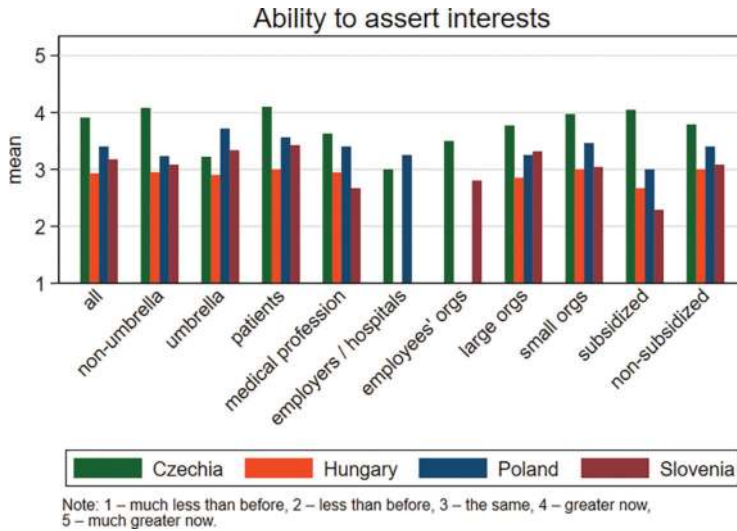


FIGURE 5.9 Ability to assert interests.

better balance the interests of groups with diverse focuses and sizes, whereby our data contradict Olejnik’s argument of an advantage for subsidized organizations. The situation with the Czech Republic is also quite interesting: while all groups report being disadvantaged vis-à-vis other interest groups, they also report a moderate to high ability to assert their interests in policy-making.

Finally, we explored whether CEE organizations engage in consultations with rivaling groups. Hungary stands out here. While nearly all Polish, Slovenian

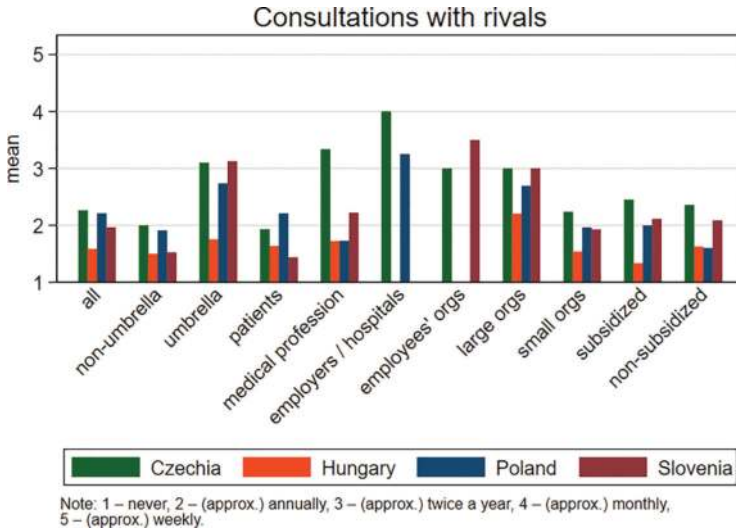


FIGURE 5.10 Consultations with rivals.

and, in particular, Czech (groups of) organized interests report at least annually or biannually consultations with rivaling interest groups, Hungarian organizations do not frequently coordinate with one another, pointing to a more statist mode of policy-making. In line with the corporatist paradigm, in the other countries, employers' associations as well as various other umbrella organizations operating in the healthcare sector more frequently interact with organizational rivals, while Hungarian organizations seem to only engage with the state.

4.2 Structural dimension of corporatism

Now, we explore the forums in which consultations take place. Is decision-making transferred away from the parliament? Do intermediate coordination bodies exist? And do certain groups hold representation monopolies within them and elsewhere? To assess whether the organizations tend to engage in parliamentary lobbying, which is less typical of corporatist systems, we asked:

How would you describe your level of participation in parliamentary hearings/parliamentary committees? (1 – very weak, 2 – weak, 3 – moderate, 4 – strong, 5 – very strong)

We found considerable variation by country. Most Polish organizations report a moderate level of parliamentary participation, and patients' and other dif-fused groups, such as non-umbrellas, even high participation, shedding doubt on the presence of corporatist structures, whereas Hungarian organizations are essentially not active in the parliament. Slovenia, by contrast, exhibits lower

parliamentary participation, an observation which also appears to apply to the Czech Republic, albeit to a lesser extent. In both countries though, healthcare employees are frequently involved in parliamentary hearings.

However, the disadvantage of the approach up to now is that aggregating organizations into groups makes it difficult to identify specific organizations frequently engaged in political consultations, i.e. acting as peak organizations. In other words, the aggregate scores of diverse organizations by type may water down the impact of “outliers”, i.e. organizations with “representation monopolies”.

To further grasp the **structural dimension** of corporatism, we took two further steps. Regarding intermediate governing bodies and the overall institutional set-up, we relied on survey responses to open questions, interviews and desk research. Then, we constructed a country-specific variable for “representation monopolies” to reflect specific organizations’ negotiation position. To do so, we aggregated all scores for all organizations for the frequency of “government consultations”, “consultations with parties” and “consultations with regulatory authorities” into one score per organization. For annual consultations, we gave each organization one point, for biannual consultations two points, for monthly consultations 12 points and for weekly consultations 52 points to roughly reflect the approximate frequency of actual consultations. Organizations not involved in any consultations are not included. For reasons of anonymity of our survey responses, we only indicate the areas of activity of the “major players” in each country.

4.2.1 Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Health plays a strong regulatory role, while the Council of Economic and Social Agreement of the Czech Republic (RHSD) was founded in 1990 to channel the dialogue between the government, trade unions and employers (Navratil & Pospisil, 2014). A Working Group on Health Care operates within this institution. The health insurance system is based on seven funds, all of them governed within the tripartite system. Medical professionals are organized within chambers on compulsory basis as well as other voluntary organizations. The most prominent is the Czech Medical Chamber, despite limited support from its members (Kafonkova, 2007). The biggest healthcare trade unions, such as the Trade Union of Doctors and Union Association of Health and Social Care, negotiate wages in collective contracts with employers. The main politically active umbrella patient organization is the Czech Association of Patients.

Despite these apparent efforts to formally establish a more corporatist mode of policy-making, numerous indicators in our data point in a more pluralistic direction. First, we see larger, umbrella organizations mainly focusing their activities on political parties (see Figure 5.2) and, to a lesser extent, the parliament (Figure 5.11), while others, in particular patients, only seem to occasionally be

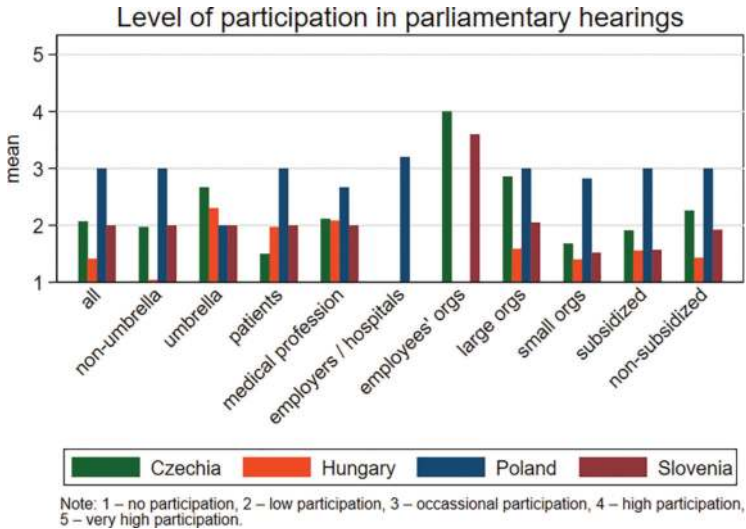


FIGURE 5.11 Level of participation in parliamentary hearings.

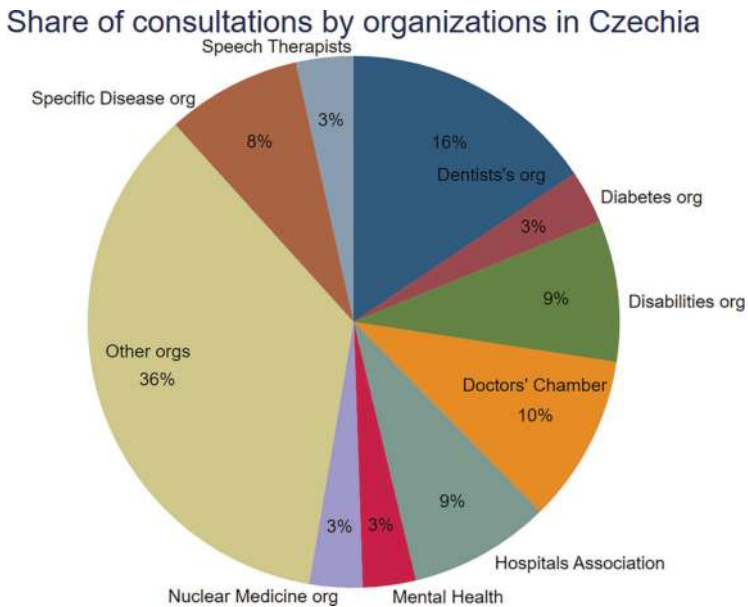


FIGURE 5.12 Share of consultations by organizations: Czech Republic.

included. This is also reflected in our “consultation score”. Based on data provided for each organization per country, we calculated its total share participation in all total annual consultations, giving us an overview of which groups are most heavily involved.

Here, we see seven or eight organizations representing different fields of medicine and hospitals most heavily involved, whereas a highly pluralistic array of patients' groups and other groups occasionally consult with the state. Nevertheless, Figure 5.9 shows that they are relatively successful in asserting their demands despite the lacking representation monopoly of a large umbrella organization. This again supports Roberts' finding (2009) that Czech political parties are highly open to civil society input and relatively quick to embrace their positions, but sheds some doubt on the institutionalization of corporatist structures including all key stakeholders.

4.2.2 Hungary

In Hungary, in 1980s, several new trade unions, professional and scientific associations were established, replacing the communist healthcare trade union. The largest were the Health Workers' Democratic Union, the Federation of Hungarian Medical Societies and the Hungarian Medical Chamber. In the 1990s and 2000s, patients' associations grew in numbers and influence. Their participation was institutionalized in waiting list committees, in the National Health Council, in regional health councils and in hospital supervisory councils (Gaal et al., 2011). Today, a single health insurance fund provides coverage for the population, whereby the government exerts strong control over healthcare policy. The Ministry of Human Capacities administers the system through the National Healthcare Service Centre (ÁEEK). The parliament is responsible for determining the size of the health insurance budget. Since 2010, Hungary returned to the model of a single, monopolistic, government-friendly union confederation(s), followed by decentralized collective bargaining and union structures. This is a sign of a decline of tripartite corporatism (Neumann & Toth, 2018). In healthcare, which largely remains under governmental control, the power and density of trade unions are relatively higher than in other sectors. Currently, there is no tripartite social dialogue in the public sector in Hungary. The National Economic and Social Council (NGTT, Nemzeti Gazdasági és Társadalmi Tanács), founded in February 2012, consists of the representatives of trade unions, industry chambers, various social and scientific organizations and even churches. It is not a consultative body as government representatives are merely observers on its sessions, and it can only draft proposals for the government. However, no patients' organization is formally included, an observation also reflected in Figure 5.13.

Breaking down the share of consultations by individual organizations, it appears that many responding organizations (approx. 20) essentially never negotiate with the state (not shown in pie chart). In line with the literature cited above, we see a strong presence of trade unions, as some four or five groups primarily representing the medical profession appear to have a quasi-monopoly status in negotiations with the state.

Share of consultations by organizations in Hungary

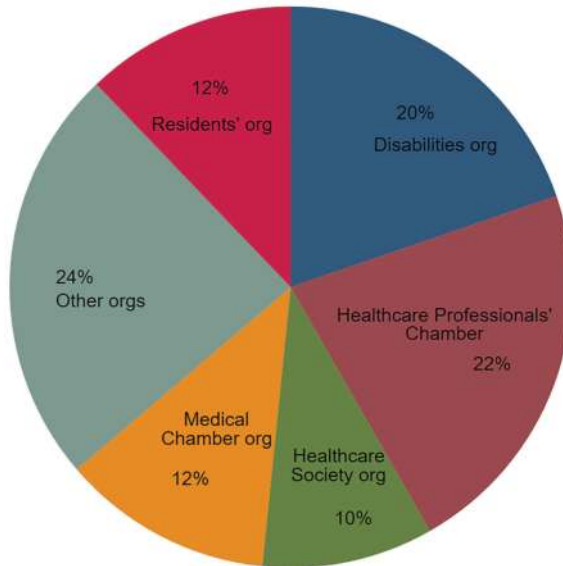


FIGURE 5.13 Share of consultations by organizations: Hungary.

However, other than one organization representing patients with disabilities, both general and specific patient groups appear to be consulted seldom or never, a finding also confirmed by two responding large patients' organizations who claim to be never included in dialogue or substantially consulted by the government (May 2020; June 2020).

4.2.3 Poland

In Poland, healthcare governance – based on social health insurance – appears to be “a bit of everything”. The system is itself much more fragmented than the Hungarian system, as the Polish Ministry of Health shares governance duties with three levels of territorial self-governments. The state holds strong regulatory, budgetary and managerial powers, while corporate actors are not accorded a significant role in healthcare regulation (Wendt et al., 2013). The system relies on statutory health insurance with a growing role of the private sector.

Our data paint a relatively pluralistic picture regarding the share of consultations by organization. Here, we see two large employers' organizations heavily involved in political consultations, but also frequent negotiations with various patients' organizations and those dealing with specific diseases.

Under Law and Justice (PiS), many reforms were adopted, generally aimed at centralization and potentially heralding a shift towards more statist interest intermediation (Szęściło, 2017). Poland also introduced in 2015 a tripartite dialogue

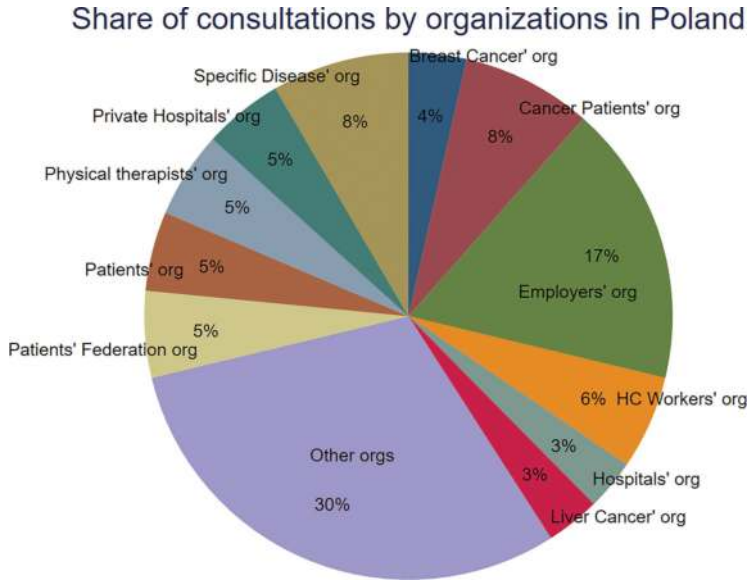


FIGURE 5.14 Share of consultations by organizations: Poland.

body, *Rada Dialogu Społecznego* (Social Dialogue Council – RDS), which was indicated by various responding employers' organizations to be an important forum. However, our data show that patients' organizations continue to target the parliament (see Figure 5.11). Thus, the RDS seems to have further consolidated the already existing situation of intense consultations with the employers' side to the neglect of the patients' side. Therefore, healthcare policy-making seems to be very fragmented due to the scattered authority between the government and local governments as well as the openness of parliamentarians to discussions with the social stakeholders and interventions by the Ministry of Health. Many actors with non-peak status seek other points of contact, for example, Senior Councils (representing older people), whose advisory and consultative role in local healthcare decision-making is growing (Frączkiewicz-Wronka et al., 2019).

However, there are some contrary observations. In 2017, the Junior Doctors' initiative carried out a hunger protest with a series of demands, including raising their salaries and increasing public expenditures for healthcare. During the protest, a treaty of all medical professions was signed. At first ignored by the government, strikes spread quickly among residents and specialists (Polak et al., 2019). In order to strengthen their bargaining position, Junior Doctors joined the Nationwide Trade Union of Doctors (OZZL) and succeeded in achieving their goals. Even though OZZL is not formally part of RDS, the umbrella of a large, representative professional organization facilitated the negotiations. This showed that despite declining trade union power and density in general, institutionalized trade union umbrellas and bureaucracy still matter in healthcare.

4.2.4 Slovenia

The Slovenian political system offers healthcare interest groups numerous important points of access. It is unique to the extent that the National Council (*Državni svet*) functions directly as the representative of organized interests of a socio-economic, professional and local character within the legislative system. It does not write or block legislation itself; rather its elected “councillors” from academic, civil society and healthcare have a corrective function in the legislative process. Medical professionals are traditionally gathered in medical chambers that administer and regulate their licensing, continuous education and training, as well as voluntary NGOs, such as the Slovenian Medical Association.

In 1994, as a result of an agreement on wage policy, the Economic and Social Council (ESC) was also established and still functions as an important tripartite body for social partners and the government. Within the ESC, the Committee on the Organization of the State and Public Affairs address issues regarding healthcare policy. The social health insurance system, operated by a single purchaser, is backed by the voluntary, supplementary insurance with almost full coverage of the population. The system is relatively centralized with a leading role of the Ministry of Health and National Council at various stages of decision-making, as indicated by various survey respondents. Social partners play a dual role in welfare state matters: an advisory role through the ESC and an administrative role through their own representatives in the tripartite boards of the Institute for Pension and Disability Insurance (IPDI), the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia (HIIS) and the Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS) (Albrecht et al., 2016). Several trade unions represent the interests of health professionals, such as the Slovenian Union of Physicians and Dentists, the Slovenian Health Service and Social Service Union, the Federation of Slovenian Free Unions (Healthcare and Social Care Union Department) and the Union of Healthcare Workers of Slovenia. Several health-related NGOs are active in the system. Patient organizations are often invited to participate in the drafting of policies and regulations in their specific area. However, there is no umbrella organization representing organized patients’ interests (Bugarcic & Kuhelj, 2015).

Looking at the share of consultations by organization, Slovenia presents the most balanced picture of our four countries and largely reflects the considerations above, with healthcare workers, professionals, administrators and the medical professions being relatively equally represented. However, the survey data also reflect the lack of a large patients’ organizations, rather a multitude of smaller, specialized patients’ organizations (not labelled) who are able to make themselves heard.

5 Comparative corporatism scores

What do all these data tell us? Following Jahn’s (2016) lead, we calculated a “corporatism score” for healthcare policy-making in each country taking all the survey results and our broader research into account. To do so, we defined ten

Share of consultations by organizations in Slovenia

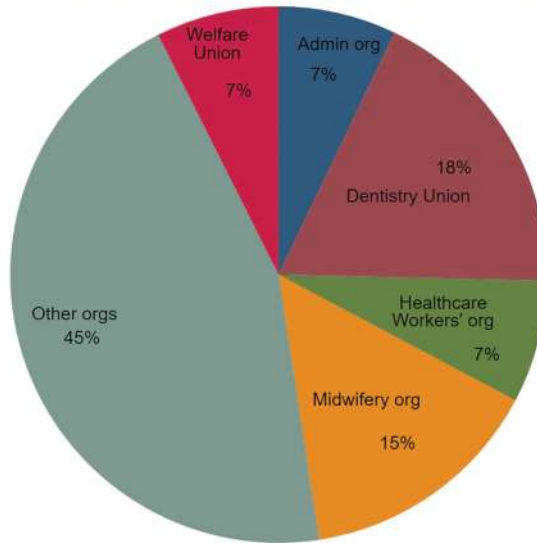


FIGURE 5.15 Share of consultations by organizations: Slovenia.

indicators for the functional and structural dimensions with a maximum score of 5 points, resulting in 50 as a maximum value.

For the **functional dimension**, we calculated the average scores for **all** organizations for the following variables on a 1–5 scale: perceived level of policy coordination, consultations with political parties, consultations with regulatory authorities, consultations with the present and previous government. Regarding the latter, to grasp the stability over time, we opted to award 1 or 2 points for a decrease in the stability of consultations, 3 points for no change and 4–5 points for an increase in consultations. Regarding consensus-oriented relations between organized interests, we included the score for “consultations with rivals” of all organizations on 1–5 scales, again based on the survey outcomes. Assuming that patients’ organizations are traditionally at a structural disadvantage, we calculated patients’ “perception of equal opportunities”.

Then, we looked at the **structural dimension** by assessing whether a regular institutionalized intermediation body exists. In each country, except for Hungary, we identified an institutionalized, tripartite consultation platform with a healthcare working group operating within in: i.e. Czech Republic – the Tripartita – Council of Economic and Social Agreement (RHDS), Poland – Social Dialogue Council (RDS), Slovenia – Economic and Social Council (ESS). Here, based on secondary literature and survey comments, we granted maximum 5 points: one for the existence of a tripartite body, one for the existence of a healthcare dialogue platform within the body, then one for the inclusion of patients’ representatives and from 1 to 2 points depending on the number of health-related topics on the political agenda (number of health-related meetings).⁵

Then, we used our survey question regarding parliamentary lobbying (1–5 points) as a sign of non-corporatist policy-making. The scores were reversed from the original values in the survey: the higher the parliamentary access per country, the fewer corporatism points given. To reflect representation monopolies of certain encompassing organizations, we calculated what share of all annual consultations the most frequently consulted groups⁶ participate in, and transposed this number to a 1–5 scale.

Our aggregate “corporatism score” shows Slovenia in the lead, with almost 60% of possible points. This is a result of a combination of the existence of

TABLE 5.1 “Corporatism score” in CEE healthcare policy-making

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Ingredient</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Czech Republic</i>	<i>Hungary</i>	<i>Poland</i>	<i>Slovenia</i>	<i>Max. value</i>
Function	Institutionalized inclusion of organized interests into the policy-making	Perceived level of policy coordination	2.19	2.33	2.12	1.68	5
		Consultations with political parties	2.08	1.28	1.9	1.68	5
		Consultations with regulatory authorities	2.46	2.43	3.07	2.8	5
		Consultations with present government	2.54	2.4	2.92	2.26	5
		Stability of consultations over time	5	3	4	5	5
		Consensus-oriented relations between organized interests	Perception of equal opportunities	2.2	2.62	2.42	2
Structure	Regular, institutionalized interest intermediation body	Consultations with rivals	2.26	1.58	2.21	1.96	5
		Existence of tripartite consultation platform	3	0	3	4	5
		Transfer of policy-making away from parliament	2.93	3.59	2	3	5
		Self-managed, peak organizations of capital and labour	Existence of representation monopolies	3	5	1	4
Sum			27.66	24.23	24.64	28.38	50

two bodies for civil interest intermediation, both within the legislature with the National Council (*Državni svet*) and outside through the Economic and Social Council (ESC), but also high scores for consultations with regulatory authorities and a high perception of equal opportunities. As a further sign of corporatism, we also find strong interactions between healthcare employers and employees, the latter of which, in particular, reported a high level of policy coordination and exchange with the state. In other words, Slovenian healthcare policy-making is not characterized by unfettered competition among interest groups, rather its relatively consensual and non-political nature, as noted by numerous respondents, in particular several rivalling umbrella organizations (see Figure 5.10).

However, our data show that Slovenian healthcare is not as extremely corporatist as in Jahn's (2015) ranking for socio-economic issues. We would attribute this to the relatively weak position of patients, who are not organized in an umbrella organization in the main corporatist intermediation bodies. Hence, we would classify Slovenian healthcare as **moderately corporatist, to the advantage of various healthcare trade unions and partial disadvantage to patients' organizations**.

Again in contrast to Jahn's classification, the Czech Republic scores relatively close to Slovenia regarding healthcare. It constitutes an interesting case, because political parties, and not the parliament, are the main targets for interest groups (see also Roberts, 2009). As a sign of more corporatist policy-making, responding organizations, in particular umbrella organizations, report the highest frequency of consultations with rivalling organizations. Czech organizations also demonstrate the highest self-perceived influence of organized interests, whereby diffused interests (e.g. patients) and non-umbrellas see themselves as equally influential as umbrellas and representative medical profession associations. We also see patients' groups as being relatively fragmented and only occasionally involved in governmental consultations despite their declared strong influence. Czech healthcare organizations also aggregately report an intensification of consultations under the Babiš government. Therefore, it remains to be seen whether this will push the existing emerging moderately corporatist system with pluralist elements further towards the corporatist ideal type.

In Hungary, healthcare organizations seem to downright avoid the parliament and political parties. However, we would not interpret this as a sign of corporatism, rather as a reflection of the relatively closed nature of the political system (see Sata & Karolewski, 2020). Along these lines, our data confirm that Hungary is the country in which healthcare organizations have the weakest ability to assert their interests (see Figure 5.9) and in which organizations least frequently engage with rivalling interests. Similarly to Slovenia, we see signs of representation monopolies of medical and healthcare professionals, who strongly engage in political coordination with the state, whereas patients (other than one disabilities' organization) are at a disadvantage. We would therefore classify Hungary somewhere between a **one-sided, moderately corporatist and technocratic statist** system of interest intermediation.

Poland, the second least corporatist country in the list with less than half of possible points, is arguably the polar opposite of Hungary. Organized interests report good access to parliamentary bodies, in particular more “diffuse” groups such as patients and non-umbrellas. We also found no marked difference in the level of political coordination between government-subsidized and non-subsidized groups. There are also few signs of representation monopolies, although one large patients’ organization and several smaller patients’ organizations reported a high to moderate level of coordination with the state. Particularly noticeable is also the strong level of political coordination between several large employers’ organizations and the state, political parties and regulatory authorities. Thus, on the one hand, interest organizations do form and shape the political process and political institutions appear to be much more accessible for traditionally weaker interest groups (e.g. patients) than in Hungary. We also see a higher level of coordination between organizational rivals than in Hungary. On the other hand, the Polish healthcare interest intermediation system remains organizationally fragmented and structurally less corporatist than Slovenia, as the Council for Social Dialogue (which still formally excludes patients’ organizations) has only been recently introduced. Therefore, we would classify Polish healthcare interest intermediation as **more pluralist with emerging corporatist structures**, which according to our data enable a relative balance of concentrated (e.g. employers, medical profession) and diffuse interests (patients’) in terms of asserting interests.

6 Concluding remarks

Exploring interest intermediation structures in post-communist policy-making posed numerous challenges. Besides a complex specification of the dependent variable, clear-cut categorization of organizations and identification of outliers in the given structures, we must cope with the reality that interest configurations may still differ **within** individual policy areas. For example, interest mobilization for hospital reform may play out entirely differently than reforms of patients’ rights or the regulation of pharmaceuticals. Nevertheless, our respondents have provided us a wealth of information to map out the broader contours of the policy-making process. Our dual approach of aggregating scores for different groups of organizations for multiple dimensions of corporatism and later singling out organizations with or without quasi-representation monopolies enabled us to show both broader cross-country trends while also pinpointing country-specific interest intermediation networks.

Our data show that all four interest intermediation systems are roughly half-way towards fully fledged corporatism, with Slovenia in the lead, Hungary maintaining strong components of the statist paradigm and Poland and the Czech Republic being more pluralist. Our aggregated data also indicate that healthcare policy-making in all four countries is more consultative than in the past. Moreover, we found only little to no evidence for Olejnik’s (2020) assumption of favouritism towards state-subsidized groups (“patronage corporatism”), as both state-funded and independently funded organizations declared similar

perception of equal opportunities, influence and the frequency of consultations in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. However, this claim should be subject to further research, with both aggregate data and individual case studies. Therefore, we encourage scholars to conduct case studies on individual reform processes not only to test our aggregate findings, but also to better understand the opportunities and limits for action of organized interests in the emerging corporatist arrangements. And most importantly, this would enable us to understand whether and when the demands and preferences of key stakeholders are translated into concrete policy changes.

Notes

- 1 Czech Republic 14th place, Slovenia 21st place, Poland 32nd place, Hungary 33rd place in European comparison regarding self-evaluations of healthcare outcomes.
- 2 Several were only applicable to economic policy (e.g. works councils, worker co-determination).
- 3 Due to data inconsistencies between countries, we did not include the pharmaceutical industry and medical devices manufacturers.
- 4 We stick to 20% as it constitutes a significant share of organizations' budgets, greatly affecting their capacity to act. Also, the 20% cut-off is a logical baseline due to the dispersion of our gathered data (i.e. few borderline cases such as 19% or 21%).
- 5 We checked on the websites of tripartite bodies whether healthcare issues are dealt with frequently (approx. once a month) or seldom.
- 6 i.e. what share of all consultations the four to six largest groups (depending on country-spread) account for.

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PART 3

Influence of organized interests



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6

GREEN ADVOCACY AND THE CLIMATE AND ENERGY POLICY ACCESS IN CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPE

*Szczepan Czarnecki, Emilia Piotrowska,
and Rafał Riedel*

1 Introduction

Combating climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency, and promoting wider usage of renewable energy sources is of the highest importance on the EU's political agenda. The European *Green Deal* is one of the most ambitious priorities announced in President Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines. However, many countries from the post-Soviet bloc still remain coal-dependent, and their visions to move away from fossil fuels substantially vary from those promoted by the EU, which are heavily focused on renewables.

Decisions impacting the environment, climate, and energy are supported or contested by various interested parties. Businesses and industry may lobby for laxer standards, less stringent enforcement, and later compliance deadlines; whereas, green activists lobby against them (Heyes & Liston-Heyes, 2005). They instead advocate for lower emissions, stricter norms of environmental protection, and more urgent enforcement. The threat of impending environmental EU regulations forces stakeholders to choose the timing and levels of strategic responses on a continuum from passive to active (Clement, Bamford & Douglas, 2008).

Together with the growing body of research dedicated to this topic, scholars have become better informed about green advocacy (GA) movements and their impact on the policy process (Heyes & King, 2020). In the post-communist world, in which the culture of political participation remains at relatively low levels, GA has its own specifics, making environmental policy one of the most intriguing in the region. This has stimulated scholarly interest in the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) advocacy organizations, their origin, resources, ways of operating, and contribution to the legitimacy and accountability of political decision-making. Still, the governmental – societal relationship in the climate

and energy domain notoriously remains an under-studied field, which requires further scientific exploration. Additionally, although scholars of GA often make comparisons to other interest organizations, there has been little systematic analysis of what distinguishes GA groups from other interest groups operating in energy and climate policy domains. This chapter aims to fill this research gap, by focusing on CEE.

The shared experience of the post-communist world (central planning and authoritarian rule) includes, among other things, a common legacy of environmental neglect, inefficient energy usage, limited deposits of natural resources, and increasing energy competition and prices. While environmental concerns, as exemplified by the climate change issue, are at the forefront of the political debate, GA organizations focused on a green future across CEE occupy a somewhat ambiguous position in the spectrum of climate and energy stakeholders. They are a relatively new phenomenon and promoting an ecological agenda pits them against the current *status quo* agents – at least in some countries of the region, such as Poland. However, such groups enjoy a special mandate from the EU, as their environmental *acquis* and financial resources provide them with new tools to reach their aims (Börzel & Buzogany, 2010). GA groups by nature share an ambition to shape energy and climate policies. They may help to formulate and implement an environmentally friendly political course by recognizing and building public awareness about specific problems and solutions. However, it is critical for them to gain access to the policy-making apparatus, which is the focus point of this analysis.

Therefore, this chapter explores the position of GA groups compared to other energy and climate advocacy groups. We focus on GA in four selected CEE countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia – and examine what kind of resources (including financial stability, levels of professionalization, and various types of expertise) enable them to gain access to executive bodies, i.e., governing parties and regulatory authorities. Methodologically, the chapter relies on descriptive and inferential statistics using survey data.

In the following, we outline the theoretical framework based on the resource mobilization literature with special attention to its linkages to access to executive bodies. Then, we provide an overview of the GA landscape in CEE, which has blossomed in the past years. In the next section, we explain our research design by introducing the hypotheses, their operationalization, and how we test them. The data analysis is followed by a discussion and concluding remarks.

2 Resource mobilization and executive bodies – a theoretical framework

The question of interest group representation is strongly rooted in the social sciences, and the roles and interactions of social actors have been the subject of interest of public policy researchers for years. Various theoretical approaches and perspectives are applied in interest group research, which include both the studies

of their types and functions, as well as institutional conditions and related strategies of interest representation. There is also an extensive and growing literature on interest organizations in the environmental context and, more generally, GA as social movement, civic society ‘syndromes, or interest group is an increasingly popular object of scientific inquiry.

The role of GA in the policy process can be understood by applying several theories, including identity-oriented theories, social responses, resource mobilization, and others. This study is rooted in resource mobilization theory, which focuses on the salience of acquired resources (e.g., monetary, staff, expertise, etc.) and the ability to use them. This approach correlates closely with rational-choice explanations, as it perceives policy stakeholders as rational decision-makers who weigh costs and benefits when deciding whether taking action is worth the time and effort.

Scholars employ a variety of analytical lenses when investigating interest groups’ linkages with the policy-making process. Rational-choice assumptions – which are at the core of this chapter – highlight the added value of access strategies. Sociological institutionalism views interest group engagement largely as an effect of participatory norm diffusion and the logic of appropriateness. Interest groups’ participation in the policy-making process is conditioned by many exogenous and endogenous factors (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007). The first group of factors is the institutional environment, understood as the nature of the political system, the infrastructure of intermediation of interests, the degree of openness of the policy-making apparatus, election funding, or applicable lobbying regulations. The second group of factors is strongly connected with the interest groups’ characteristics such as the size, degree of concentration or dispersion, internal structure, nature of membership, financial resources, expert knowledge, hierarchy of power, level of representativeness, and ability to take collective action or various aspects of professionalization. The third group of factors refers to the nature of a given policy in which stakeholders are involved, including its level of relevance, salience, and complexity.

In this chapter, we rely in particular on the resource-dependency theory to examine to what extent selected resources (including finances, levels of professionalization, various types of expertise, etc.) condition access to executive bodies. Scholars have produced a great deal of studies testing how various types of resources determine the interest groups’ access to the policy-making apparatus (Beyers & Kerremans, 2007), often relying on resource mobilization (McCarthy & Zald, 1977) and exchange relationship theories (Berkhout, 2013). In this approach, bureaucrats and interest groups interact due to the mutual need for resources. However, the ability to provide resources is strongly connected with the interest group type.

According to the access and exchange of resources model (Bouwen, 2004), resources are the most important factor conditioning access to decision-making processes. There is an ongoing exchange process between interest groups and decision-makers, while selected resources, such as expert knowledge, constitute

the good desired by decision-makers (Woll, 2007). A prominent hypothesis in interest group research is that resource-rich groups are more successful. Resource exchange can therefore either result in stronger influence over policy outputs or at least greater access to decision-makers (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007).

A normative assessment of the political role of interest groups depends on how much power interest groups have, and how power is distributed among different groups (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007). Several of them are worth mentioning, for example, the alignments with political actors or the resources available for mobilization. Internal group resources, such as the number of members and financial and professional staff resources can affect their options for engaging in intensive efforts to influence politics (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Christiansen & Nørgaard, 2006). The lack of resources might force groups to restrict themselves to a narrow range of activities, and abundant resources may enable groups to engage in a wide range of activities (Gais & Walker, 1991).

Since measuring influence is a problematic enterprise in political science, an alternative approach can be taken (Huberts & Kleinnijenhuis, 1994). Using ‘the logic of access’ instead of focusing on impact, we explore the factors that shape access to institutions. Several models can be identified here. The ‘direct effect’ model captures situations in which the interest groups interact with the government or its branches, directly. The ‘mediated effect’ model grasps how environmental groups affect public opinion to raise general awareness and consciousness. In this scheme, public opinion acts as an intervening variable between and among societal environmental groups and the governmental policy-making capacity. The ‘political alliance model’ sees ecological groups using support by powerful allies inside institutional arenas and providing support to governmental officials (Tarrow, 1994). In this approach, organized interests focus on different political arenas in accordance with their goal and then match their resources to the demands of gate-keepers (Binderkrantz, Christiansen & Pedersen, 2014). In this chapter, we focus exclusively on the ‘direct effect’ by examining the interest groups’ access to two types of executive bodies: political parties in power and public administration. Based on the literature, we assume that the executive is important for energy organizations: according to Gais and Walker (1991), organizations aiming to participate in the preparation and implementation of policies are more likely to approach bureaucrats. Scholars distinguish between the two organizational levels of the executive branch: the political executive (governing party or coalition) and public administration (*inter alia* regulatory authorities) (Egeberg, 2007). The basis for this distinction is the separation of political (fundamental) decisions belonging to the government from executive and technical decisions (administrative routine) that are the responsibility of the administration.

3 Green advocacy in Central Eastern Europe

Research dedicated to GA has been a well-established part of scholarship growing parallel to environmental advocacy evolving on the ground. There are

interdisciplinary studies focusing on the economic (Heyes & Liston-Heyes, 2005), political (Grossmann, 2006), societal (Holt, 2019), or business (Hung-Che & Ching-Chan, 2017) dimensions. Relatively, little has been published on interest groups' impact on the enforcement of environmental law (for a notable exception, see Hofmann, 2019) and even less on the earlier stages of the policy cycle. 'Green Advocacy' as a descriptive term embraces both private and public interest organizations, acting in favor of a green future, no matter if the motivation is profit or idea. The common denominator is raising awareness of environmental issues, promoting green capital and technology (Jones, 2008), protesting greenhouse emissions, and climate protection. Advocacy by various green actors helps to reach new levels of trust and commitment and develop transparency, dialogue, and partnership (Hung-Che & Ching-Chan, 2017). Such a categorization goes hand in hand with some conceptualizations present in the early political science research in the field, which favored pluralistic explanations of interest group ecosystems, emphasizing their goals over their organizational features and objectives over their incentives (Smith, 1984).

The field of GA research, as well as scholarly investigations on other organized interests, have blossomed in the past decades. There are many streams of scientific investigations addressing various aspects of green activism, its sources, inspirations, ways of manifesting, access to the policy process, its influence on political decisions, and related issues. Some scholars explored factors that determine the formation, mobilization, and dynamics of ecological groups (Steel et al., 2003; Wapner, 1996). Other subfields address whether and how green activists' demands are heard during various phases of the policy formation (Fiorino, 1996; Güney, 2015). Other scholars (Börzel & Buzogany, 2010; Lafferty & Meadowcroft, 1996; Mason, 1999) focus on the inclusive capacity of governments when processing specific climate or energy policy issues.

GA groups are a specific type of interest organizations as they engage in the defense of public goods that are not attributed to any specific individual(s) or group(s). They mobilize resources (material, expertise, membership, etc.), exposing themselves to the potential 'free-rider' problem, as the incentives for participation are less individually-attributed than in the case of classical lobbyists. As claimed by Hansen (1985), people are more likely to participate in environmental activism if the object of collective action is the prevention of a 'collective bad', rather than the creation of 'collective good'.

At the beginning of the transition, CEE countries were struggling with the problem of energy dependence, the lack of diversification of energy suppliers, and old energy infrastructure. Most of the efforts during the transition were focused on economic shock therapy and recovery understood as a massive inflow of foreign direct investments. Thus, ecological standards were generally not a priority. Meanwhile, transnational corporations have been recognized as major contributors to environmental problems worldwide (Wescott, 1992). Environmental protection was sacrificed during the process of opening up to the western world. As a result, the carbon intensity of the economic output in most CEE

countries is above the EU average today. According to the Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research, the Czech Republic and Poland emit 0.3 tons of CO₂ per \$1,000 of GDP; Slovenia and Hungary, 0.2 tons.

The post-communist states differed not only in the starting points as regards their energy mixes, but also various aspects of policy-making. The transition process brought about changes and opened up a field for action for various interest groups. Public ownership of the means of production meant that natural resources were often treated as free goods. Environmental problems were attributed to the imperfections in planning and poor economic governance. The specific context of the post-communist transformations affected environmental groups' activity and behavior. Most of them were neglected for many years. Later on, the Europeanization pressures for the energy transition appeared, while the 'climate change' agenda became an influential factor shaping the energy agendas of CEE countries and supporting selected green interest groups.

Despite similarities and the shared post-communist legacy, the energy and climate policies of Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia differ. According to the reports of the European Environment Agency, Poland's atmosphere is one of the most contaminated by carcinogenic benzopyrene among all the EU countries, exceeding the concentration of 1 ng/m³. The main cause of high CO₂ emissions and dramatically bad air quality is the coal-based power industry (Skoczkowski et al., 2018). No matter who has governed since 1990, the mining sector was always under government protection (see Kubin in this volume). The newest strategic plan for energy by 2040 assumes that the Polish energy mix will be still based on coal (50%–60%), renewables (21%–23%), and nuclear power. In the Czech Republic, coal-fired power plants are the source of approximately 40% of its produced electricity. The government wants to phase most of it out over the next 20 years, replacing part of it with new nuclear power plants as well as gas, renewables, and energy imports. The attitude of the government toward renewable energy sources is still complex and reflects patterns of externally imposed standards (Gamze & Petr, 2020). Naturally poor in fossil fuel resources, Hungary is highly dependent on external fossil fuel; as close to 90% of its total primary energy supply comes from foreign fossil and nuclear sources. It also lags behind other European countries in terms of renewables (Vadovics, 2019). In Slovenia, oil is the main energy source (45%). Electricity production is based on hydropower, nuclear energy, and coal, and the government plans to maintain this *status quo* (Živčič, 2019).

The skepticism of these CEE countries to the EU's climate neutrality goal should not only be seen in the light of the tremendous costs of energy transformation and defending the national *status quo*. Most of these countries are moving toward more green energy usage but at their own conditions and pace. Today, their share of energy from renewable sources is among the lowest across the EU: 11% in Poland, 12% in Hungary, 15% in Czechia, and up to more ambitious 21% in Slovenia, which is close to the EU average (EUROSTAT, 2018). Common to the countries is their strong declared focus on strengthening other energy

sources after their initial resistance toward the European *Green Deal*. While most of them (apart from Poland) pledged to leave carbon as a source of energy, they declared their will to develop nuclear power rather than renewables, which is not in line with the European Commission strategy and might cause further resistance in the future. This is why it is important to shed some light on the GA groups in the region, who seem to be torn between national interests and their own interests, which are consistent with the EU objectives.

4 Hypotheses, research design, and methods

Bearing in mind the above-mentioned state of knowledge on GA in CEE as well as theoretical claims on access to the decision-making apparatus, we launch our study of empirical material with the starting assumption that the group type and resources matter for interest group access. Against this background, we derive three more specific hypotheses related to resources.

Expertise is recognized as a key resource in knowledge-intensive sectors (Peterson, 2018) such as climate and energy. It remains critical both internally (for group members) and externally (as exchange good for decision-makers) (Beyers, Eising & Maloney, 2008). However, there are different theoretical expectations regarding various types of expertise and the match between the provided and demanded information (Hanegraaff et al., 2019). According to Bouwen (2004), parliamentarians – who remain under relatively direct electoral control – are likely to favor political support information on voters' preferences, whereas executive decision-makers are more focused on scientific and technical expertise. Other researchers focus rather on the type of interest groups providing the expertise, arguing that citizens' groups are more likely to pass valuable information on public preferences to policy-makers (Flöthe, 2020). The innovative nature of the green transition requires high levels of expertise among environmental activists, renewable energy businesses, and other actors involved in the decision-making process. Based on these findings, we predict that various types of expertise (scientific, legal, and economic) will be positively correlated with interest group access:

Hypothesis 1: *Expertise resources facilitate interest group access to executive bodies.*

Organizational theories rooted in the sociology of organizations emphasize professionalization as a structure and process that refers, for example, to the creation of positions requiring a high degree of qualification in terms of educational training and relevant working experience (Kubicek & Welter, 1985). According to Salamon (2012), professionalization is a shift in organizational staffing and operations, representing an increasing reliance on a paid worker with specialized knowledge gained through formal education (Hwang & Powell, 2009; Salamon, 2012). In other words, professionalization may be understood as a process of transformation of the internal structures of interest groups toward more

professionalized practices. Some scholars argue that professionalization differs systematically across the interest group types, whereas others suggest that institutional pressures lead to converging professionalization patterns so that different types of groups are similarly professionalized (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013). The professionalization of interest groups certainly may vary across different sectors of activity. For instance, some groups may be more focused on internal development and member empowerment, whereas other groups will be less oriented toward professionalization. However, in our study, we are less focused on the process of professionalization itself but rather on how increasing professionalization (in terms of human resource and organizational development – two variables covering two aspects of the professionalization) enhances access.

Hypothesis 2: *Interest groups with large professionalization resources enjoy better access to executive bodies than less professionalized groups.*

Interest groups can also substantially vary in terms of financial resources. This variable is recognized as a typical resource used in influencing the decision-makers (Woll, 2007). Although some scholars argue that money has little measurable effect on policy outcomes (Baumgartner et al., 2014), we assume that it allows interest groups to literally purchase other resources and therefore can facilitate access to executive decision-making. Moreover, for CEE GA groups, who operate on unfavorable domestic grounds, money can be a critically important resource. The green agenda is exceptionally strong in the EU, and Brussels perceives various types of GA organizations as vital for its democratic decision-making process. Hence, it sometimes financially stimulates their involvement in policy-making. The EU fund dependency is understandably one of the main ways in which Europeanization is operationalized in interest group studies (Beyers, 2002; Beyers & Kerremans, 2007; Dür, 2008; Klüver, 2011; Maloney, Hafner-Fink & Fink-Hafner, 2018; see Chapter 9 in this volume), making EU funding a legitimate sub-variable in analyzing financial resources in GA in CEE. However, we hypothesize more generally that financial resource-rich organizations will enjoy better access to the policy-making apparatus, having in mind this important sub-variable.

Hypothesis 3: *Financial resources of interest groups translate into better access to executive bodies.*

To measure the role of selected resources on access to executive bodies, we rely on quantitative research: a large-scale online survey was conducted among the representative samples of interest groups in climate and energy in four respective countries (total N=117) (see Introduction and Annex). Unlike conventional scholarly classifications by the nature of interest (diffused/concentrated, public/private, cause/sectional), we rather employ a wider, ecumenical approach of GA groups, which includes both green business organizations (focused on renewables) and green environmental protection activists. This group is juxtaposed with

all the other energy policy actors, including general energy organizations as well as fossil and nuclear organizations. This selection is backed by the *Green Deal* approach for Europe, which promotes renewable energy while pushing national agendas to transform existing energy mixes. Both ‘opposing’ groups represent a quite similar sample in terms of numbers.

The dependent variable was constructed based on the obtained data regarding ‘access to governing parties’ and ‘access to regulatory authorities’. Access demonstrates not only how inclusive the authorities are but also how influential the concrete interests are. It is a two-way street in which society and politicians meet and interact. As far as access to governmental institutions is concerned, if opportunity structures are perceived by interest organizations as closed, they will refrain from input attempts or try alternative access strategies. Therefore, we asked:

How difficult is it to access governing parties? (1 – extremely difficult, 2 – difficult, 3 – sometimes possible, 4 – easy, and 5 – extremely easy)

How difficult is it to access regulatory authorities? (1 – extremely difficult, 2 – difficult, 3 – sometimes possible, 4 – easy, 5 – extremely easy)

The first independent variable comprises financial resources. We asked respondents to indicate to what extent their organization is focused on fundraising activities compared to 1015 years ago, again using an ordinal scale from 1 to 5 (1 – much less, 2 – less, 3 – the same, 4 – more, 5 – much more). In the next step, we asked about the general share of EU funds in their budgets, and for the purposes of the statistical analysis, we recorded these data to present them on an ordinal scale from 1 to 5 (much less – much more). To measure scientific, economic, and legal specialized expertise, we asked our respondents to indicate the importance of provided expertise/information for their influence on policy outcomes using a 1 to 3 ordinal scale (1 – unimportant, 2 – somewhat important, 3 – very important). To measure professionalization, we asked our respondents to what extent their organization is focused on general organizational and human resources development compared to 10–15 years ago, again using an ordinal scale from 1 to 5 (1 – much less, 2 – less, 3 – the same, 4 – more, 5 – much more).

We first analyzed our data using descriptive statistics to picture the general trends observable in access to executive bodies. Since the collected data were largely presented on ordinal scales, we carried out an ordinal regression (Polytomous universal model) that incorporates the ordinal nature of the dependent variables.

5 Data analysis

In line with the presented research design, we begin with a short descriptive analysis of the dependent variables reflecting the means of access to governing parties and regulatory authorities. In general, for all energy groups across CEE, regulatory authorities seem to be more accessible. Both types of energy organizations aggregately indicated having at least ‘sometimes possible’ access to regulatory authorities, with other energy interest groups indicating close to ‘easy’.

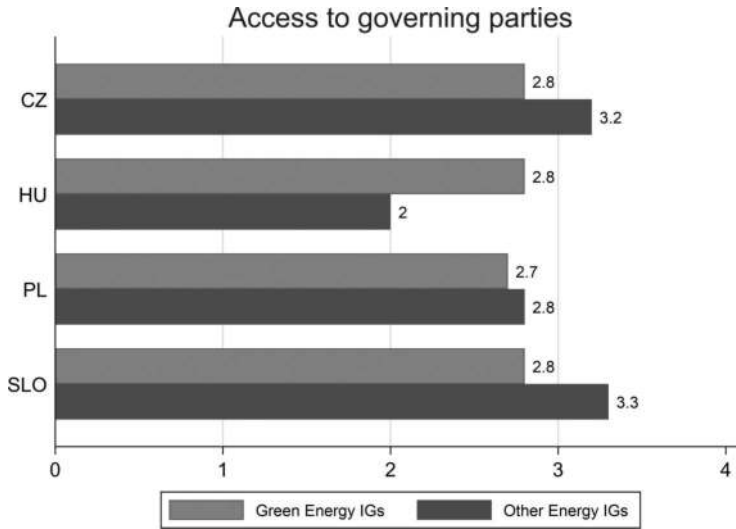


FIGURE 6.1 Access to governing parties.

Note: 1 – extremely difficult, 2 – difficult, 3 – sometimes possible, 4 – easy, 5 – extremely easy.

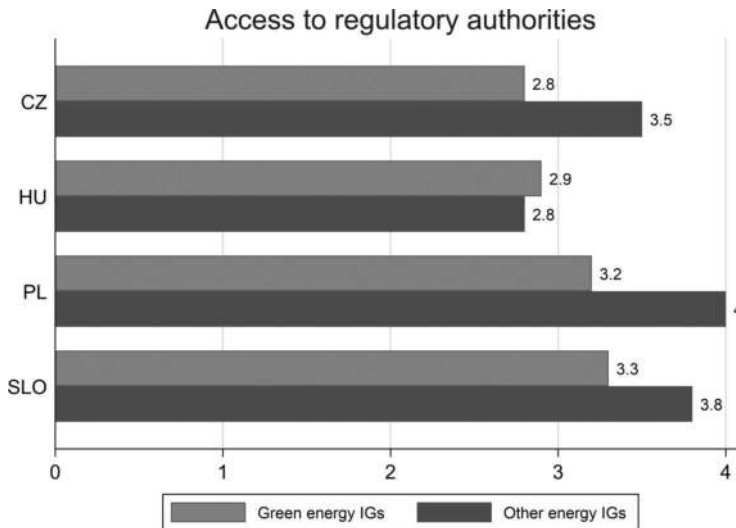


FIGURE 6.2 Access to regulatory authorities.

Note: 1 – extremely difficult, 2 – difficult, 3 – sometimes possible, 4 – easy, 5 – extremely easy.

As regards the access to governing parties, both types indicated that it is ‘difficult’, with other energy groups indicating close to ‘sometimes possible’ access. Generally, in every analyzed country, other energy organizations enjoyed better access to both types of executive bodies than GA groups. The only exception was Hungary, where GA groups indicated significantly higher access to governing parties.

As mentioned above, our two dependent variables are ‘access to regulatory bodies’ (Table 6.1) and ‘access to governing parties’ (Table 6.2). Both variables previously measured on a five-point Likert scale were recoded into three-point scales from 1 – (extremely) difficult, 2 – sometimes possible and 3 – (extremely) easy to facilitate our interpretation. As independent variables, we used three groups of explanatory variables, tested in different models. First, we tested the role of different types of expertise for each organization to determine whether provided specialized knowledge may be the key to the political process. Originally measured on three-point scales scientific, economic, and legal expertise was added to our analysis. The second group of independent variables comprises three professionalization factors. We categorized professionalization into three different categories: focus on organizational development, focus on fundraising, and focus on human resources over the last 10 – 15 years. We also added an EU fund variable to test whether European funding plays a role for interest groups in accessing policy-makers. We also measured whether the group type in terms of group activity plays a role. Group type variables are dummies coded on 0/1 scales. We also tested whether there is any country-related variance by adding a country categorical variable. To test our hypotheses, we conducted two ordinal regressions that contain five models each (Tables 6.1 and 6.2). Collinearity was tested using Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient exhibiting no major collinearity issues among our independent variables.

Group Types

We started our analysis by testing our predictions for the relationship between the group type and access. In Model I, we tested whether the group type affects access to governing parties (Table 6.1) and regulatory authorities (Table 6.2). The results show that the group type indeed impacts access to executive bodies, especially regulatory authorities. We see that other energy groups enjoy better access to regulatory authorities. The first row of Table 6.2 shows that the estimate parameters -1.05 and their significance at the 0.01 level, suggesting an association between the group type and access executive bodies. With the exception of Model III, in which we test the professionalization variables, and Model V where all the variables were tested, three Models (I, II, and IV) were statistically significant, confirming a relationship between the group type and access to the regulatory bodies. By contrast, in the models, in which we tested the association between the group type and access to the governing parties, the coefficient shows negative values. However, we found no significance at any level in any of the tested models.

Expertise resources

In Model II (Tables 6.1 and 6.2), we tested whether expertise matters for the groups in accessing relevant political bodies. For both analyzed forms of access, we found out that expertise matters: scientific expertise significantly facilitates access to governing parties (H1).

TABLE 6.1 Access to governing parties

	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV	Model V
Green advocacy Interest Groups	0.205 (0.368)	0.344 (0.435)	0.730 (0.467)	0.381 (0.436)	0.694 (0.676)
Slovenia (ref. category)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Poland	-0.336 (0.523)	0.368 (0.638)	0.161 (0.627)	-1.288 (0.722)	0.246 (0.982)
Hungary	-1.281 (0.535)	-1.042 (0.636)	-0.799 (0.801)	-0.708 (0.571)	1.587 (1.123)
Czechia	0.272 (0.432)	1.139* (0.527)	0.558 (0.511)	0.753 (0.479)	2.123** (0.738)
Scientific expertise	-	1.392*** (0.370)	-	-	2.027*** (0.554)
Economical expertise	-	-0.025 (0.390)	-	-	-0.580 (0.679)
Legal expertise	-	-0.251 (0.394)	-	-	-0.298 (0.551)
Organizational development focus	-	-	-0.400 (0.337)	-	-0.693 (0.524)
HR focus	-	-	0.255 (0.442)	-	0.489 (0.594)
Fundraising focus	-	-	0.353 (0.364)	-	1.394** (0.498)
EU funds	-	-	-	-0.219 (0.409)	0.028 (0.589)
Access 1	-1.047*** (0.375)	1.838 (1.206)	-0.684 (0.936)	-1.182 (0.742)	5.069* (2.041)
Access 2	0.470 (0.363)	3.595*** (1.246)	0.830 (0.939)	0.497 (0.735)	7.175 (2.169)
Observations	120	99	84	95	61
Pseudo R	0.8	0.19	0.12	0.14	0.35
Loglikelihood	70.279	157.949	146.365	92.134	128.833

Standard errors in parentheses *p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01, ****p < 0.001.

TABLE 6.2 Access to regulatory authorities

	<i>Model I</i>	<i>Model II</i>	<i>Model III</i>	<i>Model IV</i>	<i>Model V</i>
Green advocacy Interest	-1.055** (0.384)	-1.211** (0.459)	-0.696 (0.496)	-1.080** (0.425)	-0.613 (0.766)
Groups					
Slovenia (ref. category)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Poland	0.315 (0.591)	0.200 (0.672)	0.809 (0.763)	0.297 (0.700)	1.594 (1.170)
Hungary	-1.47** (0.489)	-1.114 (0.575)	-0.839 (0.703)	-1.018 (0.517)	0.658 (1.287)
Czechia	-0.724 (0.471)	-0.298 (0.553)	-0.678 (0.516)	-0.230 (0.502)	0.673 (0.849)
Scientific expertise	-	1.185*** (0.350)	-	-	3.209*** (0.868)
Economical expertise	-	-0.086 (0.407)	-	-	-2.130* (0.887)
Legal expertise	-	-0.851* (0.404)	-	-	-0.868 (0.608)
Organizational focus	-	-	-0.302 (0.348)	-	-0.075 (0.598)
HR focus	-	-	0.280 (0.467)	-	1.004 (0.685)
Fundraising	-	-	0.246 (0.373)	-	1.425* (0.657)
EU funds	-	-	-	-0.156 (0.338)	-0.265 (0.559)
Access 1	-1.448*** (0.400)	-0.812 (1.083)	-1.392 (0.943)	-1.352* (0.676)	2.705 (2.236)
Access 2	-0.023 (0.377)	0.007 (0.929)	0.007 (0.929)	0.169 (0.663)	4.691* (2.289)
Observations	137	115	87	112	63
Pseudo R	0.13	0.22	0.11	0.11	0.40
Log Likelihood	74.93	165.10	170.19	105.603	127.574

Standard errors in parentheses *p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01, ****p < 0.001.

In Model II (Table 6.1), the coefficient takes the positive value of 1.35 and is significant at the 0.001 level, confirming that scientific expertise plays a key role in accessing governing parties. Furthermore, in Model V (Table 6.1), when other variables are added, our estimate parameter takes the value 2.02 with a significance level at 0.001, confirming the strength of the tested association. Legal and economic expertise seems to play a less important role in access to governing parties. The role of scientific expertise is also confirmed in the models in which we tested whether there is an association between ‘expertise holders’ and access to regulatory bodies (Table 6.2). Again, we found that scientific expertise seems to be a robust factor. In the models where expertise is tested (Model II and Model V), we see that the coefficient takes values from 1.18 to 3.20 and its significance is at the $p < 0.001$ level, which means that the holders of scientific expertise may enjoy better access to the policy-making process. Moreover, we see that our group type estimate parameter is still significant ($p < 0.001$), taking the value -1.21 and suggesting that other energy interest groups better equipped with scientific expertise enjoy better access. In contrast, legal expertise was found to be significantly negatively associated with access. Considering the effect of expertise on access to the policy formulation process, we found a positive (1.13) and significant association $p < 0.05$ for access to political parties among Czech organizations. We, therefore, assume that expertise plays a more important role in Czechia than in the other analyzed countries. Oppositely, in the model testing the impact of expertise on access to the regulatory bodies, the estimated parameter for Czechia takes a negative value. However, the results are not statistically significant. In both the analyzed cases, it looks like the Hungarian organizations have the lowest access, both to the governing parties (Table 6.1, Model II) and regulatory authorities (Table 6.2, Model II), but yet again, the results are not statistically significant.

Professionalization resources

In contrast to the expertise variables measured in Model II, two of our professionalization variables (focus on organizational development and focus on human resources) seem to be insignificant in every tested model (Model III, Tables 6.1 and 6.2). Our prediction that the focus on organizational and human resources development would be positively associated with access to executive bodies (H2) was not supported. Especially in Czechia and Poland, the coefficient takes a positive value regarding access to governing parties in the models where the professionalization variable is tested. Yet, our data again suggest that Hungarian organizations struggle with lower access to policy-making bodies compared to their counterparts from Poland, Slovenia, and Czechia. However, the results are not statistically significant. Concerning access to regulatory authorities, we see a rather negative effect of professionalization on access in Czechia and Hungary.

Financial resources

We found that a focus on fundraising is positively associated with access to regulatory authorities and governing parties (Tables 6.1 and 6.2) in model five, where we ran the ordinal regression for all dependent variables and control variables. In terms of access to governing parties and regulatory bodies, we found EU funds to be insignificant for access to policy-makers.

6 Conclusions

The literature on GA and ecological and environmental movements, in general, has so far generally overlooked CEE (with some noticeable exceptions, see for example, Usacheva, 2012). This chapter partially fills this gap by providing a comparative analysis of CEE GA groups' access compared to other energy interest groups based on freshly obtained empirical data.

At the core of the scientific discourse on GA groups is the idea that they matter for climate and energy policy, as they offer added value both for the content of specific policies and their legitimation. They change the policy *milieu* within which political decisions are taken (Hood, 1995). Distinguishing between and among different kinds of groups operating within the climate and energy policy process is a natural step toward explaining their success in accessing policy-makers.

The results of our analysis confirm that the group type matters, especially as regards access to regulatory authorities. Other energy interest groups indicated easier access than GA groups in every analyzed country. The highest averages of the access variables can be observed in Poland and Slovenia (for both types of organizations), while lower values were obtained among the Hungarian and Czech groups. Regarding access to governing parties, again other energy groups by average gain easier access than GA groups in Czechia, Poland, and Slovenia. However, in this case, the results from Hungary were opposite, resulting in easier access of green groups to governing parties.

We also strongly drew on the resource-dependency theory, by examining to what extent selected resources (including various types of expertise, aspects of professionalization, and financial stability) condition access to executive bodies. We found that expertise is of crucial importance in accessing regulatory authorities as well as governing parties. Importantly, it relates only to scientific expertise. It is associated with a high level of complexity and innovation, which is required for all stakeholders involved in the green transformation. This needs to be seen in the context of the technologically underdeveloped power industry in most countries of the region. The present energy infrastructure remains, to a large extent, a relic of the past, very often dating back to the pre-1989 era. Decarbonization processes require totally different skills and knowledge than the traditional power generation methods known in CEE. Scientific expertise, focused on the new technologies, matters in accessing authorities and especially regulatory bodies.

Interestingly, focus on human resources and organizational development turned out to be entirely unimportant for interest groups seeking access to executive bodies. On the contrary, focus on fundraising is positively associated with access to regulatory authorities and governing parties. However, contrary to our expectations, EU funds do not translate into better access at all. This finding is important both for the Europeanization literature and real decision-making 'on the ground'. Financial (or any other) assistance stemming from Brussels creates beneficial conditions for the functioning of the GA organizations. Taking into account the high position of the 'greening economy' on the EU's agenda, it is understandable that supranational authorities care about the wide societal acceptance for the *climate crusade*. Equally understandable is the financial support for the GA, especially in these EU member states in which the energy mix remains highly carbon-dependent. Undoubtedly, such assistance serves to build public awareness, enhance knowledge distribution, and foster a generally positive atmosphere for pro ecological policy solutions. Nevertheless, our study has shown that funding alone is not an effective tool for GA in gaining access to the core of national executive decision-makers.

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7

INTEREST GROUP ACCESS IN CEE IN THE HEALTHCARE SECTOR

Brigitte Horváthová and Michael Dobbins

1 Introduction

For the functioning of any democracy, the voice of the civil society, its interests, its demands, and inputs are of utmost importance (Dahl, 1961). Besides political parties, interest groups serve as intermediators to voice the demands of society (Schmidt, 2010). However, weaknesses in interest intermediation systems have increased as recent research shows (Olejnik, 2020; Ost, 2011). Even though formal institutions exist, Crouch warns of a legitimation crisis if civil society grows weaker and impacts the political process less and less (Crouch, 2004). In political systems where the input function of organized interests is impaired, the main channel for citizens to raise their voices in the political process (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007) vanishes. This puts pressure on any democratic system since it ceases to be accountable to its citizens. Contrarily, in some cases, only certain groups may have access to the decision-making process, which is also problematic because it undermines the legitimacy of the system. In this context, especially the young Central and Eastern European (CEE) democracies might find it difficult to ensure legitimacy as civil society participation has traditionally been weak (Howard, 2003). As nearly three decades have passed since the transition, it is worth exploring how and whose interests find their way into the policy-making system. In a broader context, this is a crucial determinant of the quality of democratic regimes (Berg-Schlosser, 2004).

Only a few studies have systematically measured interest group influence per se (Dür, 2008b; Klüver, 2009; Mahoney, 2007), while even less research has been conducted on CEE (for exceptions see, e.g., Gallai, Döme, Molnár, & Reich, 2015). As numerous authors have already laid the foundation for measuring the influence of interest groups focusing on the western European countries, the European Union (EU), and the United States of America (USA) (Dür & De Bièvre,

2007; Mahoney, 2007), the innovation of this chapter lies in its comparative focus on CEE. However, as measuring influence is notoriously difficult, we stick to the analysis of access as a necessary precondition for influence. Many scholars have researched formal political institutions or party systems in CEE, but the analysis of the access of interest organizations still constitutes a gap. We seek to overcome this gap, first by exploring interest group structures in this region. Second, we evaluate and further develop already established theories on interest group access by creating a framework that fits the region under investigation and measuring access. Altogether, the analysis is guided by the following research question: What interest groups have strong access to healthcare decision-making processes in CEE and why? Access varies across policy sectors (Fraussen, Beyers, & Donas, 2015, p. 571). Thus, we expect relevant insights into one of the most relevant and understudied sectors of any society – namely healthcare policy. Altogether, CEE has gone through significant changes in its sociopolitical structures in the past century. After the collapse of socialism in 1989/90, all CEE countries faced the challenge of systemic transitions, including the rearrangement of healthcare sectors. Major reforms targeted the insurance system as well as primary medical care. Many of these decisions were made without including the civil society, i.e., interest groups (Rechel & McKee, 2009). Even though there have been many changes, the healthcare systems of CEE are ranked among the worst in the EU (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, 2019).

Nevertheless, healthcare represents a central sector vital for the social and economic development of nations. Healthcare policies directly affect individual citizens as well as doctors, hospitals, insurers, and employers (Immergut, 1992). Roberts (2009) argued that “political institutions are the key causes of [...] divergent paths” (2009, p. 306) in CEE healthcare. Moreover, he explains policy change as being mainly caused by different access opportunities by physicians: “[...] a penetrable single-party government and weak bureaucratic capacities allow physicians to capture the reform process and implement their preferred policies” (Roberts, 2009, p. 305).

Healthcare policy in CEE is especially interesting because these countries share similar starting positions but followed different paths after the transition. The focus of this chapter is on Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovenia. Poland is characterized by an increasing tendency toward coordination and centralization (Holman & Luneburg, 2012). The Czech Republic introduced a system of competing private insurers in the early 1990s; Hungary remained more conservative and moved toward a single national insurer, whereas Slovenia created a Bismarck-type social insurance system in 1992 with a single national health insurer and uniform legislation. These foundations have essentially remained in place ever since despite the limited privatization of certain services. These reforms have led to different institutional architectures (see Chapter 5 in this volume), funding mechanisms, and different performance levels. In Hungary, poor health outcomes are coupled with one of the lowest life expectancies in the

EU (Gaál, Szigeti, Csere, Gaskins, & Panteli, 2011), while Poland and Czechia also find themselves below the EU average (OECD/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, 2019). As the following section shows, there is a lack of analysis of what role interest groups play throughout these processes (see Roberts, 2009 for a partial exception). We address this gap and the need for a more in-depth analysis while enhancing our understanding of interest groups in post-communist healthcare.

2 Related studies, theoretical background, and hypotheses

2.1 Literature review

Healthcare is an ever-present issue in public policies due to its importance for society. It is also an area ripe with interest groups who have specific preferences and resources and vociferously aim to shape policy. Research on organized interests in healthcare can arguably be traced back to Alford (1975), who studied the barriers of ideology that hindered interest groups from reforming the US system. In her seminal study, Immergut (1992) analyzed the politics of national healthcare insurance from an institutional perspective. Lowery and Gray (2007) focused on American healthcare interest groups and discovered that their densities vary according to “changes in the sizes of constituencies” (2007, p. 18). Maarse (2006) analyzed western European countries and found that they have become more privatized over time. Heaney (2006) described how interest groups play mediating roles as dispersed actors in decentralized systems, rather than as central mediators that intervene in various policy disputes. Carpenter (2012) found that in developed countries healthcare policies are different in a number of dimensions with voters and decision-makers more likely to accept redistributive policies; therefore, it is consensus – rather than efficiency – oriented. Similarly, Contandriopoulos (2011) argues that decisions in healthcare are made mostly based on political preferences rather than science and evidence. They also found that despite a wide political consensus among stakeholders, a veto by a few could be a barrier in implementing coherent policy reforms (Contandriopoulos et al., 2018).

While some authors have comparatively explored developments in CEE healthcare (e.g., Björkman & Nemeč, 2013; Roberts, 2009; Watson, 2011), analyses of organized interests in healthcare in CEE remain scarce. To address this research gap, we analytically align this analysis with numerous studies that have comparatively explored the influence of interest groups (Bernhagen, 2012; Binderkrantz, Christiansen, & Pedersen, 2014; Dür, 2008a, 2008b; Klüver, 2011; Mahoney, 2007). As Dür and De Bièvre (2007) highlight, three bundles of factors – *institutional structures*, *interest group characteristics*, and *issue-specific factors* – may facilitate or inhibit interest groups trying to assert their demands. As for *institutional structures*, the frequency of elections, the political setup (e.g., presidentialism vs. parliamentarism), the economic setup (corporatism vs. pluralism), or federalist vs. unitarist political systems may mediate the impact of organized interests. In this

tradition, Kitschelt (1986) focuses on the interest intermediation structures and finds that the “political opportunity structure” (1986, p. 58), i.e., the resource configuration, institutional regulations as well as historical factors facilitate or impede the mobilization of social movements. Other authors (e.g., Mahoney, 2007) show that the context and scope of an issue have more weight than political institutions. Specifically, the greater the scope and ramifications of the policy, the less successful individual groups are due to the many actors involved. Moreover, opposing forces may be crucial, i.e., the more conflict-ridden an issue, the less successful organized groups may be.

Aizenberg and Hanegraaff (2020) analyzed the access of business groups to parliamentary hearings. Even though the literature identified this kind of access as unrepresentative for access in general, for the Netherlands, it appears to play an important role. Two factors affect access: the economy and political opportunities. The economy affects access negatively, i.e., the worse the economy, the more access business groups have. Political opportunities in terms of European integration also increased access significantly. The authors also identify a gap in the literature: most studies focus on the United States when it comes to access, while only a few deals with European interest groups (Aizenberg & Hanegraaff, 2020; Beyers, 2002, 2004; Binderkrantz, Christiansen, & Pedersen, 2015), not to mention CEE. Hence, we focus on types of access. Fraussen and Halpin (2016) provide an important study on access by investigating whether there is a bias when governments cooperate with certain groups, i.e., whether they exclusively usually cooperate with “privileged partners” (2016, p. 569). They measure whether the type of interest group, size of personnel, the structure of the organization (umbrella/nonumbrella), size of membership as well as age affect their access to advisory councils. The authors find that apart from age, these factors exert a significant impact on access. However, they did not find evidence for the organizational type.

Turning toward access and healthcare, a seminal study by Roberts (2009) showed that in healthcare “[i]nstitutions in short provide the points where interest groups – particularly physicians but latterly health insurers – can block change” (Roberts, 2009, p. 309). Hence, he urges scholars to analyze institutions as they not only block change but also enable windows of opportunity for political change (2009). To do so, governing parties must be accessible (hence the focus on governing parties), and the bureaucracy must be weak.

In this chapter, we focus exclusively on the characteristics of interest groups. Olson (1965) showed how their structure and focus may significantly increase or decrease their capacity for collective action. Diffuse interests (e.g., patients’ groups, consumer groups) may be more difficult to organize than concentrated interests (e.g., the medical profession, business associations). Hence, size may be critical; the bigger a group, the fewer individuals may take action to achieve common interests. Large organizations representing diffuse causes (e.g., patients’ rights, environmental issues) may suffer from the “free-rider” problem. This means that if public benefits emerge from collective action, not only individuals

who actively pursued them but also those who did not benefit. This may encourage individuals to “free-ride” on the efforts of a few. Smaller groups representing concentrated interests, therefore, may have an organizational advantage, as they are easier to organize, monitor, and control.

More recently, authors have focused on additional group-specific factors, which Olson’s theory arguably overlooks. These encompass material resources such as funds, staff, members, and volunteers, which may also increase their non-material resources such as public support, policy expertise (Bernhagen, 2012), and information on voters’ interests (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007). Besides financial resources and staff size, membership levels may also be a key variable affecting an organization’s legitimacy toward policy-makers.

Even though much research has been conducted on civil society, organized interests, and their assumed influence, Lowery (2013) suggests that much of it has generated few substantial findings. This may be due to the difficulties in measuring the sheer concept of influence, as it can only be defined in relation to power, i.e., controlling outcomes, resources, and actors (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007, p. 3). Hence, power relates to influence in terms of control over political actors. At the same time, actors are powerful when “they manage to influence outcomes in a way that brings them closer to their ideal points” (2007, p. 3). Thus, the effects of power rather than power itself are of relevance. The main difficulty is that these definitions assume clear preferences of the lobbying actors – hence, organized interests have an ideal point on legislative proposals and try to push legislation in that direction (Schneider & Baltz, 2003, p. 5). Often, however, there is no clear preference at the beginning of a political process, or preferences might even change due to interactions.

This presents scholars with major challenges. In this and Chapter 5, we therefore pragmatically bundle the strengths of qualitative and quantitative research. Specifically, we ask why certain interest groups succeed and others fail in gaining access to political systems. Access is a key indicator of political influence at a later stage of the policy process. If a group does not participate in the political process, this will likely diminish its ability to defend its interests (see Binderkrantz et al., 2014): “A crucial step in gaining influence is accessing political arenas” (Binderkrantz et al., 2015, p. 98). Thus, frequent interactions with the executive, bureaucrats, members of parliament, or regulatory authorities will enhance the position of organized interests (see also Eising, 2007). However, admittedly “access is not equal to having an influence on policy outcomes; access should be considered as a necessary, but not sufficient condition for influence” (Beyers, 2002, p. 587). Still, before exerting influence, groups must have access that can be defined as “the exchange of policy-relevant information with public officials through formal or informal networks” (Beyers, 2004, p. 213). Binderkrantz et al. (2015) also stress the “exchange of resources” among interest groups and decision-makers as: “[g]roups supply decision-makers with relevant resources and gain access and eventually political influence in return” (Binderkrantz et al., 2015, p. 98).

2.2 *Interest group-related factors: resources, expertise, professionalization, and longevity*

Building on the “*interest group approach* [emphasis in original]” (Beyers, Eising, & Maloney, 2008, p. 1110), we explore the factors mediating political access. First, organized interests have different material and nonmaterial resources spanning from finances, personnel, support of the public, outside input to information – they are anything that affects the possible course of action as well as strategies of their respective counterparts (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007, p. 5). According to Dür and De Bièvre (2007), more resources mean more influence over outcomes as well as access: “Some group resources, such as finances and staff, are relevant for access across all political arenas” (Binderkrantz et al., 2015, p. 96). Korpi (1985) speaks of power resources “such as human capital, i.e. physical capital and money”, that might not directly lead to influence. This is supported by McKay (2011) who argues that “business interests report significantly more success than public interest lobbyists, though business interests are no more likely than public interests to achieve their desired outcome” (McKay, 2011, p. 920). Woll summarizes such assets as “[...] financial resources, social capital, legal or technical expertise or other information that might be useful to policy-makers [...]” (Woll, 2007, p. 63). Actors, in our case interest groups, differ in many ways – they target different demands of policy-makers, i.e., the resources that policy-makers demand. If politicians remain dependent on the resources of interest groups, it is easier for them to access relevant institutions – information hence makes a great difference (see Bernhagen, 2012).

Hypothesis 1: *Organized interests well equipped with resources – financial¹ and personnel – will more likely enjoy privileged access than groups with weaker resources.*

Hypothesis 2: *Organized interests with specialized expertise – be it scientific, legal, economic, or impact-related – will more likely access the policy-making apparatus than interest groups with no specialized information.*

Closely related is the type of interest group. The literature provides various classifications of the types of organizations, e.g., organizations with corporative resources versus public interest groups, NGOs, and business interests (Beyers et al., 2008; Binderkrantz et al., 2014), sectional and cause groups. In line with Olson’s notion of concentrated interests, sectional organizations represent specific groups such as business associations of well-established and protected professions, doctors, and workers’ unions. These groups represent special interests that create concentrated costs and benefits for their supporters and are formed to obtain material benefits for specific groups (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013). Diffuse (Olson, 1965), civic, or cause groups (e.g., patients’ or healthcare advocates) are more idealistic, representing some belief or values as such. According to Lohmann, special interests generally win over diffuse interests as they have an advantage in terms of controlling or monitoring the actions of policy-makers (Lohmann,

1998). Hence, the organized groups are more successful in gaining access. Due to the collective action problem, individuals remain passive when it comes to nonexclusive public goods because they will benefit either way. Thus, they can “ride freely” on others’ efforts (Olson, 1965).²

Hypothesis 3: *Concentrated (sectoral, business) interests will more likely access the policy-making apparatus than diffuse (civic, cause-related) interests.*

Professionalization and longevity also may affect interest groups’ success in accessing institutions. Professionalization is often connected with Europeanization (Grabbe, 2001) and its impact on the domestic context (Pérez-Solórzano Borrágán, 2006). However, considering that the EU only has limited regulatory authority in healthcare, Europeanization is unlikely to be a mechanism for professionalization (see Riedel and Czarnecki in this volume). Rather, other learning processes, both domestic and perhaps also through international contacts, may enable organized interests to lobby more effectively (Pérez-Solórzano Borrágán, 2006).

Klüver and Saurugger (2013) specifically characterize professionalized organizations as having leadership with large resources, large membership, the claim to represent specific supporters, and the goal to influence policy outcomes as supporters wish. Furthermore, professionalized groups are organized and focus on the development of their personnel resources as well as on knowledge and the training of “technical skills” (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013, p. 187). Especially, the latter factor appears essential: “we define professionalization as the creation of positions, which require a high degree of qualification in terms of training and relevant working experience” (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013, p. 193). Lobbyists must undergo additional training, have relevant experience, and education levels. Hence, for the functioning and “strategic activities” both “operational” and “expert knowledge,” i.e., know-how is necessary (Carmin, 2010, p. 187). These “technical skills” are usually “acquired through professional training” (McGrath, 2005, p. 125; Staggenborg, 1988) and their need for development, i.e., training lobbyists.

Resources in terms of staff and finances might also play an important role in professionalization together with the age³ of an advocacy group (Maloney, 2008, p. 71). Material and human resources enable the continuous operations of the administrative apparatus of the organization: “In general, human resources refer to leadership, staffing, volunteers, and members. Professionalized organizations rely on paid staff to perform ongoing functions. Therefore, in these types of organizations, funding and staffing tend to be interrelated” (Carmin, 2010, p. 187). Thus, professionalization is strongly related to the mobilization of resources as it enables the “maintenance of the organization” (Staggenborg, 1988, p. 597) as well as its expansion.

Hypothesis 4: *The more professionalized an interest group, the more likely it will access the policy-making apparatus.*

Regarding longevity, with growing age, organizations might have created long-term bonds with political decision-makers (Carmin, 2010; Fraussen et al., 2015; Klüver & Saurugger, 2013). Furthermore, long-term organizational survival might have enhanced professionalization and, thus, strengthened an advocacy group. Put differently, the longer an organization lives, the more access it might enjoy (Kohler-Koch, Kotzian, & Quittkat, 2017). This may be of particular importance in the CEE context, as organizations that have survived the transformation process are likely to be highly viable and resilient (see Chapter 2).

Hypothesis 5: *The older an organization, the more likely it will access policy-makers.*

3 Research design

3.1 Data, variables, and operationalization

The dataset is based on a unique survey targeting healthcare interest groups in Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia ($n = 217$).⁴ The participants responded to a set of questions, which we now draw on to identify general patterns that may explain the effect of interest group-related factors on influence – measured by access as a proxy. Before turning to the ordinal logistic regressions to estimate how the identified factors affect interest group access – access to parliamentary hearings and access to governing parties – and whether there is a cross-national variation, we briefly describe the data.

Access was measured on a five-point scale. Access to the parliament or participation in parliamentary hearings ranges from “no participation” to “very high participation” while access to governing parties is measured from “extremely difficult” to “extremely easy.” To facilitate data interpretation, both variables were recoded into a three-point scale. Parliamentary access ranges from “no participation,” “low to occasional participation” to “high to very high participation” while access to governing parties spans from “(extremely) difficult access,” “sometimes possible” to “(extremely) easy access” (see Table 7.1 for details).

We also categorized interest groups as diffuse or concentrated. We coded all patients’ and healthcare advocacy organizations as diffuse, and professional doctors, trade unions, and employees as concentrated interests. Furthermore, we created the variable “employees” by simply adding values of the variables staff and volunteers. This enables us to grasp the number of people working on an issue regardless of their status. The variable was then logged in order to not distort the results. Expertise was operationalized in terms of relevance: in the survey, we broke down expertise into four areas – scientific, legal, economic, and impact – and asked organizations to assess their relevance for influence on a scale ranging from “unimportant” to “very important.” Here, we also created a compound variable based on the means of the four mentioned areas. Financial stability (Carmin, 2010) has five values (see Table 7.1). Professionalization is measured

TABLE 7.1 Summary statistics of the dependent, independent, and control variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Obs.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>St. dev.</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
<i>Dependent variables</i>					
Access to the parliament	175	1.53	0.76	1	3
Access to the government	134	1.70	0.76	1	3
<i>Independent variables</i>					
Concentrated/diffuse	217	0.43	0.50	0	1
Employees (logged for analysis)	217	143.30	1 364.68	0	20 000
Financial stability	170	2.81	1.50	1	5
Expertise	167	2.43	0.68	1	3
Networking with other groups	166	1.55	0.70	1	3
Cooperation with other groups	175	2.10	0.63	1	3
Development focus	170	2.46	0.60	1	3
Members (logged for analysis)	217	28 960.99	342 678.20	0	5 012 008
Age (logged for analysis)	215	22.14	17.31	1	156
<i>Control variables</i>					
Type of the interest group	217				
Country	217				
Czechia	68				
Hungary	53				
Poland	46				
Slovenia	50				

Notes: Coding of parliament access variable: 1 = no or low participation, 2 = occasional participation, 3 = high or very high participation. Coding of governing parties access variable: 1 = extremely difficult or difficult, 2 = sometimes possible, 3 = extremely easy or easy. Coding of type of interest group: 0 = diffuse, 1 = concentrated. Coding of employees: the row total of volunteers and staff; for the analysis the value was added 1 and subsequently transformed into a logarithmic scale. Coding of financial stability: 1 = stable for less than 1 year, 2 = stable for 1–2 years, 3 = stable for 3–5 years, 4 = stable for about 5 years, 5 = stable for more than 5 years. Coding of expertise: 1 = unimportant, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = very important. Coding of networking: 1 = no, 2 = somewhat, 3 = very much. Coding of cooperation: 1 = never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = frequently. Coding of development focus: 1 = much less or less than 10–15 years ago, 2 = same as before, 3 = more or much more than before. Coding of members: the row total of individual, firm, and institutional members; for the analysis, the value was added 1 and subsequently transformed into a logarithmic scale. Coding of age: age as of 2020. Coding of the type: 1 = business interests, 2 = employees, 3 = trade unions, 4 = patients, 5 = doctors/professionals. Coding of country: the variable was transformed into a numeric variable with 1 = Czechia, 2 = Hungary, 3 = Poland, 4 = Slovenia.

first based on cooperation with others: interest groups reported whether they cooperate with other groups in terms of representation on advisory boards, joint statements, and joint political strategies (scale 1–3). These variables were aggregated based on their arithmetic mean. The variable “focus” is composed of focus on organizational development, focus on human resource development, fundraising, evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness, and strategic planning as

opposed to 10–15 years ago (Maloney, 2008).⁵ Furthermore, the increase or decrease of networking with like-minded organizations abroad might affect access (scale 1–3: no networking, increased somewhat, and increased very much). The last professionalization measurement targets the amount of members in an organization (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013) be it either individual, firm, or institutional members, also transformed into a logarithmic scale. Finally, we collected data on the founding year, which we then transformed into the age of the variable as of 2020. We also control for country and type of organization.

3.2 Method and descriptive overview

To obtain valuable information on the ordinal nature of the dependent variable “access,” we use ordered logit regressions (Eising, 2007; Kohler-Koch et al., 2017; McKelvey & Zavoina, 1975). As the dependent variable is ordinal, this method is most suitable to fully exhaust the potential of the data. Collinearity was tested with the Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient: our dependent variables indeed correlate but do not raise significant multicollinearity issues. Most estimates were highly significant. There is a relatively strong correlation between the number of members and the age of the organization. This is not surprising as with the rising age, organizations can acquire more members.

We collected 217 responses with a rather similar country distribution. The majority of respondents represent diffuse interests (nearly 60%) and more than 40% concentrated interests, while this distribution also applies for each country – apart from Hungary, where it is vice versa. Figure 7.1 describes organizations by type. Here, the distribution is quite similar for each country with the difference that more than 50% of responses came from patients’ organizations while less than a third come from medical professionals. The survey data suggest that the perceived influence of interest groups is rather high in all four countries (see Table 7.1 for the summary

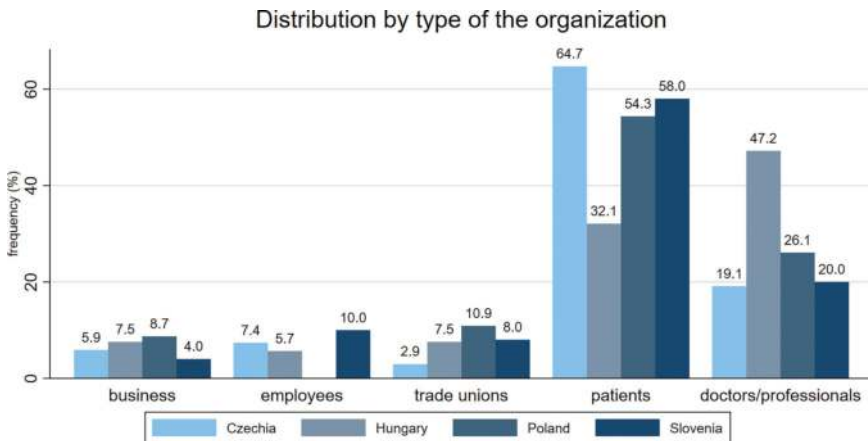


FIGURE 7.1 The type of organization by country.

statistics). Moreover, 50% of the sample organizations suggest that they have more or much more influence now compared to 10–15 years ago while only fewer than 20% suggest the opposite. The majority of Czech organizations report growing influence in the past 10 – 15 years (69.6%), while Polish and Slovenian organizations are less optimistic, but many still report no change or growth in their influence. Most Hungarian organizations, however, report during the same period either that their influence has been waning (31.4%) or stagnating (34.3%) (see Figure 7.2).

We analyze the dependent variable access with respect to access to the parliament (Figure 7.3) and governing parties (Figure 7.4). It is striking that the Hungarian and Slovenian sample organizations report in 85% and 73% of cases, respectively, no to low participation in parliamentary hearings while this is the case for only slightly more than one-third of Polish interest groups (see also Chapter 5 in this volume). Nearly two-thirds of Polish organizations report occasional or high to very high parliamentary participation. In Hungary, this pertains to 15% of the sample. Regarding access to governing parties the sample of Hungarian organizations report (extremely) easy access (31.6%) while in Slovenia only 13% enjoy (extremely) easy access to governing parties.

Turning toward the aggregate variable of expertise,⁶ there is a striking variance among groups in our sample of individual countries (Figure 7.5). Slovenian healthcare organizations appear to be most concerned about information as more than two-thirds (70%) regard it as very important followed by Hungarian organizations with nearly two-thirds (64%) opposed to only nearly 30% in Poland.

Regarding financial stability, only 5% of Slovenian organizations are stable for less than one year, while financially unstable organizations in Czechia, Hungary, and Poland account for a quarter of the sample. Contrarily, while two-thirds of Slovenian organizations claim to be financially stable for more than five years, our highest value on the scale, this only pertains to 10%–15% of organizations in the remaining countries.

The professionalization variables include the focus on organizational development, human resources, financial resources, evaluation as well as planning

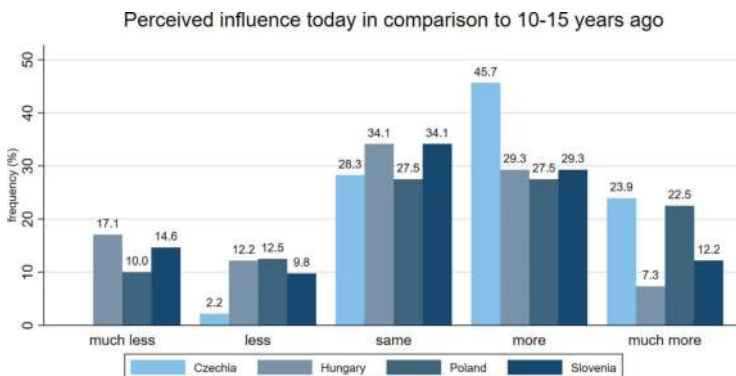


FIGURE 7.2 Perceived influence by country.

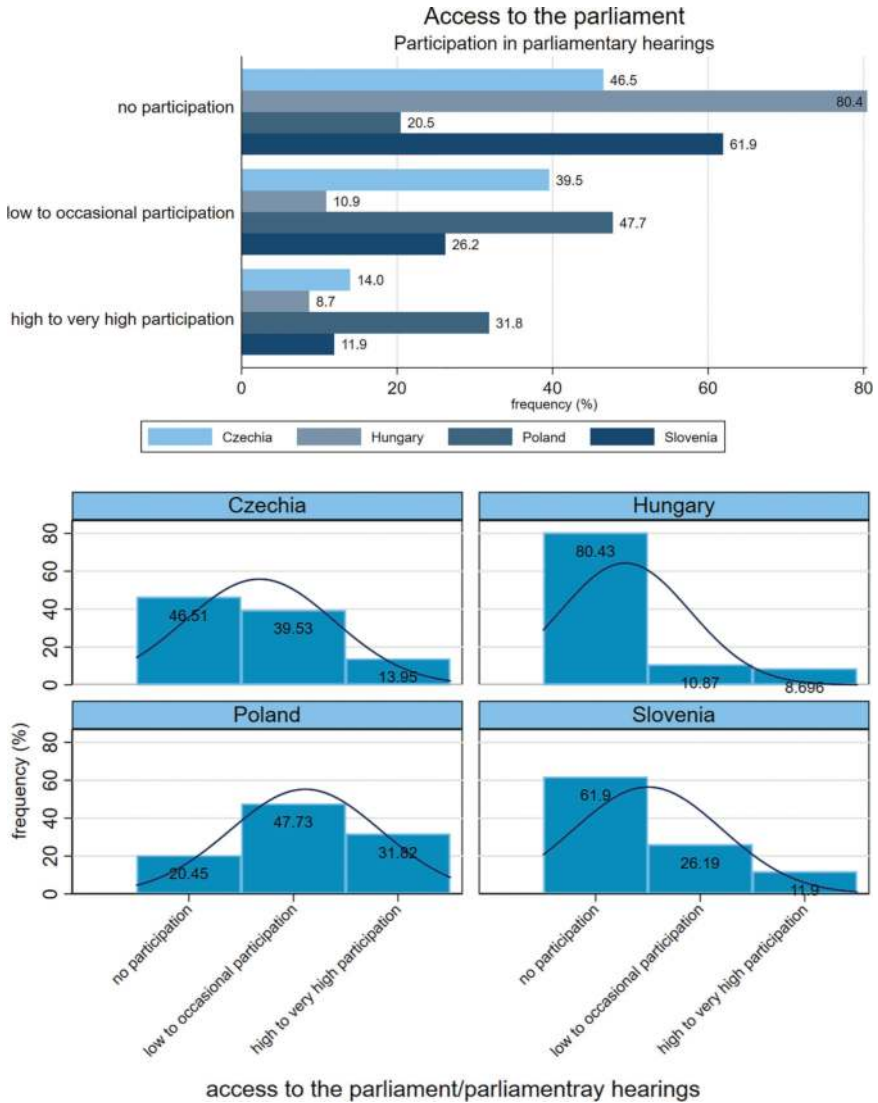


FIGURE 7.3 Participation in parliamentary hearings/committees by country.

compared to 10–15 years ago. “Organizational focus” is similarly high across the samples in all three countries (Figure 7.6). The focus on human resources, however, varies slightly across countries: in Slovenia, 70% of organizations claim to focus more or much more on human resources than in the past, while Hungarian organizations report no major changes. Organizations increasingly monitor their development everywhere except Hungary, where more than 50% of interest groups report no major changes. Finally, strategic planning is also of the highest relevance, while again, but Hungarian organizations seem to be less concerned about this aspect.

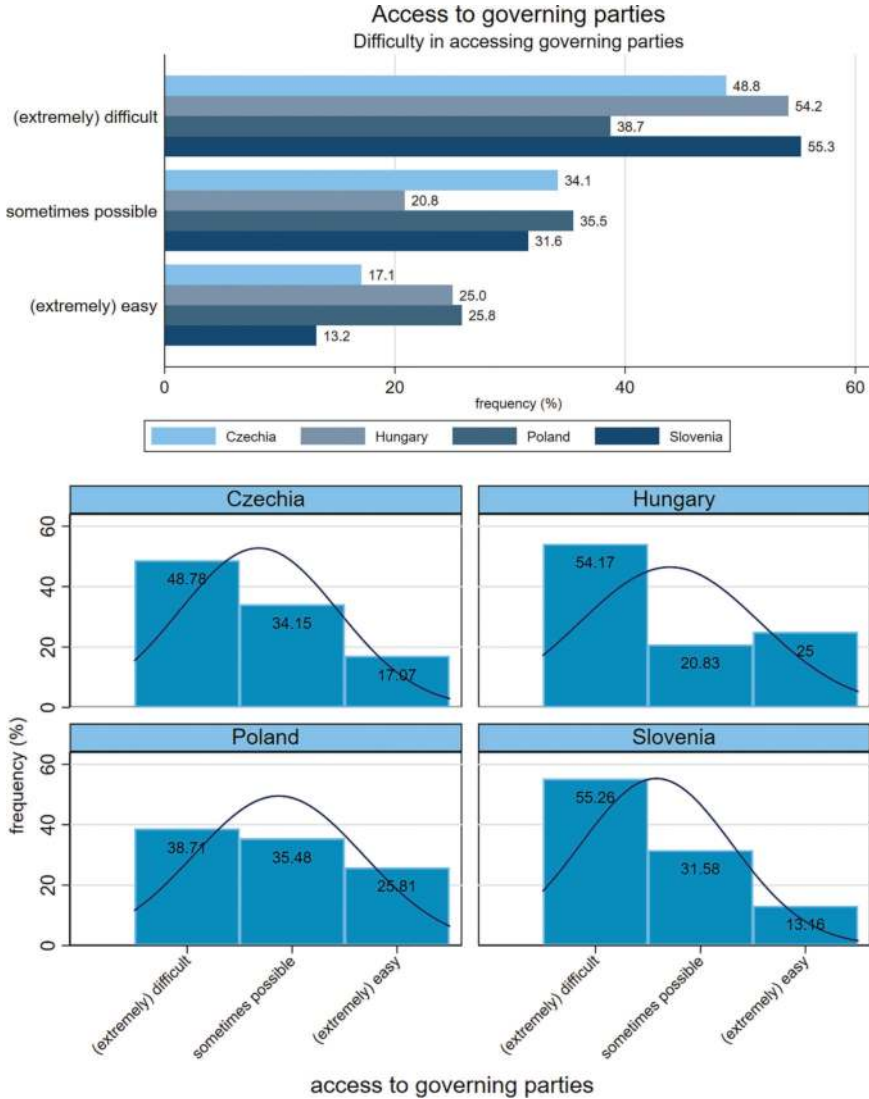


FIGURE 7.4 Level of difficulty when seeking access to governing parties by country.

For the regressions, we aggregated these indicators into a new mean-based variable “organizational focus” (for more details see the part on operationalization). We proceeded similarly with the variables “cooperation with other interest groups” in representation on advisory boards, in joint statements, and joint political strategies (Figure 7.7). There is noticeable variation regarding advisory boards: while for all countries the mean is “occasional” cooperation, Slovenian organizations appear to cooperate more often than the remaining countries. For cooperation on joint statements with other groups, the same distribution applies

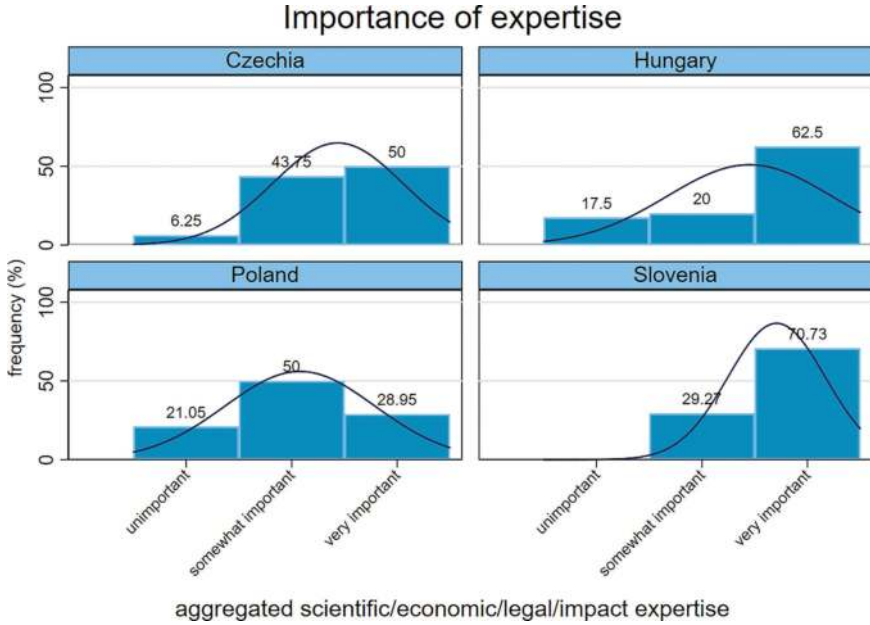


FIGURE 7.5 Expertise by country on average.

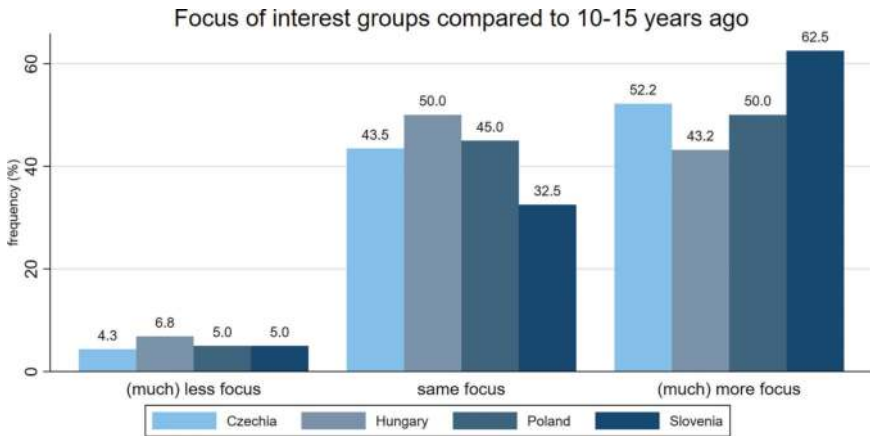


FIGURE 7.6 Aggregated focus of interest groups in the sample.

with the exception that Polish organizations appear to cooperate in this manner more “frequently” (46%), followed by Slovenian organizations (36%). Regarding strategies in our samples, strikingly 50% of Czech organizations “never” cooperate with others, while nearly a third of Slovenian organizations cooperate “frequently.” Apart from Czechia, “occasional” remains the mean response. The compound variable shows that Polish and Slovenian organizations cooperate

the most, while in Czechia a quarter cooperates “never.” Finally, on average, more than 52% of organizations have not increased networking (in Poland 61% opposed to 45% in Hungary) while healthcare organizations in Slovenia and Hungary increased networking “very much” or “somewhat” in approximately 54% of the cases (Figure 7.8). Slovenia hence appears to have the most professionalized interest groups in our sample.

The age of an organization might also affect its ability to access relevant institutions. Nearly all surveyed organizations emerged after the transition. However, some are even older (Figure 7.9), i.e., one foundation peak is in 1990/91, another one in 2006/07 probably in turn to the EU accession in 2004, and another finally, after 2009 (for more on longevity and foundation rates see Chapters 2 and 3).

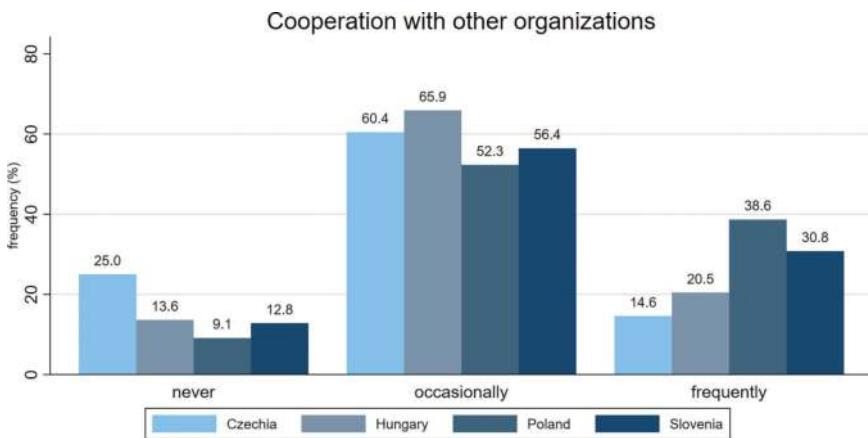


FIGURE 7.7 Aggregated cooperation of interest groups in the sample.

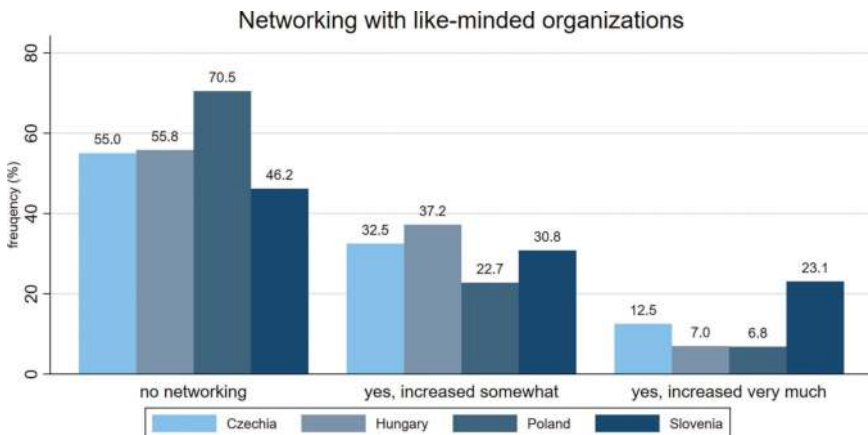


FIGURE 7.8 Increased networking for influence on national legislation.

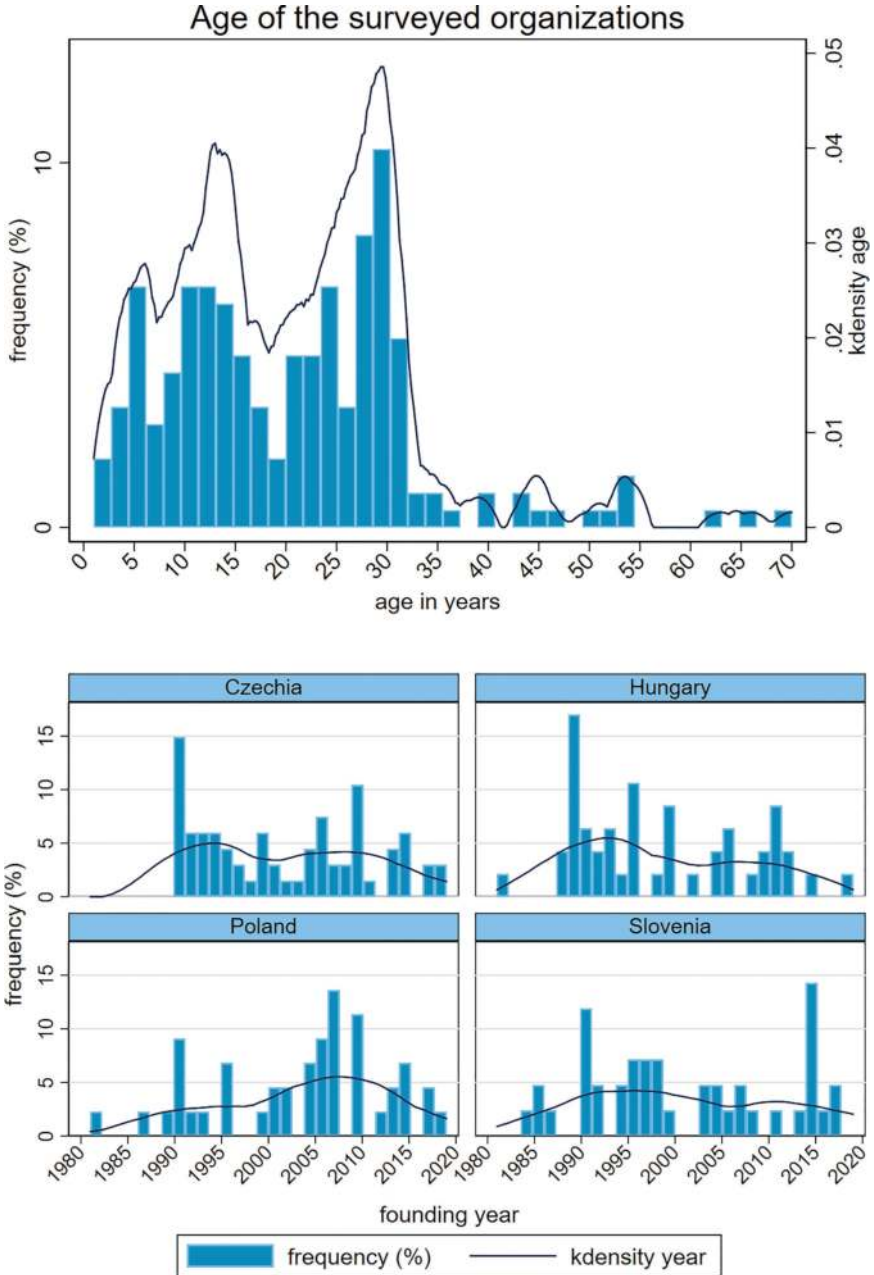


FIGURE 7.9 Age of the sample organizations.

4 Results

Tables 7.2 and 7.3 summarize the results of the stepwise regression – variables were added gradually to test how the coefficients change.⁷ However, as different models were tested, the results seem to go in the same direction. To facilitate the interpretations, we draw on probabilities, where some parameters are set to specific values while the others are kept at their means. We focus both on the overall prediction levels of factors and country-specific differences. Considering resources, first, financial stability appears to have a negative effect on the access to parliamentary hearings in our samples (Figure 7.10). The number of employees that was logged to prevent distortion due to extreme values, on the contrary, has a positive effect on participating in parliamentary hearings and committees, i.e., access to the parliament (Figure 7.11). However, the confidence intervals become wider as the number of employees rises – this is because there are only a few organizations with very many employees.⁸

The sample data show that the more employees, the greater the likelihood of access to the parliament. When considering individual countries, the number of employees appears to facilitate access to the Polish parliament the most. This, however, cannot be confirmed for access to governing parties. Regarding the effect of financial stability on parliamentary access, it counterintuitively appears that the financially stronger an organization, the weaker its access to the parliament. Hence, financial resources do not seem to enhance parliamentary access. Regarding access to governing parties, our hypothesis must also be rejected. Altogether, the data point toward confirming H1 regarding the impact of the number of employees on parliamentary access but not on the access to governing parties in the sample. Finances counterintuitively prove to have a negative effect on accessing the parliament and a positive effect when accessing governing parties. This, however, is not significant in the multivariate model, only in the univariate model, and hence cannot be confirmed. In the first case, therefore, our findings are in line with the result of Baumgartner et al. (2009) that financial resources do not automatically lead to success.

Expertise appears to have a positive effect on access, i.e., participation in parliamentary hearings: groups that regard expertise as very important are more likely to obtain access, but the results are not significant. For governmental access, this effect is confirmed only in the univariate model. Also contrary to our hypothesis, we find that concentrated groups neither enjoy privileged access to the parliament nor to governing parties. This variable appears to have a negative effect: the more concentrated, the weaker the access. However, the results across our models are not statistically significant.

Another set of factors, i.e., professionalization, might also affect the capacity of interest groups to access relevant institutions. The first component

TABLE 7.2 Ordinal logistic regression: access to the parliament

	<i>Model 1a</i>	<i>Model 2a</i>	<i>Model 3a</i>	<i>Model 4a</i>	<i>Model 5a</i>	<i>Model 6a</i>
<i>Access to the parliament</i>						
Concentrated/ diffuse	-0,11 (0,54)					-0,84 (0,77)
Czechia (ref. category)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)
Hungary	-1,28** (0,49)	-1,44** (0,54)	-1,61** (0,61)	-2,02** (0,69)	-1,50* (0,64)	-2,44** (0,75)
Poland	1,27** (0,42)	1,35** (0,47)	1,60** (0,51)	1,10* (0,55)	1,24* (0,51)	1,49* (0,59)
Slovenia	-0,52 (0,43)	-0,38 (0,54)	-0,55 (0,49)	-0,86 (0,55)	-0,44 (0,54)	-0,15 (0,65)
Business groups (ref. cat.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)
Employees groups	1,18 (0,92)	0,70 (0,96)	0,38 (1,00)	0,91 (1,28)	0,44 (1,16)	0,12 (1,39)
Trade union groups	-0,14 (0,86)	-1,11 (0,94)	-1,69+ (1,02)	-0,82 (1,33)	-1,92+ (1,17)	-1,59 (1,41)
Patient groups	-0,17 (0,81)	-0,89 (0,73)	-0,97 (0,81)	-0,67 (1,11)	-1,43 (0,97)	-2,42+ (1,42)
Doctors / professionals	-0,30 (0,71)	-0,77 (0,75)	-1,09 (0,83)	-0,81 (1,13)	-1,58 (0,98)	-0,96 (1,15)
Employees (logged)		0,27* (0,10)				0,27* (0,13)
Financial stability		-0,17 (0,13)				-0,46** (0,18)
Expertise			0,46 (0,29)			0,32 (0,35)
Networking				0,07 (0,30)		0,09 (0,32)
Cooperation				1,14** (0,37)		1,16** (0,38)
Development focus				-0,53 (0,36)		-0,50 (0,37)
Membership (logged)				0,26** (0,10)		0,26* (0,11)
Age (logged)					0,03 (0,26)	-0,31 (0,32)
cut1	-0,15 (0,83)	-0,65 (0,83)	0,17 (1,08)	1,69 (1,53)	-1,42 (1,29)	-0,19 (2,13)

	<i>Model 1a</i>	<i>Model 2a</i>	<i>Model 3a</i>	<i>Model 4a</i>	<i>Model 5a</i>	<i>Model 6a</i>
cut2	1,66* (0,84)	1,32 (0,84)	2,04+ (1,10)	3,85* (1,58)	0,48 (1,29)	2,16 (2,15)
Observations	175	153	138	120	119	119
Pseudo R ²	0.114	0.148	0.152	0.213	0.135	0.267
Log likelihood	-154.80	-130.56	-117.64	-96.86	-105.82	-89.69

Standard errors in parentheses + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

TABLE 7.3 Ordinal logistic regression: access to governing parties

	<i>Model 1b</i>	<i>Model 2b</i>	<i>Model 3b</i>	<i>Model 4b</i>	<i>Model 5b</i>	<i>Model 6b</i>
<i>Access to governing parties</i>						
Concentrated/ diffuse	-0,62 (0,52)					-0,85 (0,78)
Czechia (ref. category)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)
Hungary	0,12 (0,51)	-0,21 (0,54)	-0,35 (0,59)	-0,39 (0,72)	-0,35 (0,65)	-0,50 (0,76)
Poland	0,62 (0,46)	0,10 (0,50)	0,17 (0,53)	-1,01 (0,68)	-0,21 (0,59)	-0,91 (0,68)
Slovenia	-0,23 (0,44)	-1,33* (0,57)	-0,85+ (0,49)	-1,50* (0,61)	-1,01+ (0,56)	-2,25** (0,81)
Business groups (ref. cat.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)	0,00 (.)
Employees groups	-0,09 (0,93)	0,22 (0,97)	-0,02 (0,95)	1,47 (1,46)	1,09 (1,19)	1,03 (1,60)
Trade union groups	-0,50 (0,98)	-0,32 (1,02)	-0,64 (1,01)	1,13 (1,70)	-0,24 (1,26)	0,62 (1,78)
Patient groups	-0,43 (0,84)	-0,02 (0,79)	-0,27 (0,77)	1,63 (1,34)	0,39 (1,03)	0,90 (1,70)
Doctors / professionals	-0,53 (0,78)	-0,40 (0,85)	-0,48 (0,84)	0,98 (1,38)	-0,33 (1,09)	1,14 (1,45)
Employees (logged)		0,12 (0,10)				0,13 (0,14)
Financial stability		0,31* (0,15)				0,27 (0,21)
Expertise			0,62* (0,30)			0,56 (0,37)
Networking				-0,52 (0,35)		-0,62+ (0,37)
Cooperation				1,47*** (0,41)		1,42** (0,43)

(Continued)

	<i>Model 1b</i>	<i>Model 2b</i>	<i>Model 3b</i>	<i>Model 4b</i>	<i>Model 5b</i>	<i>Model 6b</i>
Development focus				0,78 ⁺ (0,41)		0,81 ⁺ (0,43)
Membership (logged)				0,27 [*] (0,11)		0,17 (0,13)
Age (logged)					0,23 (0,28)	-0,11 (0,34)
cut1	-0,56 (0,86)	0,54 (0,92)	0,86 (1,06)	6,33 ^{**} (2,24)	0,34 (1,42)	6,64 [*] (2,85)
cut2	0,94 (0,86)	2,15 [*] (0,94)	2,39 [*] (1,08)	8,26 ^{***} (2,32)	1,88 (1,43)	8,70 ^{**} (2,91)
Observations	134	119	111	91	90	90
Pseudo R2	0.022	0.043	0.035	0.183	0.037	0.210
Log likelihood	-135.07	-117.98	-110.86	-77.73	-90.94	-74.57

Standard errors in parentheses ⁺ $p < 0.1$, ^{*} $p < 0.05$, ^{**} $p < 0.01$, ^{***} $p < 0.001$.

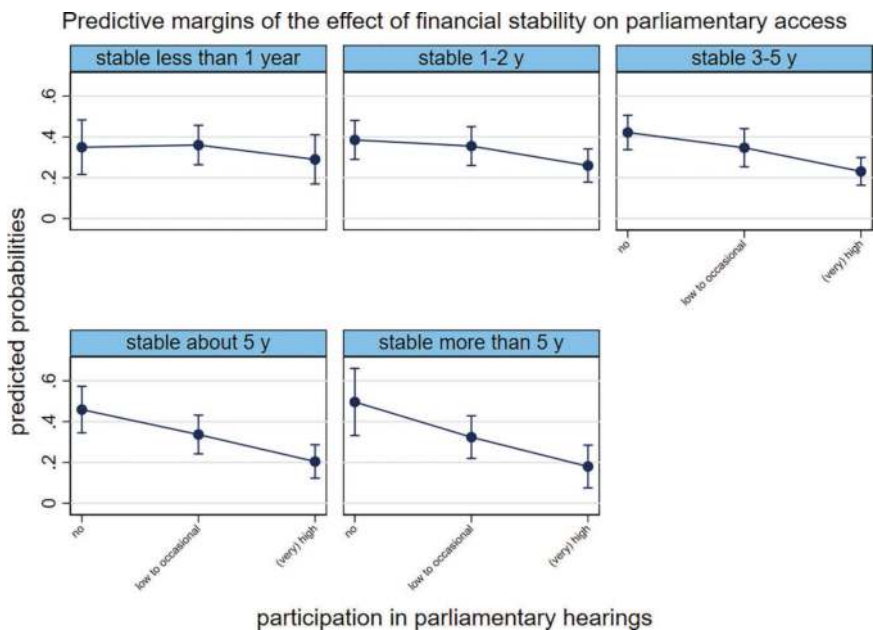


FIGURE 7.10 The negative effect of financial stability on the access to parliamentary hearings.

of professionalization is cooperation in terms of representation on advisory boards, joint statements and joint political strategies: according to our data, with higher levels of cooperation, groups are more likely to have a higher level of both parliamentary access and access to governing parties with a very significant effect.

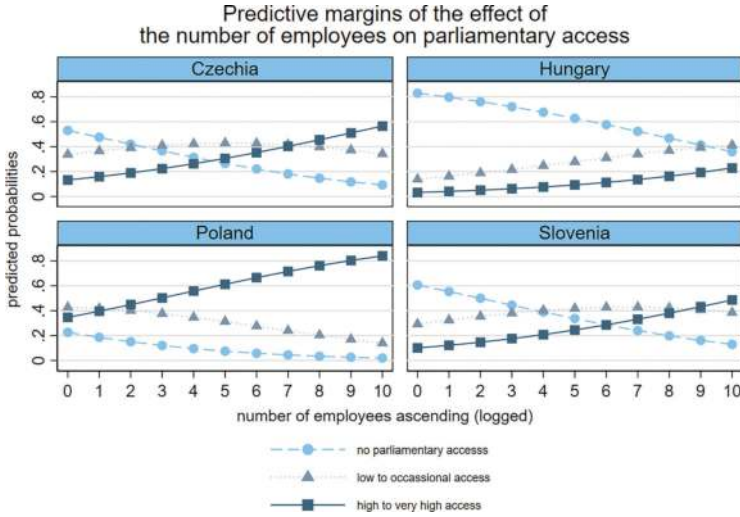


FIGURE 7.11 The positive effect of staff size on the access to parliamentary hearings.

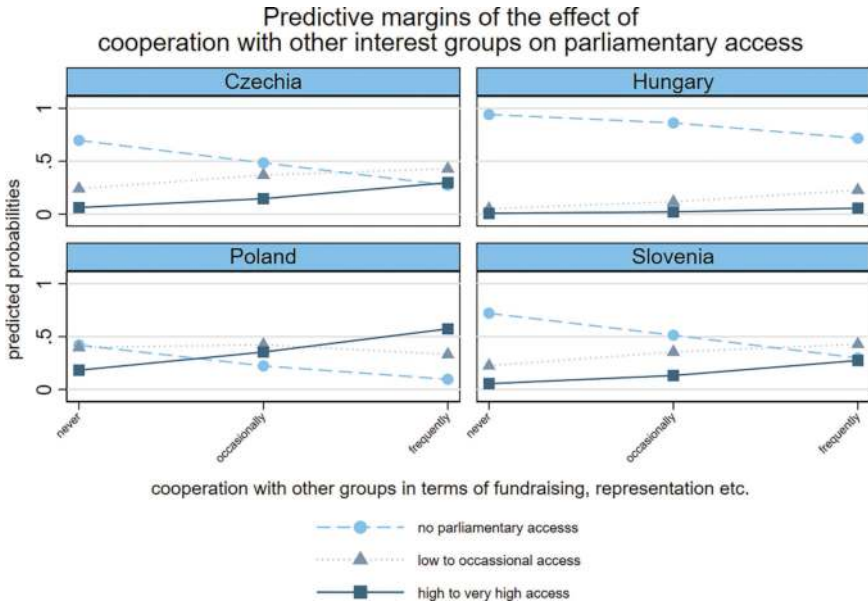


FIGURE 7.12 The positive effect of cooperation on the access to parliamentary hearings.

Figures 7.12 and 7.13 show that access is more likely when cooperation is stronger and vice versa: groups are more likely to experience difficult access when there is little to no cooperation between them. The second graph shows how access is likely to change with higher cooperation rates, especially in Poland. In

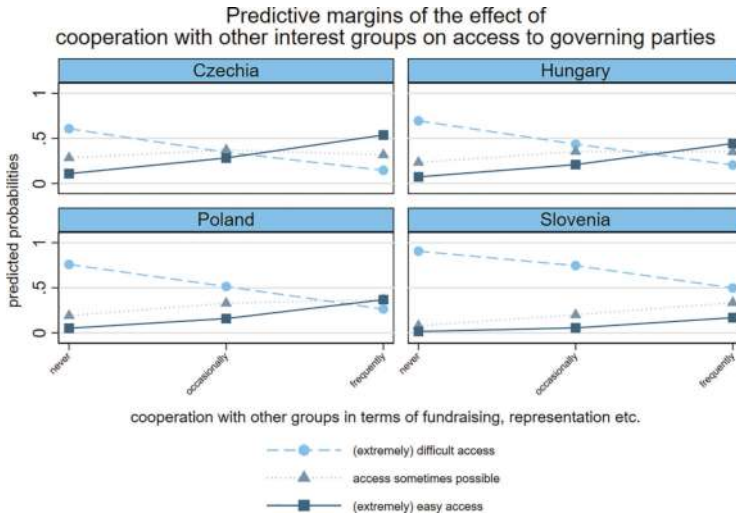


FIGURE 7.13 The positive effect of cooperation on the access to governing parties.

Hungary and Slovenia, the effect is somewhat weaker. Part of H4 is hence confirmed. Considering the effect of “focus” (on organizational development) on accessing the parliament, there is a negative effect, i.e., focus does not increase the likelihood of parliamentary access. Thus, the higher the levels of focus, the more likely access to the parliament drops. However, this negative effect is not significant and cannot be confirmed with certainty. By contrast, when accessing governing parties, “focus” is slightly significant (10%) with a positive effect; organizations focusing on their development are more likely to be successful in accessing governing parties. Hence, this part of H4 cannot be confirmed with certainty. Another hypothesized component of professionalization is networking; data show that networking with like-minded organizations does not affect parliamentary access. By contrast, networking has a negative effect on access to governmental parties. The trend thus seems negative despite the lacking statistical significance. Large membership in interest groups is also very likely to positively affect parliamentary access, i.e., the more members an organization has, the more likely it enjoys parliamentary access (significant). The finding is the most striking for Poland, where the trend toward the predicted probability of (very) high participation is more pronounced than for other countries (Figure 7.13).

The same applies to access to governing parties, but only in the univariate model, where the effect is positive and significant. As this trend is not confirmed when controlling for other factors, we cannot confirm that membership affects access to governing parties. Our data support H4 for every type of cooperation. Membership is significantly relevant only for parliamentary access while ‘focus’ is only slightly significant in the case of accessing governing parties. Theoretically, this makes sense as groups with more members represent a greater part of the society and, hence, are able to exert more pressure on politicians (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013).

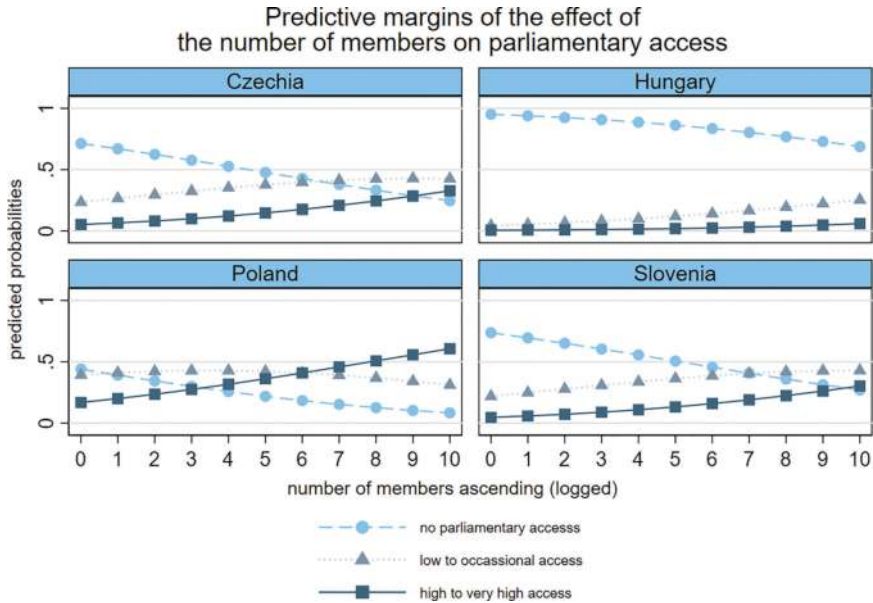


FIGURE 7.14 The positive effect of membership size on the access to parliamentary hearings.

Finally, does the age of organizations affect access? Our data show that access is not, or if at all negatively, affected by the age of the organization. However, this effect is not significant and cannot be confirmed with confidence as the estimation error is too high. Hence, Hypothesis 5 cannot be confirmed as the results are ambivalent and not robust. Even though secondary data support the relevance of a long-term relationship (Kohler-Koch, Kotzian, & Quittkat, 2017), our data are inconclusive.

5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we measured political access by means of the participation in parliamentary hearings or committees (parliamentary access) and political access to governing parties based on a sample of more than two hundred healthcare organizations in four post-communist countries. We explored and tested commonly theorized factors facilitating political access as a proxy for measuring political influence. Based on data from a unique large-scale survey, we analyzed the data with ordinal logistic regressions (Eising, 2007; Kohler-Koch et al., 2017), while taking the factors “resources,” “expertise,” “concentrated vs. diffuse interests,” “professionalization,” and “longevity” into account.

Our data show that resources (H1) are an important driving force for access. Human resources appear to facilitate both parliamentary access and access to governing parties. It is likely that more personnel can better monitor

the policy-making process and simultaneously enable the organization to engage more quickly due to the more efficient distribution of the work burden. Even though the theoretical literature emphasizes the significance of financial resources for lobbying success, the results do not show a link between financial strength and institutional access, at least to the parliament. We did observe an effect on accessing governing parties though. This might be related to lobbying regulations and electoral laws in the respective countries and should be re-evaluated with in-depth case studies.

We also found some evidence of the importance of expertise (H2). Despite its relatively weak statistical significance, the level of expertise and the ability to share it appear to be more important than finances, which is noteworthy from the perspective of democratic quality. This rather positive image of post-communist healthcare policy-making is also supported by the negative findings on concentrated (e.g., medical doctors) and diffuse interests (e.g., patients) (H3); both camps seem to have equal chances of accessing political institutions. Hence, there seems to be no major democratic imbalance as societal groups generally endowed with weaker organizational capacities are given a voice as well. Again, from the perspective of democratic quality, the insignificance of longevity (H5) means that there is no pronounced representation monopoly of older organizations, many of which existed under communism, as our analysis shows that younger organizations have an equal chance of being heard.

Regarding professionalization (H4), cooperation with other groups and membership increases the likelihood of institutional access, while the focus on organizational development and networking did not. Moreover, it appears to be of utmost importance that they have enough personnel to tend to day-to-day business and prepare relevant expertise. Especially in the healthcare sector, personnel, interorganizational cooperation, and to some extent expertise are essential for accessing political institutions as the policy area itself strongly demands both expertise and qualified personnel. Particularly encouraging for patients' organizations is that they have the same chance of being heard as professional organizations and that financial resources are not a prerequisite for access. Rather, organizations wishing to gain access need to cooperate and demonstrate strong membership support as more members facilitate greater success in institutional access.

Despite these relatively clear findings, our approach bears some limitations. First, the models convey a first assessment and are not necessarily generalizable to other policy areas and country contexts. The significance levels and confidence intervals posed an additional statistical limitation. Yet, even though they were low, the models proved to be robust, as the results were similar even in other models if not stated differently. Nevertheless, we have no means to test the accuracy of the data provided by organizations, as they are largely based on self-perception. Furthermore, we focused solely on direct strategies, and indirect ones, i.e., raising voice through media have to be considered as well (see Czarnecki in this volume). A larger sample would also add to the reliability of the findings. Thus, despite the notorious difficulties of interest group research

and the low number of interest groups in these countries, this study lays the groundwork for future research. For example, scholars should engage with case study methods to more systematically explore the causal mechanisms revealed in this study. Specifically, other scholars should explore exactly how the demands of different stakeholders are balanced, what institutionalized forms exist for collaboration between different stakeholders, and how individual stakeholder groups have shaped concrete healthcare reform endeavors in CEE.

Notes

- 1 This hypothesis warrants caution as scholars like Baumgartner (2009) find support that monetary resources do not automatically translate into success.
- 2 Interestingly, on the European level Bruycker, Berkhout, and Hanegraaff (2019) find opposing evidence to Olson's theory. Business interests are weak while civil society is strong especially on specific policy issues.
- 3 For more on longevity and its importance as well as detailed analysis, see Chapter 2.
- 4 The organizations were contacted based on a population ecology (see Chapter 3) created by means of public registries. More on the survey design can be found in Chapter 1 and the Annex in this volume.
- 5 Individually they were measured on a five-point scale (much less, less, the same, more, much more) and the compound variable was recoded to take values from 1 to 3: (much) less, the same and (much) more.
- 6 We asked about the importance of technical or scientific, economic, legal, impact assessment expertise/information on the influence on policies and created an aggregate variable.
- 7 Summary statistics are presented at the bottom of both tables. The log likelihood is indicated and the overall fit of the model is estimated by the log likelihood ratio Chi-Square test indicates that the models are highly significant. McFadden's R² test shows that the model explains 26.7% of variance for the model of government party access and 21% in the case of parliamentary access – for the models where all variables are included (Model 6a and 6b). The univariate models account for less variance. The Brant test was not significant in most of the models, only in the models 3b, 5b and 6b, hence making the ordinal logistic regression for the access to governing parties slightly inappropriate.
- 8 In general, the confidence intervals vary in a wide range with many of the models. We omit detailed information on confidence intervals for the sake of undisturbed readability. The same applies for specifications on significance.

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8

EXPLAINING INSTITUTIONAL PERSISTENCE AND CHANGE IN POLISH AND CZECH HIGHER EDUCATION FROM A STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVE

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1 Introduction

This chapter examines very different recent trends in Polish and Czech higher education (HE) while contributing to a broader discussion on organized interests in post-communist democracies. Previous research has highlighted how academic mobilization was instrumental in bringing down communism and facilitating the restoration of Humboldtian-style structures of academic self-governance (Dobbins, 2011; Junes, 2011; Kwiek, 2014). Indeed, both systems are characterized by numerous institutions to defend the integrity and independence of the academic profession. Throughout the 1990s, academia in both countries seemed very disinclined to any state intervention into HE, while in the 2000s and 2010s, both systems consolidated institutions of participative “academic democracy” with strong “internal” stakeholderism (Dobbins, 2014).

However, Poland has recently experienced a striking shift toward recentralization and power concentration, while the Czech system has largely remained embedded in its restored model of fragmented academic self-rule. How do we explain this divergent development, in Poland in particular? We move beyond simplified explanations that HE reflects a broader societal trend toward authoritarian nationalism in numerous Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries (Greskovits, 2015). Instead, we focus on two factors: (1) the configuration and strategies of organized academic interests vis-à-vis the state and (2) the state’s capacity to govern the sector. We argue that a combination of an increasingly strong state in Poland and fragmented interest organizations resulted in the centralization of HE, while a combination of a weaker state and much more consolidated stakeholders in the Czech Republic resulted in the persistence of preexisting policy arrangements. Specifically, we show that the national-conservative Polish government strategically played with the interests

of particular stakeholders and transformed the opportunity structures of academic organizations. Despite changes in the political landscape including the dominance of several reform-minded right-wing governments, Czech HE has remained almost unaffected. Internal stakeholders and institutions of “academic democracy” continue to dominate, whereby pressures and conflicts have evolved inside HE institutions rather than between the government and institutions.

We first look at research on HE interest groups before discussing Olson’s argument about diffuse and concentrated interests. Next, we provide a brief overview of Polish and Czech HE governance with a focus on stakeholder constellations, while highlighting their similar post-communist trajectory. We then explore the driving forces for their recent divergent development. Specifically, why was the Polish government able to impose a reform, which was by objective standards desirable (see below) but whose final outcome was largely rejected by the academic community? Following Olson (1965), we show that concentrated interests, in particular Polish university rectors, were able to forge tight alliances with state policy-makers, both of which were pushing for a centralization of HE and concentration of power (at the systemic and university levels). This arguably has undermined well-established institutions of academic stakeholderism.

In contrast, the Czech government has never been able to gain considerable power to steer the system and push through reforms. We show that three groups of internal stakeholders – rectors, academics, and students – were able to use their concentrated power, as firmly legitimized in HE legislation, to mobilize and mutually fight off attempts to reform institutional governance and even further consolidate some autonomous features of the system. Thus, while in the Czech Republic, an “internal academic alliance” has succeeded in preserving the status quo and weakened the position of the state, a “state-rector corporatist alliance” has evolved in Poland to the detriment of other actors and stakeholder democracy.

To show how these different models of “academic corporatism” have evolved, we rely on the process-tracing method (Bennett & George, 2005), drawing from numerous interviews with HE stakeholders (rectors, deans, professors, representatives of students’ associations, and managerial staff) and open questions in a survey of Polish and Czech HE interest organizations.

2 HE interest groups: a brief overview

HE stakeholders remain somewhat understudied from a comparative perspective. Considering the increasing number of individuals and organizations active in HE though, interest organizations have become an increasingly relevant factor in HE governance (see Tandberg, 2010 for the American context). Drawing on the classic interest group research (Schmitter & Streeck, 1999), Klemenčič (2012, 2014) distinguishes corporatist and pluralist systems. In the corporatist paradigm, the state engages with a limited number of intermediary associations often having

a representation monopoly. This may go hand-in-hand with an administrative funding arrangement for selected organized interests. Pluralist arrangements, by contrast, are characterized by a diverse array of organizations, who often compete with one another for access to state decision-makers. Membership is generally voluntary, and the state negotiates on an *ad hoc* basis with some groups.

Recently, Vukasovic (2018) provided a strong impetus to the study of HE stakeholders. She argues that political decisions regarding HE must increasingly be legitimized toward economic stakeholders, fee-paying students, tax-payers, and the electorate. Thus, various organized stakeholders are increasingly present on the institutional and system-level (Gornitzka & Maassen, 2000), as well as in supranational arenas (Jungblut & Vukasovic, 2013). Building on Klemenčič's analyses of student unions (2012, 2014), Vukasovic (2018) breaks down HE stakeholders into three key groups: organizations representing students, academic staff, and university management. Academic staff organizations are essentially trade unions with high autonomy and a strong professional ethos (2018, p. 420). HE institutions also collectively assert their interests at different levels through rectors' conferences and alliances of university groups (e.g., polytechnics, research-oriented universities, private universities, etc.). Finally, student or academic unions may also be potent actors in shaping HE policy. In some cases, their participation may be merely symbolic, whereby in others, they actually may function as veto-players or co-agenda setters.

Besides the institutional settings, factors inherent in interest groups themselves may be decisive for influence. Olson (1965) shows how the structure and focus of interest groups may impact their means for collective action. Concentrated interests (traditionally, business groups, but in our case, also university rectors or lobbyists for certain groups of universities) generally have relatively homogenous preferences and seek concentrated benefits. Diffuse interests (e.g., here, universities academics as a whole or student lobbies) may be more difficult to organize, because they often lobby for nonexclusive public goods (e.g., better working conditions for academic staff). Accordingly, size may be critical: the bigger a group, fewer the individuals taking action to achieve common interests. Olson (1965) argues that individuals may, therefore, "free-ride" on the efforts of few members of diffuse groups. Smaller, better-consolidated groups may have an organizational advantage as they are easier to organize and monitor. Organizations involved in the implementation of (state-defined) policies may also be privileged by their crucial role in the policy cycle.

Against this background, numerous questions emerge for the study of HE stakeholders in Poland, the Czech Republic, and beyond. First, is the state even actively involved in policy-making? And, if not, which organized interests are dominant? How do more diffuse interest groups such as the academic profession or students overcome collective action dilemmas and wield clout? Which groups are insiders or outsiders in the policy process, and how has interest intermediation evolved over time?

3 The evolution of Polish and Czech HE and the stakeholder landscape from the historical perspective

3.1 Poland

The history of Polish HE is particularly turbulent and characterized by a dual legacy of both academic self-governance and, since the communist phase, pervasive state regulation. Numerous Polish institutions are among the oldest in Europe, e.g., the Jagiellonian University of Cracow (1364). However, the partitions of Poland essentially terminated Polish academics for more than a century. With the reestablishment of Poland in 1918, a governance model based on Humboldtian principles of academic self-rule was reintroduced, only to be eradicated by Nazi occupiers 20–25 years later.

Nevertheless, remnants of academic self-rule persisted even after Poland succumbed to Soviet control. While the academic sector remained heavily centralized and subject to political repression and bureaucratic command-and-control, Polish academics had more freedom in teaching and research than their Soviet, Czechoslovak, or Romania counterparts (van Beek, 1995). Some contacts with western academic peers were tolerated, and Marxist–Leninist ideology was somewhat less intrusive than in other CEE countries.

After 1989, public HE essentially was realigned with a Humboldtian-type model of academic self-rule (Kwiek, 2014; for private HE see Duczmal, 2006). This “return to history” logic was reflected in the 1990 HE Act that gave public universities extensive autonomy to shape their organizational structures, financial, personnel, and enrolment policies. The historical trauma of partition, occupation, and Soviet dominance was a major leitmotiv of Polish academics’ struggle to preserve their institutional autonomy (van Beek, 1995). The 1990 Act devolved decision-making to individual faculties and chairs (World Bank, 2004) while concentrating power within decentralized self-governing bodies. This severely diminished the power resources of the state, university management, and other external stakeholders.

Although the state continued to fully (under)fund public universities, internal stakeholder structures were essentially akin to an “academic oligarchy” (Clark, 1983). Academic senates were modeled after national parliaments, whereby leading academics (with the title of habilitated doctor) accounted for approx. 90% of the representation. Academics also rapidly mobilized to collectively assert themselves at the state level. For example, the General Council for Science and Higher Education (*Rada Główna Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego*) was created as a state-licensed body to represent the broader academic community and uphold its grip over policy design (OECD, 2006a, p. 77). The Polish Rectors’ Conference (KRASP) also emerged as an advisory body to politically advocate the narrower interests of university rectors. Thus, while internal university operations were based on internal “stakeholder democracy,” academics largely succeeded in gaining a monopoly over political interest intermediation,

resulting in a “hyper-corporatist system” characterized by academic stakeholder dominance.¹

However, faced with large-scale deindustrialization and unparalleled educational expansion (Kwiek, 2014), the Bologna Process provided Poland a window of opportunity to critically assess the viability of largely unregulated academic self-rule. A State Accreditation Commission (*Państwowa Komisja Akredytacyjna*) was established in 2001 to evaluate the quality of study programs based on relatively strict minimal standards. Again, here though, high-ranking academics turned the Commission into an additional bastion of academic power. Its members are appointed by the Minister of Education (from 2006, Minister of Higher Education and Science) but have consistently been high-ranking academics, upon nomination by (equally academic-dominated) academic senates and the General Council. Despite the introduction of some state-control and market-oriented instruments in the 2000s (Dobbins, 2014), the predominance of academic stakeholders in academic decision-making and state-licensed bodies remained extremely high by European comparison, whereby the power of the government and external stakeholders was very low (Shaw, 2018).

3.2 *The Czech Republic*

The roots of the Czech HE can be traced back to the 14th century with the establishment of Charles University in 1348, the oldest institution of higher learning in CEE. Despite increasing Czech influence after the mid-19th century, Charles University remained largely rooted in German institutions of Humboldtian inspiration. Core features were strong university autonomy, a weak central (university management) level as well as the so-called “federation of professorial chairs” (Sadlak, 1995, p. 46) with formidable blocking power. However, after World War II, Czech HE succumbed to communism: academic freedom and institutional autonomy were dismantled, while mainly political appointees took over university and faculty management. Research was almost entirely transferred to the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (established in 1953), and most teachers were cut off from international networks.

Amid the collapse of communism, policy-makers were extremely quick to reinstate Humboldtian university self-governance, bolstered by internal “democratic” structures, external buffer organizations, and strong student participation (Dobbins, 2011). Procedural and substantive autonomy was devolved to professorial chairs, which transformed the once hierarchical system into a highly fragmented one. The retreat of the state was reflected in the 1990 HE Act that granted universities control over teaching and research programs as well as student numbers, admission criteria, leadership positions, and all internal structural decisions (*ibid.*). Rectors were also chosen by fellow high-ranking academics via academic senates and shared governance authority with them. Both academics and students were thus heavily represented in faculty and university senates.

In fact, de Boer and Goedegebuure (2003, p. 219) spoke of the “abolition of government.” Any policy change required the consensus of the Czech Rectors’ Conference and Council of Higher Education Institutions (*Rada vysokých škol*), which consisted exclusively of academics, excluded external stakeholders and served to represent academic senates and faculties. The Council of Higher Education Institutions also comprised students, and subsequently, a student chamber of the Council was established, representing students’ interest vis-à-vis not only academics but also the state. Thus, altogether, the post-1989 trajectory was swift and dramatic, as far-reaching university autonomy was reinstated practically overnight and facilitated by a widespread belief among politicians that HE institutions would be able to transform themselves from within (Šebková & Hendrichová, 1995). Instead of initially seeking a more pragmatic relationship with the state, the academic community rapidly mobilized and consolidated to protect itself from state intrusions, both from within and outside.

Yet the Czech (and Polish) HE system was also confronted with an enormous quantitative challenge, namely its massification. Unlike in Poland, expansion primarily took place in the public system, resulting in drastically increasing student numbers (File & Goedegebuure, 2003). The 1998 HE Act, therefore, aimed to increase the state’s leverage to steer the system. However, in effect, all state institutions² were fully transformed into public bodies with a legal ability to manage their own assets and properties, thus effectively separating them from the state. Within HE institutions, the powers of rectors were strengthened vis-à-vis individual faculties and other subunits. While faculties initially acted as independent legal entities, the 1998 Act cemented HE institutions as single legal entities. It also introduced a Board of Trustees, comprising of representatives from public life, municipal, and regional authorities and the state administration. However, its role was rather symbolic in comparison with the rector or the academic senate. The position of students was also substantially upgraded, as the Act specifically prescribed that they occupy a minimum of one-third and a maximum of one-half of senate seats on both faculty and university levels.

These foundations laid in the early 1990s remained remarkably stable in the 2000s – despite the Bologna Process and the reform ambitions of the new right-wing government coalition. Flanked by the 2006 OECD Thematic Review calling for sweeping changes in HE (OECD, 2006b), the so-called “White Book on Tertiary Education” (Matějů, 2008) provided strategic guidelines for drafting new HE legislation. It aimed to “open up” HE institutions, giving those who have a stake in the system – employers, regions, graduates, etc. – a greater say. It also anticipated more power for the state to steer the whole system. The document also touched upon a very complex issue of the system’s structure. The existing system with the majority of institutions (the majority with respect to student numbers) having an ambition for research and high academic profile was not able to meet the increasingly diversified needs of students on the one hand, and the labor market on the other.

However, partly due to political instability, the underlying policy and governance patterns only incrementally changed (Pabian, 2008), and the institutional privileging of academic interests served to uphold the Humboldt-oriented system. Above all, the lack of executive steering hindered measures that require transfaculty coordination. Thus, Czech HE remained characterized by a strong professoriate, collegial control, academic dominance of representative bodies and academic senates and a lack of entrepreneurial management structures.

4 Explaining policy divergence

We now, first, examine the striking policy shift toward centralization in Poland, again from a stakeholder perspective, before engaging with Czech policy developments. As shown above, the post-communist HE trajectory of both countries was essentially characterized by the large-scale mobilization of the academic community to fend off state control and consolidate academic “democracy.” High-ranking academics gained representation monopolies at the state level through rectors’ conferences and other academic interest bodies, while maintaining a strong grip over the state accreditation process. Within universities, academic senates remained bastions of academic self-governance, while the very fragmented internal structure of universities undermined the influence of university managers. Essentially, the post-communist pathways of both countries resulted in the convergence toward a model of academic “hyper-corporatism” at the state level and decentralized stakeholder self-governance at the university level.

4.1 Poland: the “fake corporatist” pathway to the constitution for science

The new Polish HE Act known as “Ustawa 2.0,” which is embedded in a broader package of laws known as “Constitution for Science” (*Konstytucja dla Nauki*), constitutes a striking case of “divergence after convergence.” We now focus on the policy style leading up to the reform and then discuss the policy output and shifts in stakeholder constellations. The 2010 international rankings continuously highlighted the weak competitiveness of Polish HE and Poland’s poor performance in Horizon 2020 and ERC grants (Boyadjieva, 2017). While study programs became increasingly commercialized, research tended to proliferate low-quality publications. This led to a widespread perception that an overhaul of the system is necessary.

Therefore, the new (post-2015) PiS parliamentary majority (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* / Law and Justice) pushed for a reform package labeled: “complex change of approach to scientific research, teaching students and managing the university.” In a seemingly stakeholder-friendly, democratic manner, PiS initiated an open competition for proposals (*założenia do ustawy*) for the legislative act. Of the fifteen original proposals, three most prominent ones emerged (Kwiek et al., 2016; Izdebski et al., 2017; Radwan, 2017), all of which recommended the concentration of resources in managerially operating rectors to the detriment of existing

collegial bodies, while more systematically including external stakeholders in governance. Each paper viewed the excessive “democratization” and fragmentation of the university system as dysfunctional (e.g., Radwan, 2017, p. 37) and advocated a more managerial model.

Particularly striking was the open and inclusive nature of the process, at least on the surface. More than five thousand participants (including students, professors, managerial staff, etc.) participated in thematic conferences organized under the banner “National Congress of Science,” arguably the largest consultation forum ever witnessed in Poland. However, numerous interviews conducted with stakeholders paint a different picture. For example, one stakeholder comments:

Consultations were conducted in a model way. There were many efforts to reach every university and region. However it did not affect the final reform, since almost everybody feels endangered by it.

(Interview 03 May 2019)

Another stakeholder claims: “This act was supposedly up for consultations for two years. We have voiced our claims, but nobody took them into consideration” (Interview 08 May 2019).

Other informants expressed more radical criticism, e.g.:

It was a purely political process. And propaganda of success.

(Interview 01 May 2019)

Consultations? Let’s not joke. It was not a participatory process. There were crowds of people who were for the reform.

(Interview 06 May 2019)

Many informants also emphasized the gap between the initial ideas in the three policy papers and the Ministry’s draft bill, e.g.:

There has never been a consultation process on this scale, but many voices were not heard and many things were changed at the parliamentary stage.

(Interview 03 June 2019)

Thus, while the draft bill was widely consulted in the prelegislative phase, the main details apparently were decided in ministerial corridors. Counter to the Ministry’s claims of an open, democratic process, a largely façade exercise seems to have occurred. Specifically, the national-conservative government engaged in alliances with like-minded groups, in particular, university rectors, while essentially remaining deaf to arguments voiced by opposing stakeholders from more diffuse interest organizations (in particular, university researchers).

We label this policy-making mode “fake corporatism.” Like in corporatist arrangements, decision-making power was to some extent transferred away from

the parliament to socioeconomic interest groups. However, here it was not a matter of balancing interests and reaching consensus; rather, it was of legitimizing already predetermined policies. The authors of the three policy papers had to stick to the predefined modules during the drafting process. The ministry then organized “Byzantine-style” consultations, creating the feeling of inclusiveness among the various organized stakeholders. However, the most prominent and present stakeholders were those who already held representation monopolies, were state-funded and -licensed. The final act was then pushed through parliament without any open debate. As many interviewees claim, the consultations resembled the notion of “preaching to the convinced” (e.g., Interview 03 May 2019; Interview 09 May 2019). In other words, the consultations served to legitimize already predefined goals, which were then to be implemented by rectors. The other scattered, and often rivaling actors, were unable to effectively support their pluralistic demands (e.g., more funding for doctoral students, more system funding, more stakeholder democracy).³ Their participation in the large-scale consultations allowed them to voice their preferences but not much more. Essentially, their interests “sank” in the magma of the reform, and their relative power vis-à-vis rectors was substantially downgraded.

This policy-making mode also coincided well with the recent shift toward a “strong state,” advocated by center-right governments in Poland. Drawing on the criticism of post-1989 liberal reforms and widespread systemic corruption, the PiS party, in particular, has endeavored to (re)build state–society and state–market relations from above. One of the main slogans since PiS regained a parliamentary majority in 2015 has been “*Wstawanie z kolan*” (“Rising from the knees”), thus a more proactive state seeking to regain true sovereignty and strength. This translated into various reforms leading toward empowering the state’s position *vis-à-vis* many societal spheres and, hence, recentralization. Here, the state drew on an alliance with the rectors as “natural allies” to the detriment of long-standing traditions of internal academic self-governance.

4.1.1 *The new face of Polish HE*

The 2018 Act fundamentally transforms Polish HE and – despite the open civic engagement process on the façade – results in a situation in which the large majority of stakeholders are dissatisfied with the outcome (AKP, 2018b; Chrzczonowicz, 2018; Płuciennik, 2019). The Act defines the three organs of the university: University Council (*Rada Uczelni*), Rector, and Senate (Art. 17), among which the rector has the most authority. The University Council has the most strategic competences (Art. 18) and a supervisory function over the rector. Previously the most powerful university governing body, the Senate now focuses on teaching activities. University Council members are formally appointed by the Senate, but internal regulations allow the rector to exclusively propose the candidates, whereby a majority must be from outside the university community (Art. 18 Ustawa, 2018). The rector is elected by the University Council or

college of electors and is responsible for managing the university, appointing (and dismissing) other managerial positions, as well as financial governance, representative functions, and many other areas (Art. 23 Ustawa, 2018). Rectors also decide on internal university regulations. The final version of the Act known as “Ustawa 2.0”⁴ grants the University Council hard competences in appointing the candidates for rectors, approving the financial plans and reports or monitoring university management and soft competences regarding the development of university strategies.

Upon enactment, “Ustawa 2.0” was again heavily criticized by many actors, including student unions as well as numerous labor unions (including NSZZ “Solidarność”), *Forum Związków Zawodowych*, 17 various scientific councils, and countless individuals (AKP, 2018b; Płuciennik, 2019), for its political infringement on university autonomy. The newly emerged protest group *Akademicki Komitet Protestacyjny* (AKP) organized an event entitled: “funeral of Polish science” and published a list of recommendations responding to the deficits of the reform, including the democratization of universities’ democratic standards for rectors’ elections and other managerial bodies, safeguarding autonomy by depriving the newly established “University Councils” of the right to appoint candidates for rectors, depoliticization of universities, guaranteeing transparency.

Apart from students who saw their equal access to HE (guaranteed by the constitution) endangered, academics also opposed the measures. “In the end of the reforms the rectors will be like gods” (Interview 02 May 2019), to the detriment of collegiality, self-governance, and faculty autonomy (Interview 03 May 2019). As one former dean noted: “With respect to autonomy, the faculties lost all their powers and are totally dependent on the rectors” (Interview 02 April 2019). Yet, not only the centrality of the rectors is perceived as problematic from the autonomy viewpoint, but the election process also is (Interview 10 May 2019). Specifically, the internal regulations allow the senate to control who will become the member of the Council (Interview 03 April 2019), whereas the Council determines the candidates for rectors. “Elections of rectors are like in Iran. We may choose among the candidates anointed by the Ayatollahs. This is not an election” (Interview 01 April 2019).

The critique of the new powers of rectors is not unjustified, considering that they oversee the whole university apparatus consisting of professional administration, lawyers, experts, scholars, etc. All this further concentrates their power resources and is funded by the state. How and why did the balance of power tip toward the rectors? We argue that interactions between two types of state power resources were critical: one politically organized by the Minister of Higher Education and Science, and the other corporatistically organized by the rectors. If we view the reform as an exchange between the two tax-funded groups in which one – the politicians – have decision-making power and the other – the rectors – have the implementation power, then their synergy becomes crucially decisive from the point of view of reform success.

Hence, the Minister strengthened the rectors, and *vice versa*, the rectors enabled the smooth implementation of the reform, thereby strengthening the minister. It made them the most natural allies since this collaborative power exchange was mutually beneficial.

Returning to our theory, it appears that the preexisting institutions of internal academic self-rule, a restrained state, and other groups representing university management in corporatist arenas, were subverted by a new state–rector alliance. For example, the General Council (*Rada Główna Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego*), consisting of heterogeneous representatives of academic teachers, students, labor unions, scientific institutions, etc. and formally a key player in the corporatist arrangements, was simply too diverse to speak with a common voice. Moreover, its statutory documents define it as a neutral agent,⁵ with the effect that it cannot engage in “power politics” and that its demands are more “horizontal” (i.e., more funding for HE and science). By contrast, the rectors, whose interests were heavily concentrated in the existing state-level corporatist structures and spoke with one common voice, essentially reaped most of the reform benefits, which, in turn, also increased the state’s grip over policy. From the very beginning, their position was strengthened by the three policy papers recommending more executive authority for them. This equipped them with an external source of legitimation, supplementary to the already comparatively advantageous position *vis-à-vis* other actors. This encompasses not only the traditionally understood power resources, like finances or access to decision-makers, but also external justification (policy papers, experts, reform expectations) and a position in the already existing university hierarchies and access to state resources.

Last but not least, in the perception of many informants, centralization is not without purpose but falls in line with the thrust toward enhancing the state’s leverage over various societal spheres, e.g., “Centralization and politicization, understood as ‘full availability’ of universities, is coded ideologically in this governance culture” (Interview 01 April 2019). The motivations revealed by the authors of the reform drew strong criticism: “Under the guise of the fight against nepotism and corrupt pathologies, a centralized system was created” (Interview 09 May 2019), which further concentrated authority within already privileged institutions and actors.

The upgrading of rectors in the governance structures is seen by most stakeholders as a vehicle for politicization. As one informant argues: “The rectors collectively mobilized. They received a lot of promises of power... They simply caught the hook” (Interview 04 May 2019). Others were much more explicit, e.g., “It is easier to politically steer or corrupt one person, the rector” (Interview 09 May 2019). Such judgmental statements were omnipresent in the interviewees’ claims, which consistently reflected worries about decreasing academic autonomy (AKP, 2018a). For example: “Everybody is less independent. The professors are totally dependent on the rector. And the rectors on politicians (...) the whole reform is a political project” (Interview 01 May 2019).

4.2 The Czech Republic: keeping the status quo

The foundations for academic stakeholder governance were laid early and proved to be much more change-resistant than in Poland. Šebková and Beneš (2002) still regarded a system of self-governance and high autonomy of HE institutions together with indirect state steering mainly by the distribution of financial means as two main characteristics of the Czech HE system around the turn of the millennium. This seems to be still true two decades later. Strong resistance to regulatory interference into academia has been always perceived as a step back to communist times. Along these lines, the three decades of post-revolutionary Czech HE have been marked by the persistent and collective mobilization of all internal academic groups (academics, students, and well as rectors) to preserve the system of academic freedom, autonomy, and self-governance. Czech HE can thus be seen as a “corporatist” system based on negotiation between the Ministry of Education and the formal representatives of HE institutions, comprising Council of Higher Education Institutions (since 1993 it also includes a student representation) and the Czech Rectors’ Conference. Thus, on the surface, stakeholder governance in the Czech Republic and Poland is strikingly similar.

Why has the policy pathway taken in the early 1990s become so entrenched? The historical roots of the Czech HE legislation and how it was drafted and negotiated are crucial for understanding how and why internal interest groups have successfully resisted reform attempts, including the last major amendment in 2016. Since 1990, HE policy has been based on consensus and must be implemented very carefully to cater to the sensitivities of academics. In line with legislation, all major measures are discussed with representatives of HE institutions. The 1990 Act incorporated the Council of Higher Education Institutions into policy-making, enabling it to be consulted on any “*fundamental proposals and measures concerning higher education.*” These constellations were further consolidated in 1998 by also including the already existing Czech Rectors’ Conference into all HE matters “*having a significant impact on higher education institutions.*” This provision has been interpreted basically in a way that without consensus from the academic community no changes can be introduced.

The HE Act has always been attributed a high symbolic value within academia itself, not only because of its origin (partly associated with the “Velvet Revolution” of November 1989 and the student movement in bringing down communism) but also because of the legal protection it offered to academic staff and student interests (Interview 01 January 2020). Any attempt to alter the legislation thus faced profound opposition primarily on these grounds. Thus, the 1990s saw the emergence of a weak state and strong academic community in Czech HE, which has had long ramifications for the system. During all reform attempts, the Ministry of Education was responsible for drafting new legislation, whereby the process was generally dominated by internal HE stakeholders such as rectors, the HE Council, and students.

In the early reform phase, the relationship between rectors and the state developed in a rather antagonistic manner. The leading Czech HE institutions

Charles University, and mainly its Faculty of Law, have been heavily involved in policy-making and essentially steer policy-making from both within and outside the parliament. For example, in the mid-1990s, the rector of Charles University, Karel Malý, sent a personal letter to all members of parliament who graduated at his university, asking them to block the proposed HE act because it deprived universities of their fundamental rights and freedoms (Interview 13 December 2019). This is no exceptional case, as Czech rectors have traditionally relied on members of parliament who are former graduates of their own institutions (mainly Charles University) to mobilize support against more managerial reforms. During this specific case in the 1990s, the Faculty of Law of Charles University even submitted its own reform proposal, which was chosen over the initial ministerial proposal as the main fundament for the new HE Act in 1998.

Even after the implementation of the Act in 1999, tensions between the Ministry of Education and HE institutions remained high, as demonstrated by the proclamation of the Czech Rectors' Conference: "*they ask for the establishment of the new ministry for higher education and science as the existing Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports does not defend the interests of higher education institutions.*"⁶ Leading academics pushed to establish a new ministry for science and HE from time to time, aiming to consolidate their dominance of the sector. However, HE and science have remained with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport with a dedicated deputy minister, who, essentially, always had an academic background. Since the Ministry is also responsible for primary, secondary schools, youth, and sport, HE has to some extent remained on the backburner of the ministry's agenda, again enabling academics to self-govern the system. Thus, during the period between 1994 and 1998, the main interest groups profiled and the playing field was structured. The Ministry of Education representing the state succumbed to its weak position with respect to steering the system. Public HE institutions increased their power mainly by transforming from the state into public institutions, an idea which also goes back to members of the Faculty of Law of Charles University, who thereby drafted the law and transferred the model of municipalities as public-law corporations to HE institutions (Interview 13 December 2019; Interview 20 January 2020).

In the 2000s, the Czech Rectors' Conference and the Council of Higher Education Institutions reaffirmed their positions as the two main representations affecting the HE agenda. Students emancipated themselves within the Council of Higher Education Institutions and became an important player in the field – they not only brought their agenda to the Council, they also negotiated with the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders separately (Interview 20 January 2020; Interview 17 December 2019). Despite some disagreement on some issues, rectors, academics, and students have repeatedly acted as a consolidated unit to protect university autonomy. No other external players such as employers, chambers of business, not-for-profit organizations, or other representatives of public or any other interest groups have been intensively involved in the process.

4.2.1 *A long-lasting reform attempt*

While the recent about-face in Polish HE occurred rather dramatically, the most recent amendment to the HE Act (2016) is the result of a long-term reform process stimulated by the already-mentioned Thematic Review of Tertiary Education (2006) undertaken by OECD experts and seized on by the right-wing government then. The OECD suggested changes regarding the system structure, its diversification and the institutional landscape, institutional governance, resourcing, access and equity, connections to the labor market, and many others. Like in Poland, Czech HE stakeholders were also heavily involved. While both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education at that time were not associated with academia, the Deputy Minister responsible for Higher Education and Science, Petr Matějů, was a professor himself, albeit a big critic of the existing system and proponent of private education and tuition fees (Interview 13 December 2019).

A team consisting of both ministerial as well as external members published the “White Book on Tertiary Education” (Matějů, 2008) as the main strategic guideline for drafting the new HE legislation. The document offered some alternatives to the existing system, arguing for the introduction of governance changes and making HE more open to those who have a “stake” in the institutions and the system as a whole – employers, regions, graduates, etc. The White Book itself received very critical reactions, mainly from old traditional universities and also on personal grounds. Unlike in the recent Polish reform, representatives of academic self-governance – traditional universities, rectors, academics – were not members of the drafting team.

However, the original intentions were never met. Due to governmental instability and political turbulence, the main governmental players were unable to defend the reform project. Between 2006 and 2009, as many as five ministers and four deputy ministers for HE and science changed. Well organized representatives of HE institutions did not have a stable and reliable partner for government negotiations, resulting essentially in the institutional inertia of the system established in the 1990s.

After the vote of no confidence in the Parliament and subsequent resignation of the coalition government in spring 2009, HE reform was halted by the then minister (Interview 12 December 2019), and the caretaker government took power during 2009–2010. After early elections in May 2010, a center-right government took power with Petr Nečas replacing Mirek Topolánek as Prime Minister. Its policy statement included the introduction of differed tuition fees and a supplementary loan scheme. The reform draft, to some extent, constituted an attack on internal university democracy by calling for a strengthened role of the Board of Trustees, limiting student representation in the senates to one-third, and changing the system of docents and professors from academic titles into working positions. The draft, which would have diminished the influence of major internal groups – rectors, academics, and students – met with intensive

criticism from students, resulting in mass demonstrations under the motto “the week of unrest” in 2012. Charles University was also very active in opposing the reform.⁷ The minister resigned, and his successor, a political science professor and former rector of Masaryk University, first softened their initial enthusiasm for the reform and eventually abandoned the entirely new legislation, while instead pushing for changes within the existing legislation (Interview 20 January 2020; Interview 21 January 2020).

After intensive discussion with HE representations, an amendment to the HE Act was ultimately passed in 2016. Even ten years since the White Book, it essentially did not include any changes suggested either by the OECD experts or previous reform-minded governments. It did not enable the greater participation of external stakeholders in HE governance nor did it increase in any way the leverage of the state or its surrogates (as was the case with the Polish Rectors’ Conference) over HE. Specifically, the previous Accreditation Commission was transferred into the National Accreditation Office, making it more independent from the state. The management and chairs of various working groups include almost exclusively members of academia with only minor involvement of external stakeholders. The new amendment also introduced a new possibility within the accreditation process: upon meeting certain requirements, a HE institution can be awarded an “institutional accreditation”, thus the autonomy to create and abolish study programs internally. Accreditation and quality assessment were partly moved from an external actor (Accreditation Commission) into internal processes. Hence, the ultimate outcome of the 10-year reform endeavor, which originally aimed to strengthen the state’s ability to steer the system, is essentially a further increase in the autonomy and self-governing capacities of HE institutions (Interview 21 January 2020).

What accounts for the striking level of institutional inertia in Czech HE? First, the intermingling of politics and Czech academics – mainly those in managerial positions – was decisive. Leading academics have been active in politics on all levels – municipal, regional, national, and EU. Due to the high prestige of university professors and the academic profession in society in general, political parties have actively sought and engaged them for elections. The Parliament has consistently included around five high-ranking academics, mostly former or even active deans or rectors of public universities. Former rectors of Charles University as well as Masaryk University are now members of the Senate. The former rector of Masaryk University is now a leader of the right-wing opposition party. In fact, many of the deputy ministers responsible for HE and science have been former rectors or deans. Usually, the main and only task of the ministry with respect to HE was to ensure as many resources as possible for the system that has been supposedly underfinanced. Traditionally, the Ministry, through the deputy minister responsible for HE and science (with some short-lasting exceptions), has represented the interests of the HE community rather than the state or the public. These dual affiliations and resulting inter-parliamentary and outer-parliamentary power resources put them in a privileged position, thus diminishing the prospects of rector “power grab” as in the Polish case.

This balancing act of many Czech rectors and other high-ranking academics between the political sphere and their universities, combined with a supreme degree of inter-university decentralization, has had the effect that Czech rectors have not succeeded in centralizing their institutions. Traditionally, they have been treated more as representatives of their universities rather than general managers with the deans as their deputies (Interview 27 November 2019; Interview 28 November 2019; Interview 4 December 2019). In 1998, universities indeed became legal entities. However, in reality, very little has changed. The faculties are still the main actors within the university. In fact, rectors have been usually those with higher political ambitions. Their position was rather weak within their institutions, but strong in the HE system – representing the universities vis-à-vis the Ministry. It could be described as a division of power within the system. “As long as you leave us faculties alone within our domain, you rectors can go ahead and play your political games with the ministry and the state” (Interview 28 November 2019).

Finally, Czech students have been seen as a symbol of the revolution – they went to the streets in 1989 and ultimately helped bring down communism. In Czech society, there is a strong nostalgic and sentimental attachment with student interests, which are frequently automatically equated with university interests. Whenever the state moved to change the balance of power to its benefit by taking away a bit of power from the universities, students, and academics quickly and effectively collectively mobilized to earn the sympathy of the public. This often translated into a public backlash according to the motto “Do not endanger those who gave us the freedom!” Thus, altogether, the symbolic position of universities and students in the revolutionary phase also explains their high social status and strong lobbying power.

5 Conclusions

The Czech Republic and Poland embarked on a remarkably similar reform pathway after 1989, by essentially turning back control over HE to the academic community. University autonomy, academic freedom, and the democratization of university governance were crucial early steps toward democracy. This resulted in the quick and effective restoration of academic self-governance and the creation of numerous institutions and organizations to defend the independence of the academic profession (Dobbins, 2011; Kwiek, 2014).

Why was the Polish government able to vertically impose a reform largely undesired by the academic community and amid resistance from previously potent stakeholders? And why has the Czech government failed, time and time, again to reform and “managerialize” university governance? We argued that the reasons for recent policy divergence lie in the differential mobilization capacities of academic stakeholders and the state’s means for intervention.

Regarding the power distribution within the academia, universities have been historically fragmented with power vested in faculties or even departments.

In the Czech case, this posed a substantial obstacle to institutional centralization and strengthening university management and rectors. It seems that a tacit agreement has been in place between rectors and deans about the distribution of power in institutional and national policy-making. Another striking phenomenon is the active involvement of academic management in general politics, allowing for intensive inner and extra-parliamentary mobilization for academic interests. Former or even acting rectors and deans have been represented across different political parties but consistently have been able to find a united position to defend their interests.

Thus, the Czech post-communist structures of academic democracy have consolidated over almost three decades, and strong internal stakeholdership has evolved. Indeed, the abovementioned internal stakeholders stated that their influence within the system has either remained the same or increased (Survey Response 15 April 2019). By contrast, external stakeholders, represented by the state/ministry and other players including business, employers, or regional authorities, have never been able to form an adequate counterbalance vis-à-vis internal academic stakeholders.

In Poland, by contrast, pre- and post-communist structures of academic democracy (i.e., university as a community of scholars) were converted into semi-autocratic state-rector alliance. Following Olson's "optimal group size" claim, the rectors, organized in KRASP and various other institutions, enjoyed a strong organizational advantage over other diffused academic interests. This led to a coalescence of interests between the national-conservative government aiming to reassert control over the sector and rectors, who stood to benefit from the centralization of powers within universities. Subsequently, the top of the managerial university structures – i.e., rectors – became the powerful agents of governmental policy change. This resulted in the relative downgrading of the interests of other stakeholders (faculties, institutes, departments, and even individual academics) as they have become more dependent on the rector and his/her interests. On the one hand, more diffuse and fragmented groups were unable to collectively mobilize effectively due to the pluralist setting of the various stakeholders. On the other hand, it was in the interest of the authorities pursuing the reform to focus on one interest group, namely the rectors, who were critical for the implementation of the reform. Thus, the reform not only reorganized university governance by endowing rectors with unprecedented power at the cost of other previously influential, but fragmented, collegial bodies but also places more power in the hands of politicians.

The Polish HE reform indeed can be seen in the larger context of the post-2015 political changes reflecting illiberal tendencies, democratic backsliding, and centralization. Centralization (on a systemic and university level), politicization, and disruptions to academic autonomy bring about winners and losers. The return of the strong state is an influential precondition and incentive for translating the public financial dependency into dependency on public authority which, in such a politicized system as the Polish one, automatically means

political dependency. After the judiciary and other spheres of public life, the Polish academic sector has thus become an additional arena in which purportedly well-intended reforms brought about politicization and centralization. Although it has been a long time since Poland departed from its ideologically driven, over-regulated, and inefficient communist-type HE system, some symptoms of the past seem to be returning. It remains to be seen whether the Czech system will soon move in the same direction.

Notes

- 1 For a historical account of student activism in Poland, see Junes (2011).
- 2 With the exception of the University of Defence and the Police Academy.
- 3 Students demanded more money for scholarships, etc. and actually received it, albeit at more limited numbers. So there is similar amount of money for them in the system, but it is simply allocated among fewer individuals.
- 4 “Ustawa 2.0” – the renewal of *Ustawa “Prawo o szkolnictwie wyższym i nauce”* was voted on 03 July 2018; 233 deputies were for, 195 against, 1 abstained. This vote shows there was no general consensus.
- 5 <http://www.rgnisw.nauka.gov.pl/statut/>
- 6 Quoted by the Czech Press Agency on 19 November 1999.
- 7 The text “*Kritický průvodce ‘reformou’ vysokých škol*” is available here: <https://iforum.cuni.cz/IFORUM-12056.html>.

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Interviews Czech Republic:

- Interview 15 April 2019 – Member of Council of Higher Education Institutions
- Interview 27 November 2019 – rector of a public university and member of Czech Rectors’ Conference
- Interview 28 November 2019 – faculty dean of public university
- Interview 4 November 2019 – former dean and rector of public university
- Interview 12 December 2019 – former rector of public university and deputy minister responsible for higher education and science
- Interview 13 December 2019 – former adviser to minister of education

Interview 17 December 2019 – former student member of the Council of Higher Education Institutions

Interview 20 January 2020 – former student member of university senate, former director of department at the Ministry of Education and a former deputy minister of education.

Interview 21 January 2020 – former member of the Council of Higher Education Institutions

Interviews Poland:

Interview 01 April 2019 – director of institute, responsible for reform implementation at Opole University

Interview 02 April 2019 – member of the committee implementing the reform at UMCS Lublin

Interview 03 April 2019 – member of *Obywatele Nauki* (“Citizens for Science”): director of largest institute at the University of Warsaw

Interview 01 May 2019 – former rector of the University of Warsaw

Interview 02 May 2019 – director of one of the largest institutes, responsible for reform implementation at the institute’s level, university professor, University of Warsaw

Interview 03 May 2019 – vice-director of one of the institutes, responsible for reform implementation the reform at University of Opole

Interview 04 May 2019 – dean of large faculty at UMCS Lublin

Interview 06 May 2019 – vice-rector of University of Warsaw

Interview 08 May 2019 – rector of private university in Warsaw

Interview 09 May 2019 – former vice-rector of Warsaw University

Interview 10 May 2019 – rector of private university in Warsaw

Interview 03 June 2019 –member of the executive committee of *Parlament Studentów RP*



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PART 4

Europeanization effects



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9

AT THE CROSSROADS OF EUROPEANIZATION AND PROFESSIONALIZATION

A cross-country and cross-policy analysis of organized interests in CEE

Szczepan Czarnecki and Rafał Riedel

1 Introduction

While scholars have enhanced our understanding of interest groups at the EU level (Warntjen & Wonka, 2004; Mahoney, 2007) and the impact of the EU enlargements thereupon (Pleines, 2011), less research has been conducted on the impact of enlargement on CEE organized interests. Scholars contend that EU integration has fostered processes of diffusion, learning, and adaptation, resulting in new repertoires and templates for interest groups (Klüver, 2011; Kröger, 2017; Maloney et al., 2018). However, there is a substantial deficit of research on the internal configurations of CEE interest groups after EU accession. Therefore, in this chapter, we explore one of the key features of organized interests – their level of professionalization – and how European integration affects it. This is crucial for understanding the development of post-EU accession advocacy groups and their evolution as a vital element of civil society.

Our comparative analysis covers Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, and Czechia and three policy areas: healthcare, higher education, and energy. We assume that the professionalization of interest groups is prone to vary across different sectors of activity. Some groups may be characterized by more active internal development, while other groups will focus less on professionalization. Some groups may cooperate closely with EU counterparts, while others may be much more focused on domestic activities. Bearing this in mind, we first explore how the EU impacts (e.g. through public funding) the level of professionalization of CEE interest groups, as understood in the classical top-down Europeanization approaches. Second, we examine whether other types of Europeanization (e.g. cross-loading through trans-border exchange with like-minded interest groups) affect their level of professionalization.

The data on professionalization and Europeanization were collected by means of our online survey of interests groups in all four countries (see Chapter 1 and Annex). A cross-country and cross-sectoral statistical analysis, both descriptive and inferential, provides a comparative perspective allowing us to identify, describe, and explain the policy-specific and country-specific similarities and differences at the crossroads of Europeanization and professionalization of organized interests in CEE.

The chapter proceeds as follows: after this short introduction, we reconstruct the main arguments present in the professionalization and Europeanization literature, which we find applicable to this analysis. Then we introduce our hypotheses and operationalize the dependent and independent variables, before looking at variations in the professionalization of interest groups across countries in the selected policy areas as a dependent variable. It is operationalized as a synthesized index based on survey responses collected in 2019–2020. In line with various theories established in interest group research, we expect numerous causal factors to condition the degree of professionalization. Focusing on Europeanization parameters such as available budgets (dependency on EU funds), membership in EU umbrella organizations (supra-national federalization), cooperation with partners from abroad (cross-border networking), we explore their impact on professionalization processes across the above-mentioned countries and policy areas.

2 Intersecting professionalization and Europeanization

Interest group research, in general, and in particular scholarly investigations on advocacy, lobbying, and civic society organizations have blossomed in recent decades. However, scholars have explored the role of organized interests in politics and the economy at least since the 1920s (Herring, 1929). The creation of the Common Market and thus the delegation of more and more competences to the supranational level increased not only the salience of European-level lobbying, but also academic interest in advocacy organizations, which have responded to the European integration process with varied adaptation strategies. Research has not determined a standardized pattern of interest group activity in the European multi-level setting, but rather a complex mix of tactics and strategies, consistent with diverse governance models (Constantelos, 2004).

Consequently, at least from the moment of enlargement, CEE advocacy organizations have operated in the multi-level system and therefore had to incorporate the EU dimension into their *repertoire* of activities. They act at least in the two inter-linked arenas: the domestic setting and in Brussels. An important issue is whether the same factors affect the organized interests' functioning at the sub-national, domestic and EU level. These questions are vital for the empirical and normative evaluation of the Europeanization processes within interest groups (Binderkrantz & Rasmussen, 2015). Accession to the EU entails participation in a new policy-making environment characterized by distinctive rules, norms, and values, which – in the process of Europeanization – have gradually become

internalized and impact on member states' domestic political, social, and economic settings. The dynamics, depth, and scope of this form of (European scale) internationalization depend on numerous factors. This evolving multi-level policy-making environment (with its multiple power centers) offers a novel opportunity structures for societal actors to pursue their own objectives and put forward their own agendas (Blavoukos & Pagoulatos, 2008, p. 1147–1148).

Scholarly definitions of Europeanization still differ substantially. In the most standard way, it is understood as a situation, process, or outcome in which distinct modes of European governance have transformed aspects of domestic politics (Buller & Gamble, 2002, p. 17). The concept of Europeanization has been used by some analysts to denote the process through which political actors such as political parties, governments, or civil society organizations adapt to European integration. Radaelli (2000) defined Europeanization as the processes of construction, diffusion, and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles of doing things as well as shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in EU decision-making and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies (2000, p. 4). Similarly, Robert Ladrech (1994) emphasized the adaptive processes of organizations due to a changing environment. Professionalization processes are one of the outcomes of these evolutionary changes.

The professionalization of organized interests has therefore also been the subject of intense research in social sciences in recent years (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013). However, in this chapter, we do not focus on the professionalization phenomenon itself, but rather on the relationships between two specific processes, which at some point may cross each others' paths, namely *Europeanization* and the *professionalization* of organized interests. The CEE region provides a particularly significant arena to deepen our understanding of the dynamics and intersections of professionalization and Europeanization processes of interest organizations.

Interest groups activities are always affected by the political environment in which they operate and the effective study of public interest groups must situate them in a larger political context (Meyer & Imig, 1993). In CEE, organized interests are burdened with a difficult legacy. Under socialism, civil society activity was largely channeled through communist parties, which in turn converted any pre-existing interest associations into their own appendages (Kubik, 2005). In fact, behind the iron curtain, no truly free civil societies were permitted without state control, and organizations were banned or operated only under the supervision of the relevant political bodies (see Chapter 2 in this volume). The processes of political transformation and EU accession aspirations in most CEE countries have led in parallel to significant changes in associational life. This process opened up new "fields of action" for various interest organizations.

Scholars employ a variety of theories when investigating interest groups' linkages with policy-making processes (see Chapters 4–7 in this volume). It is clear, however, that interest groups must act professionally in order to gain access to decision-makers and to effectively represent their interests (Beyers, 2008; see

Horváthová & Dobbins in this volume). This pressures interest groups to analyze and potentially transform their internal organizational structures (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013), thus incentivizing – among other things – the professionalization of their activities and strategies. But what exactly does the professionalization of interest groups mean and how is it understood in the scholarly literature? Theories rooted in the sociology of organizations emphasize professionalization as a structure and process that refers to the creation of positions that require a high degree of qualification in terms of education, training, and relevant working experience (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013). The phenomenon of professionalization in general is reflected in changes to structures, strategies, and core values. In a more direct way, professionalization describes the shift in organizational structure and may represent an increasing reliance on a paid workforce with specialized knowledge gained through formal education (Salamon, 2012). A professional workforce with its ability to create “professional culture” has a tendency to use specialized knowledge responding to social problems, which might change organizational behavior (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013). McGrath (2005) characterizes professionalization by four criteria: the adherence to professional norms, technical skills gained through training, body of knowledge, and membership in professional organizations. Some scholars argue that professionalization is a multi-dimensional process and might differ across different types of organized interests (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013). In the case of cause groups, it often involves the transition from volunteer-based organizations towards a workforce recognized as a profession. Yet there are existing theories suggesting that institutional pressure leads to similar patterns of professionalization, resulting in similar professionalization processes among different groups. However, as mentioned before, professionalization processes may move socially rooted organizations towards client-oriented service delivery, thus affecting their distance from communities. Taking into account the variety of existing theories, professionalization can be seen as a process of transformation of the internal structures of organized interests towards more professionalized features (Imig & Tarrow, 2001), including improvement of the professional knowledge and skills of individual members through formal training, hiring professionals, orientation towards internal development, and cooperation with other professional organizations.

Consequently, in this study, we operationalize professionalization in line with McGrath’s (2005) criteria for professional norm development, and increasing knowledge and technical skills gained through education and cooperation with other professional organizations. As indicated above, we define professionalization as a set of activities with a focus on human capital, i.e. membership growth and human resource development, and training of the lobbyists, which require a higher degree of qualification in terms of training and education. To fully capture the degree of professionalization, we also draw on several indicators that may give a broader view of general organizational development, such as fundraising development, focus on strategic planning and evaluation of efficiency,

and effectiveness, all of which stimulate and require the parallel development of members' knowledge.

It is recognized that the professionalization process is dependent on resources, including financial resources. Maloney, Hafner-Fink and Fink-Hafner (2018) argue that an important factor for professionalization processes is public funding (including EU-outsourced funding). They stated that public funding may not only stimulate professionalization, it may simply demand it. Governments may effectively require or even mandate groups to adopt a specific organizational structure by setting standards or rules leading to the development of their human resources capital.

Researchers have also examined the effect of EU funds on the level of professionalization. Vráblíková and Císař (2013) pointed out that the EU accession process brought professionalization and bureaucratization to Czech advocacy organizations. Interest groups began to operate with much bigger budgets, hired more employees, and resorted to more bureaucratic forms of management. However, other studies on Slovenian organizations (Maloney et al., 2018) show that in the post-accession period, there were differences between interest group types in terms of professionalization. Specifically, the differences in the levels of professionalization are lower in the post-accession than pre-accession period. Recent research acknowledges the impact of various levels of Europeanization on interest groups (Klüver & Saurugger, 2013; Kröger, 2017; Maloney et al., 2018). Klüver and Saurugger (2013) argue that both cause and sectional groups exhibit similar professionalization patterns, and the group type is not a factor that may differentiate their professionalization.

However, the impact of Europeanization on professionalization processes from a broader cross-country and cross-policy perspective has been over-looked. Having that in mind, we explore to what extent Europeanization or more precisely EU funding, membership in EU umbrella organizations, and strong ties with like-minded organizations from EU countries contribute to the professionalization of interest groups in four analyzed countries and three selected policy sectors. While these countries present four diverse and distinct environments for the functioning of organized interests, the forms and levels of professionalization may also vary by policy areas. Healthcare is conventionally meant to be a highly professionalized sector due to its sophistication and expertise needed when dealing with medical and related issues. It is also the least Europeanized sector analyzed here. In contrast, energy and higher education are much more strongly affected by Europeanization processes (see Chapter 3 in this volume), potentially exerting a differential impact on the professionalization of organizations operating in these areas.

Our focus on the dependency on EU funds assumes that Europeanization is a way of responding to external incentives (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2020). It certainly goes beyond the mere conditionality policy – driven by the prospects of EU membership – which dominated Europeanization scholarship in the pre-accession phase. Nowadays, almost two decades after the *big-bang* enlargement,

Europeanization has become a “business as usual” game in CEE. In parallel, the Europeanization literature evolved towards more detailed conceptualizations.

After a series of debates shaped the progress of Europeanization research (what Europeanization was, how it functioned, what it was determined by, what outcomes it delivered, etc.), we may understand Europeanization, for the purposes of this analysis, as the process and outcome through which the supranational norms and values become interwoven with domestic policy-making structures (Ladrech, 2010). This way of defining Europeanization fits very well to this study, where professionalization norms are under question. The professionalization of organized interests goes hand in hand with Europeanization no matter if we focus on bottom-up Europeanization when organized interests engage in the process of uploading national policies to the supranational level or top-down Europeanization, whereby organized interests cooperate in the process of downloading and implementing EU policies to the domestic level. We also test cross-border Europeanization – horizontal collaboration with other organizations from abroad – as an additional explanatory variable.

All above-mentioned Europeanization directions and mechanisms may incentivize professionalization processes. By conceptualizing Europeanization based on the availability of the EU fund flows as well as Europeanized associational life (belonging to EU umbrella organizations and dense collaborative networks with like-minded organisations from abroad), we place this study in the mainstream of Europeanization research. Undoubtedly, it is one of the main ways in which Europeanization is operationalized in studies on organized interests (Beyers, 2002; Dür, 2008; Klüver, 2011; Beyers & Kerremans, 2012; Cekik, 2017; Kröger, 2017; Maloney et al., 2018), and therefore a legitimate variable in analyzing advocacy in CEE. Being dependent on EU funds, belonging to supra-national umbrella organizations and being involved in vibrant cross-border associational life create a direct linkage with Brussels as well as other European partners across the EU and contribute to other various ways of interconnectedness. The EU perceives various types of civil society organizations as vital for the democratic decision-making process, and therefore it stimulates their involvement in policy-making as legitimate partners.

Bearing in mind the recognized ways of operationalizing Europeanization in the existing literature, we test dependency on EU funding, membership in supranational umbrella organizations and cooperation with other like-minded European organizations as explanatory variables. As stated earlier, public funding may not only stimulate professionalization, it might demand it. It is a two-directional process, where – on the demand side – decision-makers may effectively require or even mandate advocacy groups to adopt a specific organizational structure by setting standards, rules, or codes of conduct leading to the development of organized interests’ “cadre”, e.g. as the EU has done. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: *The greater the access to EU funding, the greater the level of organizational professionalization.*

Moreover, Europeanization understood as networking emphasizes the cross-border exchange of knowledge, expertise, and experience as well as other resources as an additional factor determining the professionalization processes. This type of collaborative communication is recognized as one of the key cross-loading Europeanization mechanisms. Thus, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2 *The more organizations cooperate with other EU organizations, the greater the level of organizational professionalization*

At the same time, we recognize that not all cross-border collaboration may lead towards improved professionalization standards. Due to data availability, we hence more specifically test what kind of cooperation translates into higher levels of professionalization. Is it the mere membership in supranational umbrella organizations or more intense contacts with other like-minded European interest groups sharing similar interests and values? Thus, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2a *EU umbrella organization membership results in increased professionalization*

and

Hypothesis 2b *The more intense the cooperation with like-minded EU organizations, the greater the level of professionalization.*

These hypotheses connect to the selected elements of the three types of Europeanization logics identified by Börzel and Risse (2012), namely:

- 1 *Instrumental rationality or logic of consequences* – in line with rational-choice institutionalism assuming that actors are mostly self-interested utility maximizers who select their course of action according to cost-benefit calculations.
- 2 *Normative rationality or logic of appropriateness* – in line with sociological institutionalism which perceives actors as rule-followers who “do the right thing” because they want to be part of a particular community and have been socialized into certain rules.
- 3 *Communicative rationality or logic of arguing* – in line with constructivist approaches which see actors as deliberating and persuading (including arguing, reasoning as well as challenging these reasons and legitimacy norms) each other about the validity claims inherent in any casual or normative statement.

The normative rationality drives organized interest which acts in a certain setting in line with the logic of appropriateness. In our study, the EU standards of professionalization proliferate across all participating parties in the process of cross-loading, uploading and downloading Europeanization. In the process

of networking (cooperation with other like-minded EU interest groups), they become socialized in and internalize certain rules. “The right thing to do” – understood as a certain professionalization level – is also transmitted through the federalization process, in which new organized interests become members of EU-level umbrella organizations. Last but not the least, a more coercive mechanism plays a role, namely money conditionality: new member states comply with specific professionalization standards due to their dependency on EU funds which implies a certain course of conduct.

3 Analysis

This analysis includes responses from 420 organizations representing the energy, higher education, and healthcare sectors in Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia. We define our dependent variable – professionalization – as a processes of internal, structural changes of the organization leading towards higher professional standards in its functioning, e.g. creation of positions requiring higher qualifications in terms of education and relevant working experience, focus on internal development, and focus on a professional workforce. The operationalization of the dependent variable is based on seven questions regarding professionalization, measured on a 5-point scale. Our respondents were asked to what extent their organization focuses on the following activities as opposed to 10–15 years ago (or since its founding, if founded more recently): “organizational development”, “human resource development”, “training of lobbyists”, “fundraising”, “evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness”, “strategic planning”, with an added category “membership size growth”.

In accordance with our presented hypotheses, we begin with a short analysis of (our dependent variable reflecting) different dimensions of professionalization. As our summarized *Likert* items are scored in the same direction and on the same weight scales, for the descriptive statistical analysis, we decided to create one standardized professionalization indicator. However, to avoid measurement errors, we tested our data using *Cronbach's* alpha internal consistency reliability. With a standardized alpha of 0.784, we created a general professionalization index based on a general score of summarized values of our seven professionalization variables. Our general professionalization index, presented on a 0–30 degree professionalization scale, was prepared for analysis based on descriptive statistics, i.e. means, medians, and standard deviations.

The spacings between the different parts of the box indicate the degree of dispersion (spread) and skewness in the data, and show outliers. The distribution moderately differs among groups in each analyzed country, with outliers for Slovenia and Czechia. Data for Slovenian organized interests reflect a higher dispersion as well as more marginal values when compared to the organizations from Poland, Hungary, and Czechia.

We also analyzed professionalization for specific policy fields. Like before, we again observe differences between analyzed groups. The mean level of

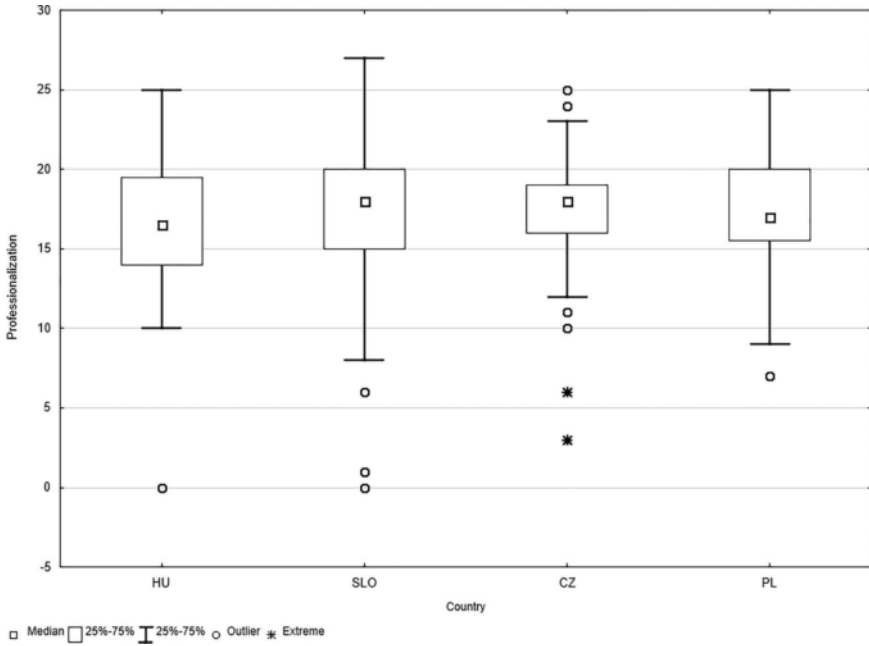


FIGURE 9.1 Professionalization by country.

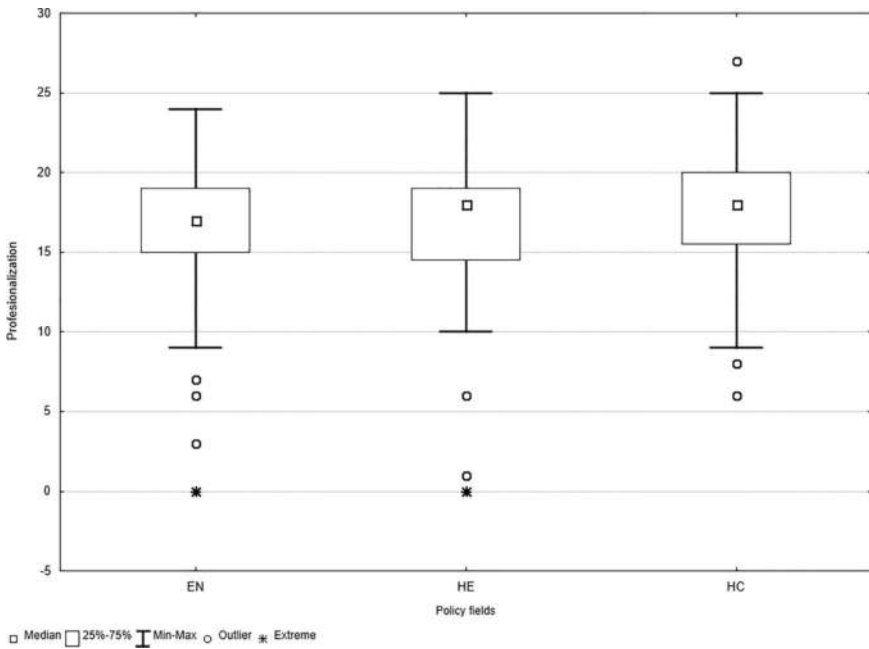


FIGURE 9.2 Professionalization by policy field.

professionalization for healthcare groups is higher than for energy and higher education, while the healthcare sector shows a lower degree of dispersion, without extremely dispersed outliers. The standard deviation is lower (closer to the mean) in the energy sector, but there is a much higher level of dispersion, which may suggest higher level of diversity between the groups operating in this sector.

In the next step, we tested our dichotomous variable of strong relations with other European organized interests. We asked our respondents if they have any strong ties with like-minded organizations from other EU countries, as like-minded organizations may be important partners for organizations and their professional development. Our descriptive analysis shows that in both cases, minimum and maximum values are dispersed. However, in the case of organizations with stronger ties with other EU organizations, there is a higher mean professionalization level and much lower values of standard deviation. Thus, we can conclude that organizations maintaining closer relations with their EU-level counterparts enjoy a higher degree of professionalization.

We also checked whether EU umbrella organizations play a role in the process of organizational professionalization. As we see, members of EU umbrella organizations are more professionalized than the groups that are not members of EU umbrellas. However, the differences are rather marginal.

To analyze the impact of our independent variables on professionalization, we conducted a linear regression. As outlined above, our main research question is the effect of Europeanization on the professionalization of organized interests.

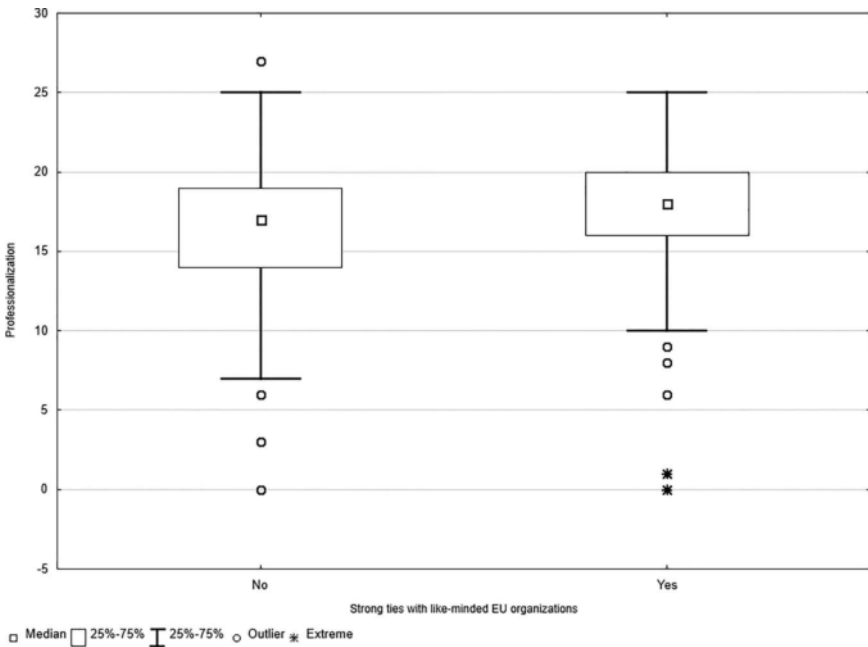


FIGURE 9.3 Intensive cooperation with like-minded EU organizations.

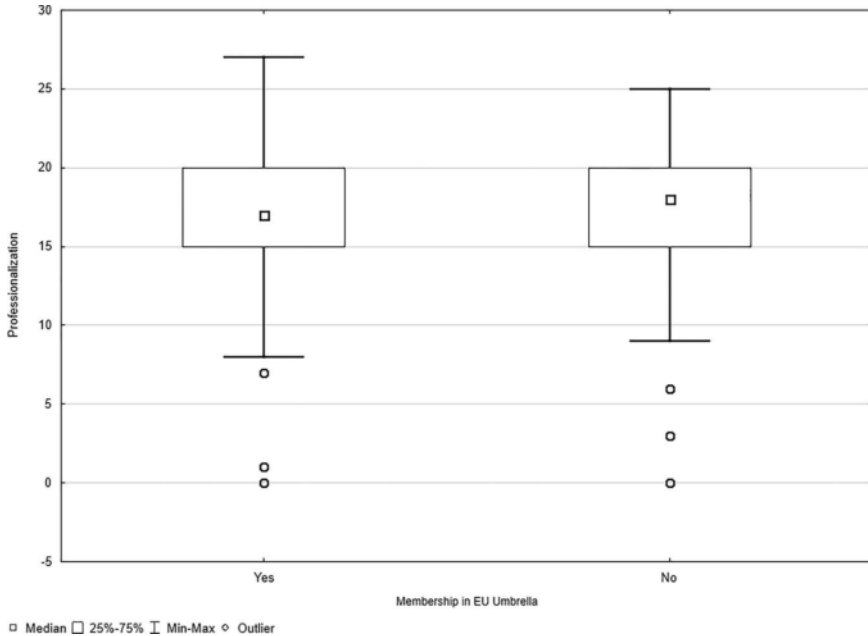


FIGURE 9.4 Membership in EU umbrella organizations.

Following the same logic as above, we created a continuous professionalization variable based on the arithmetic mean of seven professionalization variables (i.e. focus on human resources development, lobbying activities, fundraising, evaluation and strategic planning, organizational development, and staff growth over the last 10–15 years) previously measured on five point Likert scales, which we combined into one scale and recoded into values from 1 to 100 to facilitate interpretation (Sullivan & Artino, 2013).

Regarding the “Europeanization” predictors, we applied several different variables related to the EU accession and the Europeanization process of organized interests, whereas in line with the literature, we focus on EU funding as the main explanatory variable (independent variable). Based on our hypothetical starting point, we created five models related to different types of Europeanization. We applied several dichotomous independent variables such as membership in EU umbrella organizations to test our second hypothesis and strong ties with like-minded organizations in the EU as a predictor to test our third hypothesis that close relations with like-minded organizations abroad are important for gaining organizational skills and achieving professional development. To indicate the absence or presence of the categorical effect that may be expected to shift the outcome, we coded organizations that are members of EU umbrella organizations with a value “1”, and those that are not members of any EU umbrella organizations with a value “0”. Sorting the data into mutually exclusive categories, we applied the same logic to our variable regarding strong relations with other EU

organizations. As an added value to our analysis, we also included interest group type in our models, enabling us to analyze whether being a “diffuse” or “concentrated” organization (Olson, 1965) impacts the level of professionalization. We created a dummy variable “0” for diffuse interests and “1” for concentrated organizations. In the energy and environmental sector, all civic organizations representing environmental groups, promoting sustainable and clean energy, and energy consumers were coded as diffuse organizations. Energy producers and suppliers, and workers’ unions were coded as concentrated interests. For the healthcare sector, we coded all the professional medical associations (doctors, nurses), organizations representing the healthcare and pharmaceutical industry as concentrated interests. All groups representing patients and patients’ rights as well as groups focusing on disease prevention and healthcare promotion were coded as diffuse. For higher education, all the student groups were coded as diffuse, while organizations representing the interests of the academic profession or individual universities were coded as concentrated. We also added categorical country and policy field variables to the model to check whether there are any variations across country and policy sectors.

The key research question, as outlined in H1, is to what extent EU funding directly affects the professionalization process of interest groups. We therefore applied the level of EU funds in organizational budgets as a main independent variable (predictor). To check how important EU funds are, we tested the EU funding predictor in each of the five models, in the first model as the EU funds only, then adding the group type variable, membership in the EU Umbrella organization, and cooperation with like-minded organizations across the EU. We analyzed the extent to which EU funding (independent variable) contributes to the professionalization of interest groups across four countries and three selected policy fields. As we see in (Table 9.1), contrary to our hypothesis (H1) regarding the direct and positive impact of EU funding on interest group professionalization, EU funds in organizational budgets do not affect professionalization in any tested model. The coefficient of EU fund variable ranges from 0.074 to 0.362, but is not significant. The expected predictive power of EU funding even marginally decreases when measured with other variables. Surprisingly, against our expectations, EU funding emerges as a statistically insignificant predictor of professionalization. Thus, we may conclude that organizations that are more dependent on EU funding are not significantly more professionalized than organizations less dependent on EU funding. We also found no statistically significant data for membership in EU umbrella organizations. In two of the tested models (III and V), we found that membership in EU umbrella organizations does not affect professionalization. On the contrary, the coefficient for membership in an EU umbrella organization in the last tested model that includes all the variables, changed direction and became negative.

Contrary to membership in EU umbrella organizations, our results show that our dichotomous variable “strong ties with likeminded EU organizations” matter. Importantly, our data also show that organizations that have developed

TABLE 9.1 Determinants of professionalization of interest organizations

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
EU funds	0.362 (0.571)	0.335 (0.570)	0.318 (0.578)	0.074 (0.592)	0.155 (0.598)
Country Slovenia (ref. category)	0.00 (.)	0.00 (.)	0.00 (.)	0.00 (.)	0.00 (.)
Hungary	-2.797 (1.990)	-2.223 (2.023)	-2.208 (2.039)	-1.963 (2.150)	-1.649 (2.177)
Poland	-0.049 (2.315)	0.378 (2.319)	0.406 (2.366)	0.675 (2.479)	0.135 (2.547)
Czech Rep.	1.057 (1.765)	0.497 (1.798)	0.510 (0.800)	0.718 (1.896)	0.815 (1.901)
Policy field higher education (ref. cat)	0.00 (.)	0.00 (.)	0.00 (.)	0.00 (.)	0.00 (.)
Health care	4.164*** (1.472)	3.647** (1.498)	3.668** (1.508)	3.624** (1.601)	3.829** (1.617)
Energy	-1.816 (1.714)	-1.833 (1.710)	-1.827 (1.719)	-1.633 (1.835)	-1.714 (1.838)
Concentrated / diffuse		-3.477 (2.282)	-3.471 (2.287)	-3.435 (2.407)	-3.447 (2.408)
Member of EU umbrella			0.461 (2.219)		-2.357 (2.538)
Ties with like-minded EU organizations				5.936** (2.443)	6.824*** (2.624)
Observations	242	242	242	219	219
R ²	0.0528	0.0618	0.0721	0.0867	0.0974
Constant	62.142*** (1.369)	64.217*** (1.928)	64.024*** (2.143)	61.061*** (2.555)	61.512*** (2.602)

Standard errors in parentheses * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.

stronger ties with other like-minded organizations from EU countries enjoyed higher professionalization growth over the last 10–15 years than those without stronger relations with like-minded EU interest groups. In our models, the coefficient for strong ties with like-minded organizations in other EU countries significantly and substantially affects professionalization varying from 5.936** to 6.824***, indicating a positive direction in the relationship between a predictor variable and our aggregated professionalization variable.

At this stage, we found no statistically significant difference between interest group types (diffuse vs. concentrated) in the four tested models (II–V). However, in every model, the coefficient of interest type is negative, which indicates that Europeanization processes may impact the professionalization of diffuse interest groups more than concentrated groups. Also, we observe statistically significant differences between organized interests in three analyzed policy fields. In every tested model, our data show that healthcare organizations seem to be much more

focused on professional development activities such as strategic planning, the training of lobbyists, human resource development, and fundraising. The health-care coefficient is positive and significant in every tested model. By contrast, energy interest organizations appear less focused on professionalization than the two other analyzed groups. The results for the other policy sectors results are not statistically significant. The country-specific analysis shows stronger growth in professionalization among Czech organizations, while lowest values are visible in case of Hungary. However, the country variation is not significant in any tested model.

4 Conclusions

This chapter explored the interplay between professionalization and Europeanization processes within CEE organized interests. Specifically, we used various parameters of Europeanization as explanatory determinants for professionalization processes in three sectors – higher education, healthcare, and energy. Many questions related to Europeanization in general and the Europeanization of CEE organized interests in particular are still open to debate (Kröger, 2017, p. 18). This chapter contributed to this debate by explaining the intersection of Europeanization and professionalization processes among advocacy organizations from four post-communist states – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia – which have been subject to strong Europeanization pressures both before and after EU accession.

We expected the professionalization of interest groups to vary across their different sectors of activity across four countries in question. This expectation was built on the general assumption in the Europeanization literature about the diversified reactions to similar pan-European processes and dynamics (Ladrech, 2010). Specifically, we first explored how the EU impacts the level of professionalization of CEE interest groups (e.g. through funding). Second, we examined whether other types of Europeanization (e.g. cross-loading – through trans-border exchange with like-minded interest groups) play a role and affect their level of professionalization. Finally, we tested whether professionalization parameters increase together with EU umbrella organization membership.

The key finding is that various types of Europeanization pressures produce diversified outcomes regarding the professionalization of organized interests. Membership in supranational umbrella organizations (which is a standard parameter of Europeanization) does not necessarily lead to higher levels of professionalization (Hypothesis 2a). Instead, strong ties with like-minded EU organizations correlate much more strongly with greater professionalization among CEE organized interests. In this light, the EU can be seen as a gigantic socialization platform which actively promotes rules, norms, practices, and structures of meaning to which member states (various actors, including the advocacy and other types of organised interest organizations) are exposed and which they have to incorporate into their domestic structures (Börzel & Risse, 2012, p. 1). At the same time, our results show that cross-loading Europeanization mechanisms (Hypothesis 2b)

seem to be more effective in CEE than top-down or bottom-up mechanisms. Participation in transnational networks matters and the communicative process of exchange correlates with improving professionalization levels across the organized interests.

Cross-border cooperation among various civic society organizations has increased substantially after 1989, together with the process of “opening orders”, but the phenomenon accelerated together with the membership in the EU (2004) due to the participation in the Single Market (free movement of people) and later in the Schengen agreement. This soft route of Europeanization, predominantly through transnational communication (Voegtler, Knill & Dobbins, 2011) occurred to be the most effective professionalization vehicle. Dense contacts and linkages with other organized interests of the region not only fill the gap between the traditional top-down Europeanization pressures or bottom-up (supranationalization mechanism) initiatives. They create a type of organic Europeanization that operates much more horizontally than vertically. Domestic interests groups’ environments interact not only with the EU level (Kendal, 2010), but they exchange knowledge, information, and resources across borders with their foreign counterparts. This analysis shows that this type of Europeanization provides an effective channel of professionalization among the post-communist organized interests.

We also hypothesized that professionalization processes are largely determined by classical Europeanization mechanisms, like dependency on EU funds (Hypothesis 1). However, we found that EU funds in organizational budgets do not affect professionalization in any tested model. Contrarily, we found out that organizations that are more dependent on EU funding are not significantly more professionalized than organizations less dependent on EU funding. This finding leads to counter-intuitive conclusions in relation to the assumption about the demand-driven professionalization of European(ized) organized interests.

Together with the growth of the European Union’s salience, advocacy organizations increasingly seek to influence supranational policy-making. For CEE organized interests, EU institutions became crucially important with the 2004 “big-bang” enlargement. While many indeed were present in Brussels beforehand, only through the process of EU accession did they become – together with other political, social, and economic actors of the joining states – legitimate agents in the legislative *apparatus* of united Europe. Their success in inserting themselves into the policy-making process depends on existing formal and informal ties with EU institutions (Thiel & Uçarer, 2014, p. 99). The literature predicts that policy fields with stronger EU competences will experience stronger Europeanization impulses and effects. Counterintuitively, our findings show that it is not the highly Europeanized energy policy sector, in which organized interests have become increasingly professionalized, rather the relatively less Europeanized healthcare sector. Other factors seem to play a stronger role here: healthcare organizations seem to focus on professional development activities such as strategic planning, the training of lobbyists, or human resource development without the additional impetus from Europeanization.

While contributing to the existing literature on Europeanization and professionalization, these findings open many windows of opportunity for future research. Further analyses are needed to examine other parameters of the Europeanization of organized interests (convergence, competition, and communication related factors) and how they interact with the structure and functioning of interest groups (including professionalization). Moreover, the previously assumed path-dependence of democratization, consolidation, and Europeanization is challenged by the contemporary processes of democratic backsliding and de-Europeanization, which may have significant implications for the environment of interest groups, their internal structures, and ways of operating.

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PART 5

Excursions to other territories



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10

ANALYZING POLISH AND CZECH HARD COAL-MINING TRADE UNIONS AND THEIR POSITIONS TOWARD EU CLIMATE AND ENERGY POLICY

Tomasz Kubin

1 Introduction

Climate and energy policy has developed into one of the most important common EU policies. In December 2008, general objectives known as the Climate and Energy 20-20-20 Package were approved by the European Council. It is a set of legally binding acts to ensure that the EU achieves three targets by the year 2020: a 20% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (from 1990 levels), 20% energy from renewable sources, and a 20% improvement in energy efficiency.¹ At three meetings in 2014, the Council discussed and reaffirmed the EU's efforts to combat climate change and adopted the EU's framework goals by 2030. The goals for renewables and energy efficiency were revised upward in 2018 and now stipulate at least 40% cuts in greenhouse gas emissions (from 1990 levels), at least a 32% share of renewable energy (originally 27%), and at least a 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency (originally 27%). In 2018, the European Commission submitted a proposal for a Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021–2027, proposing a target of 25% of the entire EU budget for climate goals (European Commission, 2018).

A European Green Deal was one of the first objectives of the new President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen (2019), and in December 2019, the European Council endorsed the aim of a climate-neutral EU by 2050. However, as stated in the conclusions, “at this stage, one member state cannot commit to implement this objective as far as it is concerned” (European Council, 2019) and the European Council would come back to this problem in June 2020. The conclusions did not include the country's name, but it was Poland, where hard coal is the largest raw material for electricity production. Moreover, Poland is currently not planning to abandon hard coal burning as the primary source of electricity production. The current shape of the energy sector in Poland (and other CEE countries), including high dependence on hard coal, is largely a heritage of the past (Horváthová and Dobbins, 2019). Poland has the largest

amount of hard coal by EU comparison, and it has been one of its most important industries for many decades, long before the 1989 transformation. Later, the size of the hard coal-mining (HCM) sector in Poland decreased, but its political and economic significance remains high. Due to the many active coal organizations and their ties with political parties as well as the strong political polarization of society and political calendar, mining trade unions are among important interest groups in Poland, not least because the social movement and the then trade union “Solidarity” was crucial in overthrowing communism.

The Czech Republic is the EU’s second-largest hard coal producer. Together with Poland, Hungary, and Estonia, it blocked the adoption of the climate neutrality target for 2050 at the June 2019 Council meeting. However, the level of hard coal extraction is much lower than in Poland, resulting in its lower economic and political significance. Nevertheless, the policies of these strong coal-mining states directly affect the EU’s climate and energy goals. Against this background, this chapter explores how the main organized interests and, in particular, trade unions impact their energy policies and, more specifically, how they shape the Polish and Czech governments’ positions on the EU’s climate and energy policy.

Drawing on the theoretical literature on interest groups, I explore how HCM trade unions justify their position toward EU climate and energy policy. Following up on Mahoney’s observations (2007) that the more attention the public pays to a specific decision, the more difficult it should be for special interest groups to influence outcomes, I explore whether mining trade unions have adopted a specific tactic, i.e., either “silencing” the issue (making it easier for them to achieve their goals) or “publicizing” their position and striving to persuade other social groups. I, then, address to what extent the positions and activities of HCM unions have shaped government policy toward EU climate and energy policy. And, finally, I address why the Czech Republic changed its position at the December 2019 European Council meeting. While doing so, I specifically focus on how organized interests produced different outcomes in both countries.

In the upcoming section, I present my theoretical assumptions. The third section is devoted to the empirical analysis, which explores the trade unions’ attitudes toward EU climate and energy policy, the arguments they use, while also assessing their influence on both governments’ positions. In the final section, I readdress the research questions. As data sources, I rely on official trade union documents and statements by their leaders. Documents from Polish trade unions were obtained directly from representatives of these unions and/or their websites, while the Czech data on HCM unions were generally available on the internet.

2 Trade unions as organized interest groups – theoretical assumptions

Interest groups are key actors at the national, regional, and global level (Orach, Schlüter, & Österblom, 2017) as they enable people to express their opinions to decision-makers (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007). Taking into account three criteria –

organization, political interest, and informality (Beyers, Eising, & Maloney, 2008) – trade unions are among the most prominent interest groups. During the political and economic transformation, the significance of large, formal, membership-based Polish and Czech trade unions has declined, whereas relatively small NGOs have become more important (Ekiert, Kubik, & Wenzel, 2017). Despite this general assessment, trade unions are still relatively vigorous and influential in some sectors, in particular those under state ownership (e.g., education, health care, railways, energy). Their political significance is primarily due to their resources, the high level of unionization in these sectors, their strong commitment to the political process and links to political parties, and their ability to mobilize resources (including organizing strikes, blocking transport infrastructure, and even using violence).

The restructuring of the Polish and Czech HCM sectors has been going on almost continuously since 1990. This was necessary primarily for economic reasons, whereby the general goal was (and still is) to sustain the profitability of coal-mining. Among other things, this has resulted in a decrease in production, the number of active mines, and employment. The objectives of the EU climate and energy policy are the next big challenge for the HCM sector, especially in Poland, which forced the HCM trade unions to take a position and aim to shape government policy.

The social, economic, and political contexts of interest group activity are one of the key factors shaping their real impact on policy outcomes. Hence, how interest groups convey their arguments may be crucial. As Beyers, Eising & Maloney (2008, p. 1106) write, “this aspect is often called political advocacy, which refers to all efforts to push public policy in a specific direction on the behalf of constituencies or a general political idea.” We can assume that the more an interest group raises arguments going beyond its own particular interests and that can be recognized by other social groups, the greater the chance of influencing policy outcomes. This strategy may be particularly important regarding energy and climate issues, which *de facto* directly affects all social groups, individuals, and economic sectors. Thus, essentially, every political party aspiring to power takes a stand on energy and climate due to their fundamental importance. Therefore, the right strategy of a given interest group, appropriate instruments for its implementation, and implementation itself are keys to achieving goals.

It is particularly important how significant and present an issue is in the public space in which a given interest group operates. As Christine Mahoney (2007) states, interest group influence may depend on the salience of a given problem, that is, the less notice public opinion pays to a given issue, the greater the chances for the interest group to shape the final policy decision. However, argumentatively “going beyond” its own particular interests, and presenting its activity as defending the interests of other social groups, may also be an effective strategy for interest groups.

In general, though, it is notoriously difficult to measure the influence of organized interests. Yet qualitative comparative analysis (Horváthová & Dobbins,

2019) provides a partial solution to this challenge. Following Dür (2008) and taking into account the specifics of the topic of the study and its aims, I, therefore, draw on the preference attainment method. To reconstruct events, it is necessary to identify (1) interest groups and the issues on which they take positions and try to influence policy outcomes, (2) the most important contextual factors, (3) the most important other engaged stakeholders, (4) and the final policy outcome. This helps us to trace the actual impact of interest groups.

In the following, I show that numerous factors were crucial in explaining the divergent developments in both countries. Besides Poland being the largest producer of hard coal and having a large number of workers in this sector, several very important factors explain the advantageous position of HCM trade unions despite the steady decline of the economic importance of coal, i.e., the state's control over the sector, the energy mix based on hard coal combustion, the number, density, and level of organization of mining trade unions, and political involvement and close ties with political parties. Moreover, history is key because "Solidarity" was not only a trade union but, most of all, a social movement opposing the communist authorities. Despite being the second-largest hard coal producer in the EU, the Czech coal-mining sector and trade unions operating in it are much smaller. Its share in energy production is very small, while sector employment is several times lower than in Poland, and general mining production more than 12 times less. There is *de facto* one trade union in the entire hard coal sector, whose influence on political decisions is relatively low.

3 Empirical analysis

Trade unions in Poland are grouped into three confederations: Independent Self-governing Trade Union "Solidarity" (*Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy "Solidarność"*), All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (*Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych*, OPZZ), and Trade Unions Forum (*Forum Związków Zawodowych*, FZZ). In terms of significance and political influence, the most important are: National Hard Coal Mining Section "Solidarity" (*Krajowa Sekcja Górnictwa Węgla Kamiennego "Solidarność"*), which is the organizational unit of NSZZ *Solidarność*, Miners' Trade Union in Poland (*Związek Zawodowy Górników w Polsce*, ZZGwP), belonging to OPZZ, and the Trade Union "Kadra" (*Związek Zawodowy "Kadra"*, ZZ "Kadra"), belonging to FZZ.

In 2017, the level of unionization both in Poland and in the Czech Republic was 12%, which was significantly below the European average (28% in 2017). Trade union density has dropped in both countries in recent years compared to 2000: in Poland by 4% and in the Czech Republic by 6.9% (Vandaele, 2019). In Poland, the trade union system is highly pluralistic, and there are about 25,000 individual trade unions. Three-quarters of all company unions belong to one of the three trade union confederations: NSZZ *Solidarność*, OPZZ, or FZZ (Trappmann, 2012) (see below). According to data for 2012, NSZZ *Solidarność* had around 623,000 members, OPZZ around 793,000 members, and FZZ around 408,000 members.²

The biggest Czech trade union confederation is the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (*Českomoravská konfederace odborových svazů, ČMKOS*). In 2015, 29 trade unions with approximately 287,000 members³ belonged to ČMKOS. The most important trade union operating in the HCM sector is the Trade Union of Mining, Geology and Oil Industry Workers (*Odborovy Svaz Pracovníků Hornictví, Geologie a Naftového Průmyslu, OS PHGN*). Within the framework of OS PHGN, there is an Association of Mining Unions (*Sdružení hornických odborů, SHO*).

3.1 Polish trade unions' positions toward EU climate and energy policy

Polish trade unions operating in the HCM sector have long been strongly opposed to many key assumptions of the EU's climate and energy policy. For example, in a 2014 letter to the then Prime Minister Donald Tusk, NSZZ *Solidarność* took the position that EU goals for 2030 to reduce CO₂ emissions and increase the share of renewable energy are “from the point of view of the Polish *raison d'état* absolutely unacceptable” and would mean the loss of several hundred thousand jobs and an increase in energy prices. (NSZZ *Solidarność*, 2014). In the same year, in a joint petition to Donald Tusk, mining trade unions called for vetoing the so-called second EU energy and climate package, “taking into account Polish socio-economic conditions and the state's energy security” (Związki Zawodowe, 2014a). This view was repeated in the letter of the mining trade unions to the then Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz (Związki Zawodowe, 2014b). All three major mining trade unions – ZZ *Kadra*, NSZZ *Solidarność*, and ZZG – in Poland called the participants of the February 2018 meeting with the Polish Ministry of Energy “eco-terrorists” (Związki Zawodowe, 2018a).

ZZ *Kadra* recognizes the threats arising from the functioning of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme in Poland, which in its view may result in the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs. ZZ *Kadra* in 2017 expressed support for the general idea of establishing the Just Transition Fund to supplement the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund and being financed from the ETS system in the amount of 2% of revenues (Kadra, 2017).

HCM trade unions in Poland were very active on the occasion of the Katowice COP24 summit in 2018. The international scale of the summit and related events have been evoked by trade unions to convince Polish and foreign public opinion and political decision-makers of their arguments. Cooperation among mining trade unions and a unified position strengthened their message and position in seeking to influence political authorities. Thus, in line with Klüver (2011) and Mahoney (2007), they aimed to build a coalition and raise arguments that could be considered justified by wider social groups.

In the petition of the National Section of Hard Coal Mining NSZZ *Solidarność* from January 21, 2019, statements by representatives of the Polish authorities regarding COP24 Katowice were “more or less in line with the mainstream current in COP24 – trend toward decarbonization, phasing out of coal, which for our state, and especially for Upper Silesia and the Dąbrowa Basin, means

economic death and permanent impoverishment of society.” The announcement of “a drastic reduction in the share of coal in the Polish energy mix” contained in the Polish Energy Policy until 2040 was also criticized (NSZZ *Solidarność*, 2019a).

The opposition of the Polish Prime Minister to climate neutrality as a EU goal until 2050, expressed at the June 2019 European Council meeting, was echoed by the Executive Board of the Śląsko-Dąbrowski Region of NSZZ “*Solidarność*” with huge approval. According to NSZZ *Solidarność*, the acceptance of such a plan would mean “a catastrophe for the Polish economy and permanent impoverishment of the inhabitants of our state.” The Prime Minister’s position was recognized as “the first example of successful pursuit of the Polish *raison d’état* in the area of EU climate and energy policy in many years” (NSZZ *Solidarność* 2019b).

In a letter containing comments on the draft Polish energy policy until 2050, ZZ *Kadra* expressed the view that the objectives of the EU climate policy until 2030 for Poland are “unrealistic” and the energy industry based on Polish hard coal and lignite is “the surest investment in the future and security of the state” (Kadra, 2015). According to ZZ *Kadra*, Poland’s energy policy should be based on hard coal and lignite, followed only by natural gas and renewable energy sources (Kadra, 2017a).

Związek Zawodowy Górników (Miners’ Trade Union) in Poland also took a critical stance and negatively assessed the assumed decline in the importance of hard coal as an energy resource. It argued that Poland’s own hard coal and lignite resources ensure the country’s energy security and that the reduction of hard coal in Poland’s energy policy is already part of the European Commission’s policy for reducing CO₂ emissions. This will result in the need to further restructure the HCM sector, job losses, and thus Poland’s loss of energy sovereignty and degradation of the main HCM regions, i.e., Upper Silesia, Małopolska, Lublin (ZZGP, 2015).

3.2 Czech trade unions’ positions toward EU climate and energy policy

In recent years, the trade union operating in the Czech HCM sector has focused on social problems and paid less attention to the EU energy and climate policy. Following the announcement of insolvency by New World Resources (May 2016), the OKD company was nationalized. The mining trade union strongly supported nationalization and blamed all Czech governments after 1991 for OKD’s bankruptcy (Stanovisko Sdružení, 2017). OS PHGN mainly focuses on the annual negotiation of collective agreements and higher-level collective agreements (*Kolektivní smlouvy vyššího stupně*). These documents regulate matters related to working conditions, such as working time, remuneration, work safety, etc. Regarding social issues, two very important events in the HCM industry in which OS PHGN was engaged were the reduction of the retirement age for miners and regulation (Act 167/2016) and mitigating the social effects of restructuring or termination of activities of entities dealing in HCM concerning OKD.

The OS PHGN trade union program neither for 2012–2016 (OS PHGN, 2012) nor for 2016–2020 (OS PHGN 2016a) contains any specific provisions regarding the EU energy and climate policy. Much more important was the content of the call to the Czech Government, which was adopted at the VIII Congress of the OS PHGN in March 2016. According to participants, the state’s energy security can only be ensured thanks to its own natural resources, and the greater the independence on imported raw materials, the higher the level of security of the Czech Republic. Trade unionists of OS PHGN called on the Czech government not to succumb to the “mindless” pressure of “ecological fanatics” at the national, European, and global level (OS PHGN, 2016b).

To sum up, the attitude toward the goals of the EU energy and climate policy of all major Polish and Czech HCM trade unions is essentially the same. This also applies to OS PHGN, the *de facto* only Czech HCM trade union. However, it should be emphasized that while Polish mining unions devoted much attention to the EU energy and climate policy, OS PHGN focused on the survival of OKD after the bankruptcy of New World Resources and the (effective) fight for social rights. The position on the EU energy and climate policy was expressed by trade union activists (see Table 10.1).

3.3 HCM trade union arguments justifying their stances

Based on official documents and interviews with Czech trade union activists⁴ on the internet, Polish and Czech HCM trade unions put forward arguments, which can be categorized as follows (Table 10.1).

It is apparent that the arguments of Polish and Czech mining trade unions coincide and their rhetorical tactic is the same, i.e., although interest groups like trade unions “exclude[...] broad movements and waves of public opinion that may influence policy outcomes” (Beyers, Eising, & Maloney, 2008, p. 1106), mining trade unions refer to arguments that go beyond their particular interests

TABLE 10.1 Arguments in opposition to EU climate and energy policy

Type of argument	Explication
Related to climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “the opinions of scientists regarding the impact of man on climate change and the effects of these changes are differentiated” (NSZZ <i>Solidarność</i>, 2019b). - “global warming theses are based on a scientific theory that has not yet been reliably proven” (Sábel, 2017). - “CO₂ can be absorbed by forests” and coal can be used in a way “that does not involve negative environmental impacts” (Społeczny Pre_COP24).

(Continued)

Type of argument	Explication
Related to the desirability of EU climate and energy policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “the EU has a small share of global CO₂ emissions and thus a small impact on the Earth’s climate” (Sábel, 2019b). - “costs of climate policy should be borne primarily by consumers of goods and services containing a carbon footprint from richer countries, and not their producers from poorer countries” (Związki zawodowe, 2018b); - “EU policy is the result of lobbying corporations operating in the renewable energy sector” (Sábel, 2019a). - “coal burning by utility power engineering does not contribute to the formation of smog in the least” and CO₂ “is not a toxic gas and it has absolutely nothing to do with smog” (NSZZ <i>Solidarność</i> 2019b).
State’s energy security/independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “EU’s climate and energy policy will lead to the EU becoming dependent on imports of natural gas and coal from other states” (Sábel, 2019a). - “solar and wind power plants are unreliable” (Sábel, 2017). - “considering that Czech nuclear power plants are aging, the need to import natural gas, the instability of energy production from renewable sources to ensure energy security and affordable energy prices for individual consumers and industry, coal will be irreplaceable” (Franta, 2019). - “Poland should ensure energy security based its raw materials” (Społeczny Pre_COP24). - “COP24 member states should be free to shape their energy mix” (Społeczny Pre_COP24).
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “liquidating hundreds of thousands of jobs” (NSZZ <i>Solidarność</i>, 2019b). - “permanent impoverishment of society” (NSZZ <i>Solidarność</i>, 2019b). - “worsening of the labor market and social security situation” (Kadra, 2015). - decarbonization is a “huge threat” for Poland and the future of Polish families (NSZZ, <i>Solidarność</i>, 2019b). - “increase in energy prices for households” (Kadra, 2017; Pytlík, 2016); - “climate policy and environmental protection must not lead to energy poverty” (Kadra, 2014).
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “very high financial cost – for Poland at least EUR 200 billion” (NSZZ <i>Solidarność</i>, 2019b). - “stunting economic development” (NSZZ <i>Solidarność</i>, 2019b). - “electricity produced from solar and wind power is very expensive” (Sábel, 2017). - “higher energy prices” (Związki zawodowe, 2018a).

Type of argument	Explication
Related to the nature of the debate on climate change and EU energy and climate policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “the discussion on climate change is dominated by propaganda and manipulation” (NSZZ <i>Solidarność</i>, 2019b). - “the public debate is dominated by IPCC reports, treated as revealed truth, not subject to any discussion or verification although IPCC forecasts are not later confirmed by reality” (NSZZ <i>Solidarność</i>, 2019b). - “the EU seems to be ruled by ecological and climatological fanatics” (Sábel, 2019b). - “just transition is only an empty slogan” (NSZZ <i>Solidarność</i>, 2019b). - “avoiding discrimination against states whose economies are particularly dependent on fossil fuels” (Społeczny Pre_COP24).

and embrace the general public. In other words, they aim to extrapolate their positions to other social groups, which are not directly or only indirectly connected with the sector.

3.4 Assessing the impact of trade unions on the Polish and Czech governments' positions toward EU climate and energy policy

As stated in the theoretical part, the conditions in which interest groups operate and try to influence political decisions are of key importance for assessing their impact. “Interest groups do not develop or operate in a vacuum” (Thomas, 2004, p. 67), and their influence is “highly conditional” (Orach, Schlüter, & Österblom, 2017, p. 91). The first group of factors concerns the size and employment of the hard coal-mining sector for the Polish and Czech energy balance. The basic data for the period 1990–2018 are included in Table 10.2. It should be noted that currently about 83% of all hard coal produced in the EU is mined in Poland. However, the Czech share is only about 6%. What is striking, though, is the very large drop in production, employment and the number of active mines compared to the beginning of the system transformation, both in Poland and in the Czech Republic.

Other key factors affecting Poland’s energy and climate policy are its high dependency on coal for electricity production – mainly hard coal (47% in 2018) and brown coal (29% in 2018). As reflected in Table 10.3, this is well above the EU average, and the share of electricity produced from hard coal in Poland is by far the highest in the EU. The Czech situation is completely different – it produces only 5% of electricity from hard coal, while lignite (43%) is much more important. The importance of hard coal is greater in the heating sector – in 2014,

TABLE 10.2 Hard coal in Poland, the Czech Republic and the EU – selected data

	<i>Year</i>	<i>Poland</i>	<i>Czech Republic</i>	<i>EU</i>
Production (Mt)	2018	63.4	4.5	76
	2013	76.5	8.6	114
	2008	83.4	12.6	n.a.
	2004	99.2	13.3	n.a.
	1990	147.4	23.2	n.a.
Imports (Mt)	2018	19.7	3.3	166
	2013	10.8	2.1	216
	2008	9.4	2.1	n.a.
Employment (thousand)	2018	82.7	9.5	n.a.
	2004	127.1	19.6	332.9
	1990	387.9	71.7	n.a.
Number of active hard coal mines/units	2018	21	3	n.a.
	2004	39	5	n.a.
	1990	70	27	n.a.

Source: <https://euracoal.eu/info/euracoal-eu-statistics/> (21 December 2019), Euracoal (2005), Euracoal (2013), Euracoal (2018), Alves Dias et al. (2018), World Energy Council (2000), Kaczorowski & Gajewski (2008).

it generated 17% of heat (Rečková, Rečka, & Ščasný, 2017). Secondly, the Czech Republic is a significant net exporter of electricity, while Poland consumes more electricity than it can produce and the shortages must be covered by import.

The document *Poland's energy policy until 2040* stipulates that in 2030 about 56%–60% of electricity will be produced from coal in Poland. This means a slow phasing out of coal as a raw material (in 2018 it was 76%, Table 10.2) due to the lack of a real alternative in the short and medium term.

Another significant impediment to a more progressive energy policy is that the government – which HCM unions try to influence – is simultaneously the actual owner of almost all mines in Poland (directly or indirectly through subsidiaries).⁵ The same applies in the Czech Republic, since the only producer, OKD, until 2017 owned by New World Resources NV, was nationalized again. Hence, the Polish and Czech governments play multiple roles simultaneously: they are regulators at the national level, policy-makers at the EU level, and owners. Decisions regarding the state's position in the EU are, therefore, taken by mine owners whose future depends on these decisions. Moreover, the Polish government controls all large energy companies, which are the main recipients of coal from state-owned mines. This causes a conflict of interest – on the one hand, the state as the entity controlling the energy sector is concerned about the cheapest coal supplies (even from imports), on the other hand, it is against the interests of mines, which are also state-owned. As a result, energy companies – whose boards are staffed by political operatives – try to balance between economic rationality and concern for the financial results of enterprises and expectations of

TABLE 10.3 Power production by fuel in Poland, the Czech Republic, and the EU28, (2018)

		<i>Lignite</i>	<i>Hard coal</i>	<i>Other fossil</i>	<i>Gas</i>	<i>Nuclear</i>	<i>Hydro</i>	<i>Solar</i>	<i>Wind</i>	<i>Biomass</i>	<i>Consumption</i>	<i>Imports</i>	<i>Production</i>
Poland	TWh	49	80	5	11	0	2	0	13	8	175	6	169
	% of production	29	47	3	7	0	1	0	8	5	-	3	-
Czech Republic	TWh	37	4	3	4	30	2	2	1	5	73	-14	87
	% of production	43	5	2	5	34	2	2	1	6	-	-	-
EU 28	TWh	300	324	131	614	829	344	127	382	198	3,276	26	3,249
	% of production	9	10	4	19	25	11	4	12	6	-	0.1	-

Source: Agora Energiewende, Sandbag (2019) and own calculations (% of production).

political authorities, that are under pressure from the hard coal sector and which primarily have political goals in mind.

It should also be noted that, currently, about 80,000 people work directly in the Polish HCM sector and about 400,000 jobs in enterprises are linked to mining (according to the Polish Mining Chamber of Industry and Commerce).⁶ A phasing out of coal, therefore, would be a very serious challenge not only for miners but also for many people in other enterprises. This again justifies the tactics of extrapolating to other social groups than just those employed directly in mining.

Altogether, especially in Poland, mining trade unions have greater resources (financial, human) and are able to mobilize larger and more politically significant social groups than ecological organizations and interest groups working for the renewable energy sector. The livelihood of several hundred thousands of families is directly and indirectly connected with the mining sector. Hence they constitute a very significant group of voters, who are particularly important in strongly polarized Polish society. It is additionally worth noting that both countries' green parties play virtually no political role. This is a distinct difference to western European countries, and to some extent, this reflects the dominant social views on issues regarding energy sources and environmental protection.

3.5 Contrasting the Polish and Czech governments' positions on the EU climate and energy policy

How do we explain the Czech government's turnaround and ultimate acceptance of the EU's policy of climate neutrality until 2050? In December 2019, before the European Council meeting, Prime Minister Andrej Babiš pointed out that without the activities of other states, EU activity regarding CO₂ reduction would be ineffective, that this would mean very high costs for the Czech Republic and would not be possible without EU financial assistance. He stressed that reducing greenhouse gas emissions must not threaten the competitiveness of EU economies. Representatives of the Czech authorities declared that by 2050 they want to increase electricity production in nuclear power plants and from renewable sources.⁷ And according to Popp, trade unions in Czech Republic representing coal miners "have a strong influence on climate and energy policy and are strongly opposed to any measure that might impact coal. They have close ties to the government" (Popp, 2019, p. 5).

There seem to be several fundamental reasons for the Czech Republic's retreat from its initial stance. First, its energy mix contrasts with Poland's, as reflected in Table 10.3. The need to import electricity significantly hinders the transition from hard coal in Poland – simply, in the absence of sources of electricity production other than coal (hard coal and lignite), there is no short- and medium-term substitute for this raw material. Theoretically, the Czech Republic could completely give up electricity generation from hard coal without significantly reducing its energy security. However, in Poland, the situation is different. On the demand side, what will cause its growth is economic development (the estimated

increase in electricity demand for this reason is approx. 2%–3% per year), urbanization of large- and medium-sized cities resulting in an increase in demand for system heating (approx. 3%–4% per year) and the possible development of electromobility. On the supply side, the oldest power units that cannot be modernized will be phased out.

Even assuming the dynamic development of renewable energy sources and taking into account the current state of affairs and financial capabilities, it is not possible for Poland to soon abandon coal as an energy source. Furthermore, in recent years (2017–2019), a few new coal units have been built or are still under construction: 1,075 MW unit at Kozienice power plant, two 905 MW units at Opole power plant, 910 MW unit at Jaworzno III power plant, 496 MW unit at Turów power plant, and 1,000 MW in Ostrołęka C power plant.⁸

Against this background, Polish mining trade unions not only strongly defend the extraction of coal, but also oppose measures that could impact its future importance for energy production. In 2016, NSZZ *Solidarność* took a very clear position regarding the Polish energy mix: “there never was, there is not, and there can never be approval on our part regarding the construction of a nuclear power plant.” This position is justified by the risk of failure and its consequences and the lack of social acceptance (NSZZ *Solidarność*, 2016).

Summarizing, the position of the Polish government toward the EU energy and climate policy is the result of both the political significance, mobilization, activity and cooperation as well as a unified position on this matter of mining trade unions, and favorable objective conditions. The most important is the Polish energy mix, as fundamental change and phasing out coal would take many years and require significant investments. The Czech situation is different. In accordance with the energy policy of the government, “the aim of the Czech Republic in the area of energy and climate protection is to ensure the transition to a competitive low-carbon economy and to reduce the dependence on fossil fuels” (The Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, 2015, p. 39). In 2020, the share of hard coal in total final energy consumption was to be only 2.7%, and in 2040, 2.3%. In total gross electricity production, the share of hard coal in 2020 is 4.6%, and in 2040, it should be 2.2%. The share of hard coal in the heat supply in 2020 is 15.3%, and in 2040, it should decrease to 10% (Ministerstvo Průmyslu a Obchodu, 2014). Thus, even though the Czech Republic has typically taken a skeptical stance on low-carbon development, it has often cooperated with the Visegrád Group countries in blocking European climate ambitions. However, it is somewhat more progressive than Poland regarding the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) and energy efficiency (Popp, 2019, p. 4).

An additional reason is trade union politicization. Informality is a characteristic feature in the sense that interest groups do not normally seek public office or compete in elections, but pursue their goals through frequent informal interactions with politicians and bureaucrats (Beyers, Eising, & Maloney, 2008). “However, many nonpolitical interest groups are forced to become politically active because there is no other way to protect or promote the interests of their members or an

organization such as a business” (Thomas, 2004, p. 8). Consequently, the Polish trade union movement is strongly politicized. This situation dates back to 1989 and even earlier, when, in the 1980s, NSZZ *Solidarność* was not only a trade union but also a social movement opposing the communist authorities. In the 1990s, trade unions saw and treated political parties and parliamentary representation as a tool of political influence. Several Polish political parties have emerged from the trade union movement, and trade union activists frequently enter politics (Zientara, 2009). Roughly speaking, NSZZ *Solidarność* ideologically is center-right and/or right-wing and officially supported the conservative Law and Justice party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) in parliamentary elections and their candidates in presidential elections. Since 2015, NSZZ *Solidarność* has become an even stronger ally of Law and Justice. OPZZ is ideologically on the left or center-left and is politically closer to left-wing parties (Democratic Left Alliance, Left Together, Labor Union). FZZ is generally centrist. The most important opposition political party in Poland – Civic Platform – is not linked with any trade union.

These circumstances have very strong practical significance. At a time when the Polish government had to make a decision regarding its position on the EU’s climate and energy policy, Poland was *de facto* in a permanent election campaign. In 2018, local elections were held; in 2019, elections to the European Parliament (spring) and the national parliament (autumn); and in 2020, presidential elections. Under the conditions of very strong rivalry and political polarization in Poland, the Law and Justice government could not risk losing the support of mining trade unions.

In the Czech case, only 9,500 people work in mines (of which approx. 20% are Poles), which significantly weakens the strength of their political impact. The potential reduction in employment or even the closure of all mines will not have such negative social and political effects as in Poland. Czech trade unions had much less influence on politics after 1989 than Polish trade unions (especially “Solidarity”), and the links between Czech trade unions and political parties are much weaker. “Formally and institutionally independent of any political parties, ČMKOS’s position is closest to the Czech Social Democratic Party” (Drahokoupil & Kahancová, 2017, p. 9). It is one of the most important Czech political parties after 1989, and since 2018, it has again joined the government led by Andrej Babiš, but in the 2017 elections, it received only 7.27% of the vote.

In addition, past experiences are very important. In Poland, the restructuring of the hard coal-mining sector was very turbulent and accompanied by numerous conflicts between the government as the owner of the mines, on the one hand, and miners and trade unions on the other hand, including the use of force during demonstrations by both parties, i.e., by trade unions and the police. In the Czech Republic, in turn, coal-mining restructuring was relatively calm: “in the Ostrava region, the miners’ union cooperated with the government – and the government consulted with the union – which led to a peaceful process of restructuring despite the significant decline in employment” (Bruha, Ionascu, & Jeong, 2005, p. 4).

The third reason relates to differences in the Polish and Czech trade union systems. One of the most important features of the Polish trade union movement is its fragmentation. The hard coal-mining sector is among the economic sectors with the highest level of unionization, in which several dozen trade unions are active. Very characteristic of the trade union movement in Poland is that it is already very pluralistic. This means not only that there are very many trade unions, but also that in many enterprises, there are several or even several dozen trade unions acting simultaneously. This is most evident in sectors where enterprises are primarily state-owned such as HCM. According to the latest available data, in 2014 in Poland, 72% of the total employees in the “mining and quarrying” sector belonged to trade unions, which was the highest union density ratio by sector (GUS, 2015).⁹

The very high level of unionization, exceeding several times the national average, with several dozen trade unions operating in one mine, and employees belonging to more than one union causes constant competition and rivalry between trade unions. Thus, in practice, trade unions sometimes try to outbid one another when raising claims (e.g., wage increases, defense of endangered jobs, protests against mines liquidation, conditions of mining restructuring, conditions of employment, opposition to hard coal import, opposition to mine privatization plans, pressure for financial public support). Besides political involvement, trade unions in Poland recently frequently initiated collective disputes and organized various types of protests, demonstrations, petitions, demands, etc.

Another very significant difference in the Czech Republic is the predominance of a one-workplace-one-union principle, a legacy of decentralization after 1990 that eliminates such motivations in trade union activities as in Poland (Veverkova & Wegenschimmel, 2016). The most prevalent level of collective bargaining is the company level. It is worth adding that, as Mansfeldová writes, strikes are relatively very rare. Trade unions rather tend to declare a strike alert, which is announced during collective bargaining (Mansfeldová, 2015). In Poland, after Law and Justice came to power in 2015 supported by “Solidarity”, there were no strikes or very radical forms of protests (during the rule of the Civic Platform in 2007–2015, there was even physical violence used by miners and the police). However, mining trade unions almost always organized forms of protests such as petitions, mass crew demonstrations, underground protests, roadblocks, railway blocks, crew occupation of the mines’ offices, strike alerts, or strike referendums.

Therefore, taking into account the energy mix and the much smaller economic importance of HCM and the much smaller political importance of mining trade unions than in Poland, the Czech government changed its position of June 2019 and jointly declared the objective of climate neutrality with other EU countries – except for Poland. Two other very important factors are, first, a very large reduction in coal and lignite stipulated in the Czech Energy Policy until 2040 (Ministerstvo Průmyslu a Obchodu, 2014). Second, moving away from coal will enable the use of the financial resources from the Just

Transformation Fund, the EU financial instrument supporting regions most affected by the transition toward climate neutrality. Hence, the Czech government considered that the political costs of opposing climate neutrality in the EU arena would be too high.

4 Conclusions

The position of Polish and Czech HCM trade unions toward EU climate and energy policy is clearly negative. To justify their opposition, they refer to arguments that go beyond sectoral interests and aim to convey the impression that they also act in the interest of other social groups. Thus, they seek to ‘publicize’ their position rather than ‘silencing’ the issue and achieving their goals ‘quietly’.

Despite the success of coal-mining organizations in fueling Poland’s opposition to phasing out coal, the long-term prospects of this strategy are uncertain. Rising prices of energy produced from coal (a consequence of geological conditions and the EU regulations), together with falling prices of renewable energy, may decrease the importance of coal as an energy resource. This process has been going on in Poland (and Europe) for several decades, and the pressure of mining trade unions may slow it down, but it is not able to stop it.

Altogether, several factors explain the differential clout of mining trade unions on governmental policy. In Poland, there are many more member-strong unions; they have relatively large resources at their disposal; and, importantly, they compete strongly with each other, which promotes the radicalization of their demands and tools used to achieve objectives (strikes or even violence). The political calendar and elections (to local governments, the European Parliament, national parliament, presidential elections), which were held in Poland in 2018–2020, were also very important. For example, in the 2020 Polish presidential election, the difference in the second round between Andrzej Duda – openly supported by the trade union “Solidarity” – and the opposition candidate Rafał Trzaskowski was only about 422,000, which is almost exactly the number of people estimated employed in mining and sectors directly related to it. Taking into account the energy mix, the Czech Republic may consider it easier to give up energy produced from hard coal, and the social and political effects would be much smaller.

Finally, one cannot neglect the current impact of coronavirus on the sector. High infection rates among coal-miners have turned the traditional mining regions into national epicenters of the pandemic. Resulting short- and long-term health issues may not only weaken the practical organizational capacity of mining unions but also shed further doubt on the sector’s viability in the future. This unexpected calamity may further facilitate the decline of the sector not only in the Czech Republic but also in Poland despite the many factors outlined above that have stalled its downsizing.

Notes

- 1 Detailed solutions were included in secondary legal acts: Directive 2009/28/EC, Decision 406/2009/EC and Directive 2009/29/EC.
- 2 <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pl/country/poland#actors-and-institutions> (26 December 2019).
- 3 As Vevekova and Wegenschimmel (2016) note, according to ČMKOS, which does not keep ex-act records on the number of members. Myant (2010, p. 891) writes that the figure cannot be calculated with precision partly because of uncertainty over the exact level of union membership [...] and partly because unions generally retained pensioners as members and these were often not counted separately. The number of pensioners varied enormously between unions, but often exceeded 20% of total membership.
- 4 Jan Sábel – president OS PHGN, Jaromír Franta – president SCO/CCG (*Sdružení odborových organizací/Czech Coal Group*) Jaromír Pytlík – president SHO OKD (*Sdružení hornických odborů*, Association of Mining Unions in OKD).
- 5 Only three very small hard coal mines in Poland are 100% private property: Przedsiębiorstwo Górnicze Silesia Sp. z o.o., Zakład Górniczy Siltech Sp. z o.o. and Eko-Plus Sp. z o.o.
- 6 https://www.slaskibiznes.pl/wiadomosci_firmy-okologornicze-blagaja-o-pomoczy-plan-sasina-to-fikcja_wia5-1-3235.html (22 July 2020).
http://www.solidarnosckatowice.pl/pl-PL/przemysl_okologorniczny_potrzebuje_wsparcia.html (22 July 2020).
- 7 *Boj s klimatickou zmenou bude Česko stát biliony korun, zapojit se ale musí celý svět*, 02 December 2019.
<https://www.osphgn.cz/clanky/aktuality/boj-s-klimatickou-zmenou-bude-cesko-stat-biliony-korun--zapojit-se-ale-musi-cely-svet.html> (21 December 2019).
- 8 In February 2020, owners of the Ostrołęka power plant decided to suspend construction of the C unit.
- 9 In the biggest hard coal-mining company in Poland (and EU) – Polish Mining Group (*Polska Grupa Górnicza*, PGG) around 43,000 people were employed at the end of 2017. In entities of the PGG Capital Group in 2017, there were 148 trade union organizations grouped in 24 trade unions, which included over 40,000 employees, meaning a unionization level of 93.1%. In numbers, the largest trade unions at PGG are: NSZZ *Solidarność* (24.5% of the total trade unions members in PGG), ZZG (15.4%), *Sierpień 80*” (14.8%), and *Kadra* (9.9%), *Związek Zawodowy Ratowników Górniczych* (5.4%), *Związek Zawodowy Pracowników Dołowych* (5.3%), other trade unions – 17.8% (PGG, 2017). In the second biggest mining company in Poland in terms of employment and hard coal extraction – Jastrzębie Coal Company (Jastrzębska Spółka Węglowa, JSW) – 28,268 people were employed at the end of 2018. At JSW, 125 trade union organizations operated, with 31,739 members. The number of trade union members is higher than the number of JSW employees because each employee may belong to more than one trade union. This meant that the union density rate at JSW was 119.9% (JSW, 2018). In 2018, the hard coal-mining company in the Lublin Basin – Lublin Coal “Bogdanka” Capital Group (Lubelski Węgiel Bogdanka, LW “Bogdanka”) employed 5,420 people, and six trade unions operated in it, with 3,319 members, which meant that the union density ratio was 70% (LW Bogdanka, 2018).

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11

BETWEEN MISSION AND INTERESTS

The evolving role of the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic and Poland

Joanna Kulska

1 Introduction

Among the diverse actors present in the discourse on interest groups, religious groups have been rarely, albeit increasingly, discussed. In Europe, this refers in particular to historical majority Churches, which in different parts of the continent contributed significantly to the development of both social and political institutions shaping contemporary European states. The Catholic Church is one such influential actor, which has attracted much attention in research on Western Europe (Werner, 2001; Minkenberg, 2003; Fink, 2008) but received less attention in CEE (Stan & Turcescu, 2011; Ramet, 2014; Grzymała-Busse, 2015). The chapter aims at the comparative analysis of the evolving role, goals, and strategies applied by the Catholic Church in Poland and the Czech Republic, taking into consideration the significantly different position of the religious factor in social-political contexts in both countries. Following the argument that religion is a major structural factor characterizing societies and likely to change little over time (Fink, 2008, p. 1646), I argue that the political entanglement of particular national churches in the post-communist context needs to be viewed as a relatively dynamically evolving phenomenon. According to this perspective, national church hierarchies adjust their strategies to altering sociopolitical reality, depending on their accessibility to the political arena. This process can lead to backing off from active engagement in the political sphere as in the Czech Republic or moving from an agenda-setting strategy to a veto-player function in Poland (see Fink, 2009). In the Polish case, the veto-player strategy may be based not on the mobilization potential of the religious electorate but on doctrinal premises, as I illustrate on the abortion issue. Due to the growing role of the identity factor in policy-making, it is an option for political elites to instrumentalize the Church, especially in countries where religion has been an important tool in shaping loyalty toward the state.

2 Theorizing the Catholic Church as a political actor

There are two basic understandings of the Catholic Church, a more institutional and a more communal understanding. According to the first, the religious community forms the organizational–institutional unity represented by its leaders who hold their posts and act uniformly as such. According to the second, the Catholic Church is the community of the faithful who want to follow the values and norms of the religion and not perform their religious affiliation as a uniform institutionalized subject (Böckenförde et al., 1994, p. 92).

In its own understanding, the Church is not an interest group. This perception is the result of the aspirational character of the Catholic social doctrine based on three main principles, subsidiarity, solidarity, and the common good (Höffner, 1992, pp. 29–41). According to this approach, if the Church's institutions function based on those directives, they do not conflict with state institutions. They also do not aim at achieving particular goals gained with harm to the community. The crucial argument used in this regard is the postulate of independence toward the state and the postulate of coordination (Papiéska Rada Iustitia et Pax, 2005, pp. 276–278).

Political science analyses of the Church's political–institutional specifics are much more complex, because the Catholic Church is an institution that does not follow clear-cut categorizations. The Church is perceived as a denominational organization, institutionalized religious community, interest group, political actor, or political subject (Kowalczyk, 2014, p. 126). Looking at the Catholic Church as an interest group, three main approaches exist. First, the Church is one of many interest groups and regardless of its religious mission, it also performs social functions and participates in the public debate on not only sociocultural but also political issues. Second, it is a specific interest group as the social engagement of the Church complements its religious mission. Third, the Church is not an interest group as its social engagement is only an additional aspect of its activities (Dylus, 2005, pp. 99–101).

Almond et al. (2000) categorize churches, along with the army, bureaucracy, and corporations, as institutional interest groups which, while articulating their own interests, also carry out other political and social functions. In this sense, they carry out an evangelizing mission but simultaneously may have a significant influence on political processes (Kowalczyk, 2014, p. 128). Following this approach, it needs to be stressed again that there are various understandings of the Catholic Church. Since the Church as a whole includes both Catholic laity and leadership, it can be looked upon from two different perspectives: the perspective of the membership group and the perspective of the institutional group representing a hierarchical institution acting similarly to a corporation (Camissa & Manuel, 2016, p. 4).

A useful categorization of this atypical interest group was proposed by Warner, who perceives the Catholic Church as an institution aiming at accessing goods from the political and economic system of the state just like other interest groups

but, at the same time, having some specific features which no other interest group possesses. As such, the Catholic Church is the authoritative supranational institution to which all “national branches” are supposed to refer. Also, typical of only this particular interest group is that it functions based on the claim of universality of moral authority and is treated as the ultimate moral authority by its followers (Warner, 2001, pp. 7–8). As an interest group not following unequivocal categorizations, the Catholic Church can also be regarded as unique due to its number of followers. Contrary to interest groups usually representing “minority groups”, the Catholic Church represents the majority of the society, at least in Poland among other countries (Graniszewski, 2015, p. 118).

The Church’s range of concerns reaches beyond those of other interest groups. The Church was not created for the purpose of lobbying governments to obtain resources for its leadership and members or battle various institutional enemies (Warner, 2001, p. 7). Gaining influence over political authorities is not an aim in itself for the church. This influence is meant to secure the institutional stability of its structures and improve its effectiveness in performing social and religious functions (Zuba, 2010, p. 117). Yet, while Churches undoubtedly embody the sacred and the divine, their interests and influence extend well beyond the spiritual realm to the extent that warrants exploring the aims of the Church exceeding its mission. As Anna Grzymała-Busse shows in her seminal book: “Many countries are ‘nations under God’, where churches are powerful political actors, shaping policy and transforming lives in the process” (Grzymała-Busse, 2015, p. 2).

When achieving their goals, Churches rarely stand alone and united against the state. In reality, they create alliances with other political actors and other churches (Enyedi, 2003, p. 227). They also do not stick to one universal strategy as they have to take into consideration national specifics and sometimes long lists of factors shaping their national political standing. As a result, they can influence particular political systems either directly or indirectly. First, they influence policy by openly declaring their convictions, contacting public officials, or organizing protests. Second, they gain institutional access, which is a far more powerful instrument than creating partisan coalitions or relying on diffuse voter demand (Grzymała-Busse, 2015, p. 332).

Looking at the place and role of the Catholic Church in the political system, its relation to civil society must not be overlooked. According to many categorizations, religious organizations and bodies are subjects of the civil society sector. This approach is expressed, among others, in the official documents of the European Union (EU), which define Churches as institutions of civil society that engage citizens, especially at the local level (Szymczak, 2015, p. 52). They have functioned as such for decades in Western Europe, where processes of regulating mutual relations were initiated much earlier than in CEE. However, their relationship to civil society in the central part of the continent appears to be more complex and political. Moving away from the atheist model severely limiting the freedom of conscience and belief and organizing, often from the scratches, the mutual relations between the state and the Church were challenging in all

possible aspects. These included the social–political sphere but also political attempts to strengthen the political position of dominating churches including the Catholic Church. This not only resulted in formal legal challenges but also raised the question to what extent the Churches would or would not contribute to the processes of pluralization and building a strong, active, and independent civil society.

Although “catholic” means “universal,” the Catholic Church is by no means homogenous in terms of both its formal–legal standing and social–political entanglement. The Catholic Church is a transnational organization with a centralized hierarchical structure to which the representatives of national Catholic Churches are responsible. Since the doctrine or institutional structure, being the same, do not determine the specifics of national churches, any differences that may exist are the result of the national settings that override their commonalities (Kratochvíl, 2009, p. 126). Thus, by theoretically following the same universal pattern regulating the mutual relations between state and Church based on the principle of separation of religious and world orders, national contexts of delimitating between the given, concrete state and Catholic Church differ significantly. Also, the issue of the internal fractions occurring at the highest state–level organizations such as the National Conferences of Bishops should be taken into consideration. Finally, the Church in the institutional sense has been significantly diversified not only at the national but also at the local diocese and parish level where different political–religious settings exist¹ (Cammisa & Manuel, 2016, p. 4). Hence, the universality of the Church should be analyzed as the general principle and point of departure for interpreting the doctrine and the scope of activities but not in terms of specific relations with the political power determined by national and local factors.

3 Poland: the Catholic Church as an agenda-setter and veto-player

Weakened by the communist regime in a material sense due to the nationalization of the majority of the Church’s property, the Catholic Church in Poland entered the transformation period as a strong and influential mediator between the old and the new political elites. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Church mobilized with a new sense of mission based on “religious truths” in order to influence political decision-making, thought, and language. A good example is the term “unborn children” that has become rooted in the public discourse. Since then, the activities of the Church have taken on a more or less political character, never abandoning the political sphere totally (Zuba, 2010, p. 116).

The foundations of the mutual relations between the state and the Church in Poland were defined within the first four years after 1989 (Gowin, 1995; Gowin, 1999). At that time, the political scene was dominated by the centrist and rightist parties that generally deemed taking into consideration the religious values and material interests of the Church as justifiable (Zuba, 2020, p. 3). These

developments found expression at the institutional level where the bilateral bodies serving as the platforms for regular consultations between the Church and the government such as the Joint Commission of the Episcopate, the Property Commission, and the Concordat Commissions, in fact, became quasi-corporation forums for the Church to influence the government (Zuba, 2010, p. 124). Using its institutional access, the Church not only proposed bills at this stage but also intervened in appointing civil servants and officials.² “All sides of the political spectrum acceded to these demands for fear of destabilizing Polish democracy and newly found sovereignty” (Grzymała-Busse, 2015, p. 165).

The opposition toward the “special treatment” of the Church, even though then absent at the societal level,³ grew fast within left-liberal political circles. In the atmosphere of the “religious cold war”⁴ which embodied increasing criticism against the Church among society as well as anticlerical parties and media (Dudek, 2016, pp. 169–173), some important concessions toward the Church were made. They involved introducing religious education to schools as well as antiabortion regulations, which since then have been a constant topic in the political discourse accompanied by the return of Church’s property and the regulations on Christian values in education and public radio and television. Civil partnerships and in vitro fertilization were added later to the list of issues influenced by the Church.

Three main political strategies were applied by the Polish Catholic Church during the first two decades of transformation. First, it acted as a political principal, which meant exerting direct influence on the political scene by supporting Catholic national parties. Second, it shaped political values which, in practice, meant supporting the establishment of Christian Democratic parties. Finally, after 2004, while formally withdrawn from political activities, the Church engaged politically by supporting the Catholic national Radio Maryja, which has been very influential in sustaining the traditional, conservative wing of Polish Catholicism.⁵ In the following years, both direct and indirect instruments of influence were applied (Zuba, 2010, p. 124) in the form of the official and back-channel meetings of the bishops with political decision-makers, conferences, symposia, letters, and statements directed at politicians but also activities of religious advocacy groups (Kowalczyk, 2019, pp. 95–96).

According to Grzymała-Busse (2015), the Polish Church has been the most powerful interest group and is likely to remain so due to various sociocultural and political factors. First, despite the strong criticism and growing distrust toward the Church, society is often passive and disengaged from reforming an institution, which represents a crucial element of self-identification. Although critical toward the Church’s political engagement, voters do not express this criticism at the ballot box. At the same time, Polish politicians preserve the “tradition” of good relations with the Church and avoid, except for some rare cases,⁶ open conflict with the Church. As Poland is arguably an example of the greatest possible fusion of religious and national identities in the region, it is also one of the examples of the greatest moral authority of the Church gained in the course

of its “stormy history.” Even though this type of authority does not correspond with the popular need for engaging the Church in politics, it corresponds with the attitudes of the political elites wary of offending organized religion. Characteristic of Poland is thus the level of mutual links both between the nation and faith and between politicians and the Church’s hierarchy. A system of “supra-political” bonds that are often stronger than the political cleavages has been created (Grzymała-Busse, 2019, pp. 23–25).

“Supra-political” bonds characterizing relations between the state and the Church have not prevented the latter from altering its strategy in post-transformation Poland. While the Church initially could have been perceived as an active agenda-setter, later it adopted a veto-player strategy, before eventually becoming a quite passive, selective “third-way seeker” on some issues. Although this last strategy definitely is not applied by the whole Catholic clergy and not even the whole leadership embodied by the Episcopate, it does apply to the more open and more self-critical Church’s leadership meaning, among others, the primate archbishop Wojciech Polak. The lack of internal cohesion is well evidenced at the level of the Episcopate of Poland where the strong divisions between the more conservative and the more liberal wings have been observed, with the conservative one “winning the battle” in the public reception (Dylus, 2019, pp. 131–140).

Its role as agenda-setter developed when the belief in the Church’s pivotal role during the communist period was politically utilized by the ruling centrist and rightist parties in the early transformation period. Later, under conditions of the decreasingly favorable social-political climate, a slow evolution toward less-direct engagement could be observed. The political strategy of the Church developed toward that of a veto-player, as displayed by ever-present issues such as abortion, civil partnership regulations, and in vitro fertilization, which were opposed by the Church even in the moderate versions proposed by Catholic politicians such as Jarosław Gowin (Dąbrowska & Szacki, 2020, pp. 19–21). The Church expressed clear disapproval toward the legal proposals introduced at parliament, but the final outcomes were the result of different political settings: either the decisions made by state organs (the president, Constitutional Tribunal) practically applying Church’s argument (abortion), or the members of parliament expressing their personal religious convictions in the legislative process (civil partnerships), or conservative political party (PiS – *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*/ Law and Justice) introducing financial restrictions from the state budget (in-vitro fertilization) (Zuba, 2020). Regarding abortion, religious interest groups such as *Fundacja Pro, Instytut Ordo Iuris* or *Polska Federacja Ruchów Obrony Życia* (Polish Federation of Movements to Defend Life) have also been increasingly influential actors (Kowalczyk, 2019).

The turn from a more active agenda-setter toward a more passive veto-player seems to have been determined by two main developments: the increasing instrumentalization of the Church by conservative parties and the increasing social criticism and distrust among the society toward the Church.⁷ This tendency

became more apparent since PiS and its allies entered the political scene and openly used religious–national arguments for political purposes. The breakthrough moment may have been the dispute over the “Smoleńsk cross”⁸ in 2010. While the Episcopate did not take sides in the conflict, politicians and conservative media, including the leader of PiS, Jarosław Kaczyński, openly instrumentalized the symbol of the cross to mobilize more religious supporters (Kublik et al., 2013).

Two other issues exemplify the new Church strategy of distancing itself from political engagement and embracing the “third-way seeker” option, namely the discourse on migration and the problem of nationalistic attitudes. Though often presented in public discourse as the Church’s political attitude, the Church, in fact, has never officially declared anti-migrant views or support for nationalistic radicalism. By contrast, in both cases, the Church’s official stance was directed against the goals of the PiS government. Since 2015, the official position of the Episcopate was to accept a limited number of migrants in the spirit of Christians’ obligation to help refugees, and it has not changed since then (Modrzejewski & Raczyński, 2019). Despite numerous calls of the Episcopate, including the primate Wojciech Polak, and the president of Polish Episcopate Conference archbishop, Stanisław Gądecki, as well as signing the official agreement on cooperation with the Community of Sant Egidio as the leader of the project of Humanitarian Corridors in Europe, the Polish government’s stance on the issue has stayed the same. As to the problem of increasing radical nationalism in 2017 in the document entitled “Christian shape of patriotism,” the Episcopate made a sharp distinction between the positive attitude of patriotism meaning the “love of the homeland” and the attitudes contrary to patriotism, among them “national egoism, nationalism, cultivating the sense of own superiority, closing itself against other national communities and all-human community” (Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, 2017).

The historical–demographic matrix that resulted in the political–legal positioning of the Catholic Church was one of the essential determinants shaping the Polish public sphere after 1989. The Church not only influenced the transformation process and the axiological fundamentals of the political system but also contributed to legitimizing post-Solidarity elites, electoral behaviors, and the public debate. The model embarked by the Church turned out to be the one “in-between” the political and the metapolitical, meaning both the presence in the life of the political community as a participant in the political process and carrier of values (Kowalczyk, 2019, p. 96). As such, the Church used multiple strategies, from agenda-setter to veto-player, but it also attempted to signal its own political voice even at the cost of opposing “friendly” political decision-makers.

4 Czech Republic: the Catholic Church as a civil society actor

Contrary to Poland, the structural weakness of the Czech Catholic Church after 1989 became a key issue in the process of regulating relations with the state and

exerting political influence. Problems such as the lack of organizational structures at the dioceses and national level as well as lacking experience in contacts with the government bodies were visible. The essential factor influencing church–state relations were the Church’s dependence on the government in communist times, which in practical terms meant that priests and bishops received their salaries from the state budget and were thus regarded as civil servants (O’Mahony, 2003, p. 180). From an institutional perspective, both the nonreligious perception of Hussitism and the noninstitutional reception of religion by President Masaryk were also crucial.

The Czech Catholic Church is characterized by its passiveness, especially in the social–political realm. It also aimed to renew its institutional structures based on tactics from the pre-communist era, but in general, it is only weakly involved in social consultations (Kaczmarek, 2016, p. 282). This passive approach can also be explained by the political failure to make meaningful headway in the institutionalization of civil society (Potůček, 2000, pp. 107–121). As Joan O’Mahony (2003) noted, this failure brought with it numerous attacks on many religious organizations, not just the Catholic Church. This politics of exclusion can be perceived in the wider context of the Church’s inability to impact policy-making, neither through direct linkages with the state nor by influencing political parties.⁹

While supported by over 50% of society, including non-Catholics in the 1990s (Kaczmarek, 2016, p. 247), the relatively strong social position of the Church has been significantly weakened by the political controversy over the return of Church property. In the mid-1990s, the growing strength of the political party KDU-ČSL, traditionally perceived as connected to the Church, resulted in the recognition of the Catholic Church’s involvement in political issues and a further decrease in trust. Declining support for the Church was also effected by statements by the head of the Catholic Church at that time, Cardinal Vlk, who became not only the face of the restitution issue but also a public critic of the current political developments, including the critics of Václav Klaus’ government (1996–1997). The period of controversies and disputes lasted until 2006 when, among others, the Catholic Church softened its unfavorable view of Jan Hus.¹⁰

Since 2010, the political position of the Church has been shaped by the new primate Dominik Duka, who started his term in office by solving the dispute on the issue of the Saint Vitus Cathedral with President Klaus. The process of reaching a settlement between the Church and the government took two decades. It started in 1992 and culminated in 2012 during the intensive political debate and the passing of the bill on restitution. Primate Duka’s attempts also increased the level of engagement of the Church in the social and cultural realm. An important part of his activities were current issues of Czech public life from the perspective of the Church’s teachings. In the following years, the Czechs found themselves among countries expressing the lowest level of trust in the Church.¹¹

According to Jan Váně, the fact that Roman Catholics represent the largest religious group in the Czech Republic, with 10% of society declaring affiliation

to the Catholic Church, can be approached from two perspectives. On the one hand, this makes the Church a powerful institution

formally disposing of 10% of the population on which it can rely in political and religious disputes with the non-religious majority. On the other hand, various research projects have shown that in the eyes of the broad public, the Church hardly exercises influence that would match its cultural and historical significance.

(Váně, 2013, pp. 115–116)

In the legal sense, its weak position is evidenced by the lack of a binding agreement regulating its status. Signed in 2002 by the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Erwin Josef Ender and Minister of Foreign Affairs Cyril Svoboda, it was never ratified by parliament.

While, in Poland, the Catholic Church has held a monopolistic position in the sociopolitical structure, the Czech Catholic Church is perceived as one of many interest groups and, as such, has never been subject to a more detailed analysis in political science (Kaczmarek, 2016, p. 230). Society expects less and less from the Church except for its social services. As a result, the Church's strategy has been to turn its attention away from the state. Instead, it has formed alliances and strived "to draw the public's attention to civil society and to be active in the public space, also emphasizing the need to work for the community in its broadest possible sense" (Váně, 2013, pp. 116–117). In the practical sense, this approach has been pursued, along with other entities, by Caritas, which runs 1,340 facilities and serves 145,000 registered clients (Czech Bishops Conference, 2019).

The Czech Catholic Church has focused on family, old age, sickness, and pastoral activism aimed at young people. Even though its agenda has been defined, the Church has been unsuccessful in creating tools enabling it to become involved in political decision-making. With decreasing interest and support from political parties, it withdrew from active political involvement and focused more on economic and social problems. Thus, the current public agenda is formulated outside official Church structures. The leading role is thus played by individuals and driven by their personal effort to formulate current areas of interest. In practice, this means paying a lot of attention to the laity which the Czech Catholic Church recognizes as an integral part of the Church (Váně, 2013, pp. 113–120).

5 Catholic Church in Poland and the Czech Republic: between national religion and civic religion

Poland and the Czech Republic are considered extremely different cases in terms of constructing national identity and legitimizing the contemporary position of the Catholic Church, both socially and politically. In the Czech Republic, a non-denominational civic religion¹² was developed, "laic Christianity" as described by the prominent philosopher and anti-communist activist Jan Patočka.

Both the Polish Church and political authorities have “politicized” and instrumentalized religion based on the concept of “regaining” national culture and national identity, with the Church at the center of the “great Polish nation”. The aims of the Catholic Church are thus political and nonpolitical. It strives for both concrete short-term objectives as well as the long-term alteration of social and political values, attitudes, and behaviors. As such, independently of the same doctrinal source and organizational patterns, they constitute examples of different roles and political strategies of the Church.

In Poland, where the Catholic Church is said to constitute “the fourth branch of the government” (Ramet, 2017, p. 1), it holds a religious monopoly. In the vastly homogenous society, roughly 10% do not identify with the Catholic Church. In the highly secularized, though at the same time spiritual Czech population (Havliček, 2006, p. 331), 10% identify as Catholics. While in Poland the Roman Catholic Church is perceived as the protector of the nation during the partition and loss of independence, in the Czech Republic it is perceived as opposing the Czech nation and associated with Habsburg rule against pro-independent ambitions of Protestant nobles. Hence, 75% of Poles perceive a fusion of the Church and nation, while only 29% of Czechs do (Grzymała-Busse, 2015, p. 28). Poland offers examples of frequently offensive nationalism, the instrumentalization of religion, and its de-universalization (Zenderowski, 2010, p. 39). Czechs meanwhile may be considered the only example of modern national identity constructed upon laicized religious tradition (Zenderowski, 2018, p. 199).

The different political position of the Church is also visible in public discourse. Czech public discussions are rarely framed in religious terms (Kratochvíl, 2009, p. 128). In Poland, references to the heritage of Poland’s Christian civilization are crucial elements of the public discourse conveyed by the government-controlled public media, especially since 2015. The essence of this strategy was the opinion expressed by the leader of the ruling party PiS, Jarosław Kaczyński, who declared in September 2019 that outside the Catholic Church in Poland there is only nihilism.¹³ One year earlier at Jasna Góra monastery, considered the “spiritual capital of Poland,” Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki warned supporters of the Catholic Radio Maryja, the perceived political arm of PiS, that just like during the Swedish invasion in the XVII century “in the free Poland for the last 25 years and even today different ideological opponents have been trying to excavate under Poland, under Polishness, under our traditional values: family, patriotism, the dream of the great, magnificent Poland” (Deon, 2018).

Both in Poland and the Czech Republic, the Catholic Church influences education and social services on different scales. The Church became involved in Czech education, health care, and the army by offering religious services and psychological support, and in public television by having the right, in the capacity of a social organization, to appoint representatives to the national media board (Maćkowiak, 2020, p. 48). Since 1989, more than 100 church school institutions at all levels of education have been established or restored (Havliček,

2006, p. 337), including three Catholic theological faculties in Prague, Olomouc, and České Budějovice (Tretera & Horák, 2017). Also crucial from the perspective of strengthening civic activeness, the influence and importance of church humanitarian organizations have increased with The Charity of the Roman Catholic Church¹⁴ among the most important organizations in Czechia.

The Polish Roman Catholic Church is the biggest nongovernmental organization not only in Poland but also in Europe (Zuba, 2010, p. 117). It counts over 10,000 parishes and almost 25,000 clergies (ISKK, 2020, p. 4). It also acts as the “mobilizer” in terms of social engagement. Being the largest nongovernmental organization, the Church fosters the civil engagement of otherwise passive citizens. Janusz Czapiński concludes that religious and Church organizations are the forms of organized advocacy in which a significant part of Poles engage. As he underlines, in general, Poles rather do not participate much, do not belong anywhere, and do not act, unless mainly religious and Church organizations are involved (Szymczak, 2015, p. 52).¹⁵ The Church became engaged in the educational sector and social sector by developing a broad educational and social network consisting of over 560 Catholic schools, two Catholic universities in Lublin and Cracow, and nine theological faculties. Three million beneficiaries have been offered support by the Church’s institutions, not counting the help offered at the parish level. The Church has become the second provider of social services after the state (KAI, 2018).¹⁶

What both countries have in common is a model of Church–State relations based on autonomy and cooperation (German model), which recognizes the positive social role of the Church(es) and its presence in the public sphere. Meanwhile social–cultural, political, and formal–legal differences regarding the position of the Church are enormous. Two examples are the relations to the Holy See and financing of the clergy. The Czech Republic is the only CEE country without a concordat or some kind of other agreement signed with the Holy See. Following the old Habsburg pattern of Church–state relations, it also fully finances the clergy, which in Poland would be unacceptable¹⁷ due to the historical independence of the Church.

6 Abortion: from universality to locality

The evolution of the abortion policy in the whole post-Soviet bloc was one of the most visible examples of the Catholic Church’s influence in the countries where it had played a strong political role in the pre-communist period. Prior to the collapse of communism, abortion was legal in all Soviet-bloc countries since the 1950s, including the Soviet Union, except for Romania where it was delegialized under Ceaușescu. The passing of these laws did not result from the women’s movement or demands for reproductive freedom. The logic was rather of economic nature and was motivated by the state’s need to increase women’s participation in the labor force (Githens, 1996, p. 55).

Regarding abortion in Poland, the Church has acted as both a trendsetter and veto-player depending on the phase of the process. In particular in the early transformation period, even before the semi-free elections in Poland when the first official talks were held between the Church and the communist government, it acted as a trendsetter. The first bill banning abortion, which later became the basic point of reference to all next proposals, was drafted by lawyers appointed by the Episcopate, finalized in the Joint Commission, and introduced in the Sejm in the last days of the communist regime in May 1989 (Grzymała-Busse, 2015, p. 171).

From the beginning, the Church framed abortion as both a fundamental matter of natural law and the condition of the survival and development of the nation. Even then, the Church declared it will defend the unborn children even if it had no allies left (Episkopat Polski, 1991, p. 23). Simultaneously, it stressed that abortion should not become a topic of public debate due to its fundamental moral character. Following this line, a strategy was adopted, aimed at preventing a referendum on the issue. This proved to be effective within the next years when the parliament attempted to pass a bill on the referendum.¹⁸ The divisions regarding abortion, which later turned into political conflict, emerged both within the political arena and at the public opinion level, making abortion one of the most important and most controversial political issues in post-transformation Poland. In the heated debate, the pro-choice camp was referred to as “communist” or even the “Eichmann-Mengele-Stalin” option, while the opposite pro-life option was named “medieval” and “clerical” (Wielowieyska, 2020).

After the more than three-year controversy, a settlement was reached in 1993. Referred to as “the Anti-Abortion Act,” and known in the public discourse as the “abortion compromise,” the Act of 7 January 1993 restricted the possibility of performing abortions to just three cases: a threat to the woman’s life or health; irreversible damage to the fetus; and pregnancy resulting from a prohibited act (The 1993 Act). In the following years, with leftist governments, and later a leftist president Aleksander Kwaśniewski, the Act of 7 January 1993 was not changed and is binding until now. The reform attempt, namely The Act of Amendment of the Penal Code which was passed by the parliament in 1994, was vetoed by President Lech Wałęsa the same year. Two years later, when a group of MPs proposed another liberalization of the Anti-Abortion Act, it was overruled as nonconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. Though this is impossible to prove this decision was based on religious premises, this verdict was among the most controversial in the history of the Constitutional Court (Zuba, 2020).

Abortion became a fundamental political issue again before the 2003 EU Accession Referendum, with the Church acting now more in the capacity of a (potential) veto-player. At that time, the Church pursued a significantly modified approach compared to its earlier direct engagement. It is debatable what form of political influence the Church exerted before the referendum. Some observers raise arguments that the Church offered to back accession if the abortion law was not liberalized (Grzymała-Busse, 2015, p. 176). However, the then

leading politicians such as Leszek Miller suggest that the influence was not direct but rather a method of preventive steps undertaken by the ruling left-wing government. According to Miller, there was no “pacting” with the Church. His decision not to “go on war” with the Church, meaning not reopening the abortion issue, was not due to an agreement with the Church but mainly out of fear that the local parish priests could discourage their parishioners from participating in the EU accession referendum (Wielowieyska, 2020). Thus, the element of bottom-up negative mobilization over abortion affected the crucial political developments regarding EU accession. During the following years, internal divisions emerged within political parties such as PSL and PiS, between which opposite attitudes on the abortion issue have always been present.¹⁹

The abortion issue as one of the most important political topics of the post-transformation decades has come to bear in recent years especially in the form of civic legislative initiatives such as *Stop aborcji* (Stop abortion) or *Zatrzymaj aborcję* (Halt abortion) supported by the Church by means of public appeals and letters. Noticeable in this regard is the change of rhetoric used in the debate compared to three decades ago. The narrative is no longer that abortion is “evil,” rather something that is “not ok.” Arguments of scientific nature have also been increasingly used by the Church. Meanwhile, support for eugenic abortion has been decreasing according to public opinion polls (Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, 2018).

Yet, a decision by the Constitutional Tribunal issued on 22 October 2020 has again somewhat unexpectedly heated up the “cultural war” (Korolczuk, 2020). Based on a petition led by a group of PiS parliamentarians in late 2019, the Constitutional Tribunal ruled abortion unconstitutional due to heavy, incurable, and lethal damage to the fetus. This sparked massive protests engaging various political, social, and cultural groups expressing diversified views and attitudes. In addition to reproductive rights, the groups also called for LGBT rights, the removal of religious education from school curricula, climate action, animal rights, better education, and health care, among others (Strajk Kobiet, 2020). Eventually, abortion served as the “umbrella” issue which was well visible on the often very innovative posters carried by the protesters. While for the majority of protesters the fundamental right of women to decide on abortion was the fundamental issue, for many others it was an opportunity to demonstrate their hatred for the Church (expressed also by the acts of apostasy), the government, and, often personally, Jarosław Kaczyński.

This shed light on deep internal divisions within the Polish clergy. More liberal circles of the Church, both the clergy and Catholic journalists (Prze-ciszewski, 2020) trying to justify the protests, avoided open confrontation and appealed for deep reflection within the Church. More conservative members spoke of “collective possession,” attributing the protests to the radical, ultra-leftist activities carrying out “Satan’s deeds” and “persecuting the Church.” The strategy of political confrontation and “using” the Church was well evidenced in the rhetoric applied by the representatives of the Episcopate, on the one hand, and the government, on the other hand. When primate Wojciech Polak appealed

for respect for “holy places,” Jarosław Kaczyński called on PiS supporters to defend the church for any price, arguing that attacks on the church should not be perceived as accidental. Soon, Jarosław Kaczyński made the argument that the parliamentary opposition has “blood on its hands” due to the rising numbers of Covid victims as an alleged sideeffect of the protests.

Contrary to Poland, the topic of abortion has not been a significant political issue in the Czech Republic. Already in the 1950s when abortion was legalized in Czechoslovakia, it was framed as a medical issue, not an ethical one, and as a way to healthier motherhood (Dudová, 2010, p. 945). Since 1989, the issue has returned periodically, also in the moral context, but the political influence of the Catholic Church has not been the determining factor. Focus has been placed more on economic issues and the necessity to build a stronger civil society. This line of reflection and teaching was expressed, in particular, in the letter “Peace and good” (*Pokoj a dobro*) published in 2000 in which Czech bishops critically looked at the direction of development of the country in an excessively liberal and free-market direction. As a reaction to the letter, President Václav Klaus expressed his critique toward this engagement by the Church. In an article published in “Lidové noviny” in 2001, he encouraged the Church to pay more attention to issues such as abortion or the death penalty (Kaczmarek, 2016, pp. 302–303).

In the next years, the dominating force politically engaged in the abortion issue were single representatives of the Christian-Democrat KDU-ČSL. However, neither in 2003 nor in 2008 when they proposed banning abortion was it a top political issue. At the same time, abortion has been constantly addressed by different organizations gathered under the pro-life movement organizing yearly Marches for Life. However, they do not demand a ban on abortion, as this idea is perceived as unrealistic. Instead, their main focus has been the pragmatic goal of decreasing the number of the abortions performed and organizing more sufficient care for mothers and their families.

7 Concluding remarks

Three decades after the transformation, the Czech Catholic Church tends to be “one of many” actors in the social–political sphere. In Poland, its status is rather “one over many” still, though decreasingly, advocating corporatist aims and strategies. This status has resulted in still existing close bonds between the Church and the state, through which both the Church and the state exploit their mutual dependence. In the Czech Republic, the lack of such dependence translates into more civil society-oriented activities in the social and charity domains and avoiding direct political participation. At the same time, the element common to both models has been the move toward more passive political engagement. In this regard, the recent involvement of the primate of the Czech Catholic Church, Dominik Duka, in controversies around political attempts to limit the freedom

of public media has been quite puzzling. In Poland meanwhile, this passiveness has gained its own dimension. The question has been increasingly discussed in which direction the political influence of the Catholic Church will evolve in the connection to “dark side” of civil society and illiberal democracy problem. Once linked to democratic transformation, the process of pluralization and building a strong, active, and independent sphere of engaged citizens challenging the state, now some segments of civil society are turning away from those values. Instead, this illiberal civil society leans toward authoritarian power-promoting, top-down processes of building alternative organizations and movements supportive of government policies (Ekiert 2018; Ekiert, 2019). In Poland, this has already resulted in the adoption of new financing rules for NGOs and support for organizations with a more nationalist and Roman Catholic profile (Mandes, 2020, p. 112). Whether and to what extent the Church will engage itself in this strategy of the government may define not just short-term political interests but its long-term political and social standing.

Notes

- 1 Subsidiarity is a basic concept of Catholic theology that it is incumbent upon society to nurture basic human relationships. Thus, policies should be administered whenever possible at the level closest to the individual (Cammisa & Manuel, 2016, p. 5).
- 2 The undebatable sign of the close relations between the Church and the politicians was the consent to use the name Catholic by the coalition of the conservative right-wing Catholic Electoral Action (*Wyborcza Akcja Katolicka*) in the election of 1991.
- 3 In the early transformation period, public support for the Church was 90%. It dropped to under 40% by mid-1993.
- 4 The term “cold religious war” was coined by Jarosław Gowin to describe church-state relations in 1990 (Sowiński, 2014, p. 660).
- 5 Radio Maryja has become a central ideological pillar for consolidating Polish national-catholic ideology (Krzemiński, 2016, pp. 85–112).
- 6 Anna Grzymała-Busse notes that in the post-transition period open conflict with the Catholic Church would have negative consequences for political parties. The more significant political parties are thus more or less clerical, but look for compromise with the Church (Grzymała-Busse, 2019, p. 24).
- 7 Social trust in the Church decreased 17% between 2017 and 2020 to a level of 39.5%, the lowest in history (Przewodnik Katolicki, 2020). The sexual abuse scandal and political engagement of the Church were the main reasons (Boniecki, 2019; Sporniak, 2019).
- 8 The “Smoleńsk cross” reflects the socio-political divisions since the crash of the plane carrying 96 Polish top officials including President Lech Kaczyński and his wife on 10 April 2010. The delegation was on its way to Katyń in Russia to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Katyń Massacre in which NKVD forces executed almost 22,000 Polish citizens including some 10,000 Polish officers. The wooden cross installed after the catastrophe by a group of scouts in front of the Presidential Palace has reflected long and emotional disputes on the role of religion and the Catholic Church in the public sphere.
- 9 See Dobbins, Piotrowska and von Bronk in this volume for a contrasting finding on the openness of Czech political parties.
- 10 Jan Hus, a main figure Czech history, was a philosopher, theologian and 15th-century religious reformer who anticipated the Lutheran Reformation by a full century.

- He was convicted of heresy at the Council of Constance and burned at the stake in 1415.
- 11 In 2008, 27% of citizens declared their trust in the Churches, while in Poland it was 70% (Kaczmarek, 2016, p. 249).
 - 12 Interestingly both “fathers” of Czech modern democracy –Tomáš Masaryk in the interwar period and Václav Havel in the post-communist period – referred to the religious dimension in their visions of the Czech state. For Masaryk the religious dimension, which he perceived mainly through the prism of its humanizing values, constituted the inherent element of harmonious existence of the society (Kaczmarek, 2016, p. 119). Václav Havel, while not referring to the religious terminology in the direct way, had deep consideration for “what reaches beyond” (Róžańska, 2019, p. 48).
 - 13 The opinion expressed by Jarosław Kaczyński was criticized by the Catholic media in Poland, while pointing out that this is not the view of the Catholic Church itself (Królak, 2019).
 - 14 Caritas Czech Republic is among the biggest organizations of that kind. It is involved in 30 countries and runs 1200 social and health services. It also runs the biggest voluntary aid project in Czech Republic “Three Kings Collection.” Its organizations employ over 7,700 employees and have 60,000 volunteers.
 - 15 The number of participants, i.e., parishioners actively involved in the parish organizations, grew from 4% in 1993 to 8.1% in 2018 (ibid., p. 33). According to the Main Statistical Office (GUS) in 2018, there were 88.1 registered non-profit entities in Poland. The parish organizations constitute a separate category of non-registered non-profit entities and count 611 of 65.5 non-registered non-profit organizations. All registered organizations counted 8.9 million members at the end of 2018. Compared to 2010 the number of those participating in these organizations decreased by 12.8% which is about 1.3 million (GUS, 2019, p. 103). Approximately one in five Poles participates in those organizations. On average, the number of members is 30 participants (Stowarzyszenie Klon/Jawor, 2015, pp. 4–9).
 - 16 Church charity activities in Poland are conducted at three levels: diocesan, religious orders and parish organizations. The number of bodies carrying those services was 835 in 2015. They carried out over five thousand charity projects, mainly with children and youth, the poor, homeless, handicapped, elderly and jobless.
 - 17 In Poland, the state finances social and healthcare insurance contributions of the clergy.
 - 18 Already in 1991, public opinion polls conducted by OBOP showed that ¾ of respondents wanted a referendum, which was supported with the petition for a referendum in January 1991 collecting 1.3 million signatures (Karolewska, 2018, p. 143). During the heated debate, the Episcopate rejected the proposal of the referendum. The Church argued that ethics issues cannot be resolved this way as “voting on the matter of the legalizing human’s life not only violates human rights but it undermines the entire natural order” (Dudek, 2016, p. 172).
 - 19 One politician strongly advocating the total ban on abortion was Sejm marshal Marek Jurek who resigned in 2007 when the ban was not introduced.

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12

FILLING THE BLANKS. POLITICAL PARTIES, INTEREST GROUPS, AND REPRESENTATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Paweł Kamiński

1 Introduction

While political parties have been at the center of scholarly attention in recent decades, research on interest groups has gained traction only lately. Besides a few notable exceptions (Thomas, 2001; Witko, 2009; Allern, 2010; Allern & Bale, 2012, 2017; Otjes & Rasmussen, 2017), we lack a systematic analysis of interactions between these two actors, not to mention whether interest groups are replacing political parties in representing certain groups of citizens. For example, as Lefkofridi et al. (2014) have suggested, some groups of voters are less represented by parties than others. Furthermore, scholars have also suggested that political parties are increasingly interested in the cartelization of politics, where they are more inclined to penetrate the state than to fight for voters and members (Katz & Mair, 1995). Are interest groups at least partially able to compensate for the absence of political parties?

I investigate whether both political parties and interest groups carry the same type of representational biases or whether the latter could make up for parties' shifts towards certain types of electorate. To empirically verify this assumption, I map groups' and parties' positions on Gal-Tan and economic matters. The Gal-Tan dimension (green, alternative, libertarian *versus* traditional, authoritarian, nationalist) has become increasingly popular among scholars investigating party stances on Europeanization (Hooghe et al., 2002). Regarding economic matters, where parties are set apart by different points of view on economic redistribution, welfare, and government regulation of the economy, it allows researchers to map political parties on four ideological quadrants (left-tan, right-tan, left-gal, and right-gal) (Vachudova & Hooghe, 2009). As party competition has recently been dictated not only by the left-right division, Gal-Tan adds multidimensionality regarding the socio-cultural dimension.

I analyze six countries – three from CEE (Poland, Slovenia, and Lithuania) and three from Western Europe (Belgium, Sweden, and the Netherlands). Both regions have had diverging trajectories of party politics (Vachudova & Hooghe, 2009). The collapse of communism in the East, Europeanization, and, last but not the least, the lack of societal embeddedness, created completely different dynamics for the institutionalization of political parties and civil societies.

There are various definitions and interpretations of what an interest group is (for discussion, see Beyers et al., 2008). I follow the definition of interest groups provided by Thomas (2001, p. 7): “An interest group is an association of individuals or organizations, usually formally organized, that attempts to influence public policy”. By contrast, a political party is “any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office” (Sartori, 1976, p. 64).

2 Cartelization

As argued in a seminal article by Katz and Mair (1995), in contrast to previous time periods when other organizational models (elite caucus or cadre party, mass party, catch-all party) were dominant, the cartel party emerged in the late 20th century. Contrary to its predecessors, the cartel party is less interested in gaining people’s support than exploiting the resources of the state and position itself within it. Parties, as Katz and Mair have argued, function therefore as cartels, trying to limit the emergence of competition and ensure that the party in public office has the upper hand over the party on the ground and the party central office (Krašovec & Haughton, 2011).

The research on cartelization has primarily been focused on western democracies, with a few notable examples (Yishai, 1998; Szczerbiak, 2001; Sikk, 2003; van Biezen, 2003; Bolleyer, 2009). Where does it leave us with CEE countries? As Katz and Mair (2012) point out, political parties in post-communist democracies share many problems with those in old democracies, but contrary to them, they do not have the institutional advantage of having functioned for several decades. Moreover, it has been debated that parties in CEE might immediately embrace the cartel model, according to which the relationship with interest groups and, in general, civil society is loose (Szczerbiak, 2001; Sikk, 2003; Krašovec & Haughton, 2011). There have also been concerns that civil society itself is so weak and fragmented that it would not channel societal interests into organized forms (Dobbins & Riedel, 2018). Katz and Mair (2012) even argued that instead of arduously building relationships with civil society, political parties could take a shortcut, build their own organizations, and establish permanent dominance over them. They also contended that all the previous models of party competition have focused on their relationship with voters, while their relationship with the state should be treated as equally important.

First, after the Second World War, parties became less and less agents of civil society acting in the interests of their constituency and penetrating the state

on their behalf. Instead, they became agents of the state themselves (Katz & Mair, 1995, p. 18). Thus, cartel parties have become detached from their traditional constituencies even more as their dependence on state subsidies has grown substantially. Such parties penetrate and operate within the state, are highly professionalized, weakly anchored in society, and use their privileged financial positions – above political divisions – to limit the likelihood of new entities entering the system (Mair, 1997; van Biezen et al., 2012; Fraussen & Halpin, 2018).

Secondly, Katz and Mair distinguished three ideal types of a modern political party – (1) party in office (in parliament or in government), (2) party on the ground (activists and local branches), and finally (3) party's central office (party leaders). Particularly remarkable for Katz and Mair is that the party in office has dominated the other two types. They argue that “as the party in public office gains ascendancy within the party as a whole, its particular interests will be treated as being the interests of the party writ large” (Katz & Mair, 2009, p. 756).

I argue that political parties in Europe are generally drifting towards the cartel mode. As the proliferation of new parties entering the system decreases, the ideological saturation of the party scene could be reduced as well (for a discussion about party funding, see Häusermann & Geering, 2011; Casal Bértoa & Spirova, 2019). Political parties are becoming more interested in achieving electoral and financing thresholds. Therefore, they could strategically turn away from political positions that do not guarantee staying in the (cartel) system. Moreover, ties with parties' collateral organizations like trade unions or agrarian associations have been more relaxed lately. Parties used to rely on such grassroots organizations to mobilize support and gain new members. With the emergence of the *catch-all* model, political parties attempted to appeal to broader audiences. In consequence, parties took a more independent position on interest groups, trying to free themselves from constraining relationships (Katz & Mair, 1995; van Biezen et al., 2012; Allern & Bale, 2012).

3 Interest groups as a second go-to option

As a consequence, the “decline of parties” and party democracy (Dalton et al., 2011) paint a different picture for citizens. Parties may no longer be interested in representing a broad spectrum of voters and this may create gaps in representational relationship. Voters may no longer feel represented and may show anti-party sentiment as well (Poguntke, 1996). Subsequently, they could look for alternatives and turn to interest groups as another form of preference aggregation. As Borang and her colleagues have argued, interest groups do not necessarily carry the same ideological history, pre-existing voting constituencies, or organizational structures that make it difficult for political parties to reach voters above socio-economic cleavages in societies (Borang et al., 2017).

Furthermore, it has been debated elsewhere that it is actually plausible to address interest groups as “political organizations” in the same manner as political parties (Fraussen & Halpin, 2018). Heaney (2010, p. 568) has even argued that

groups and parties are “intricately and inextricably linked to one another”. Furthermore, Fraussen and Halpin hypothesized that

given the high level of similarities, not only in organizational form but also in the external challenges that they face, studying political parties and interest organizations in tandem can deliver more insights into the nature and evolution of these organizations.

(2018, p. 26)

More generally, interest organizations are seen here as entities channeling policy preferences and bringing them to the political arena in the form of agenda setting, and simultaneously also influencing policy processes, becoming intermediaries – or transmission belts – between the public and the state (Easton, 1971; Truman, 1993).

One important difference between parties and interest organizations is that the latter do not compete in elections. In order to influence policy-making processes, they need to interact with political parties, parliamentary committees, or governmental agencies. Keeping in mind this important difference, some scholars have observed many similarities between interest organizations and political parties (Fraussen & Halpin, 2018).

According to Burstein and Linton (2002, pp. 381–382), either parties or interest organizations “define public problems, propose solutions, aggregate citizen’s policy preferences, mobilize voters, make demands of elected officials, communicate information about government action to their supporters and the larger public, and make relatively coherent legislative action possible”. Allern and Bale (2012) have highlighted the role of parties and groups in aggregating the public’s interests into collective demands and seeking to influence the form and content of public policy. By contrast, Fraussen and Halpin (2018) have discussed the possibility that interest groups might have followed the same path as political parties by becoming very professionalized, managed from above and having little to do with local constituencies apart from collecting membership fees.

According to Theda Skocpol, older groups are more likely to undergo the process of professionalization and centralization. These organizations are often devoid of membership involvement and usually focused on single issues, resulting in “diminished democracy”, whereby their civic and integrative dimension is lost (Skocpol, 2003).

Organized interests – grassroots movements, various professional associations, or cause groups – allow citizens to pursue shared objectives in an institutional way (Putnam, 1995). A high density of interest organizations along regular channels of communication between citizens and interests and their governments is seen to be crucial for the emergence of liberal democracy (Putnam, 1993; Elster et al., 1998). For instance, when interest groups and the public are on the same page in terms of policy preferences, the likelihood of adoption of a jointly preferred law increases (Gilens, 2012). Groups’ activities in certain policy areas have also had a positive impact on bringing decision-makers’ attention to issues (Rasmussen

et al., 2014; Berkhout et al., 2020; Bevan & Rasmussen, 2020). In this sense, the chapter bridges research on social movement organizations (SMOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and, obviously, interest organizations. Beyers et al. (2008) bitterly remark that scholars of former groups can go to great lengths to avoid the “interest group” label, often seen as something negative, elitist, and undemocratic. However, interest groups research sees them as politically and democratically useful, and, in fact, analyzes the same phenomenon as research on SMOs or NGOs, “as [interest groups] evolve over time, incorporate multiple purposes and structural features from all three prevailing forms” (Hasenfeld & Gidron, 2005, p. 98). Finally, one could say that “NGOs” is a “hurrah” word for the “boo” word “interest group”, as Grant argues (2001).

Nonetheless, our knowledge about interest groups as a potential substitute for political parties is very scarce and limited to Western Europe and the United States. We know very little about how political parties and interest groups behave in the post-communist environment. It should be also noted here that the development of organized interests and political parties has had a different dynamics than in Western Europe (Mair, 1997; Kitschelt et al., 1999; Enyedi, 2006). The departure point for democracy was not a century-long overlapping process, but rather an unexpected collapse of communism. In consequence, the transition was three-fold, with simultaneous creation of new political, economic, and constitutional systems, and in some cases also new states (Offe & Adler, 1991; Bunce, 1995; Bohle & Greskovits, 2012; see Labanino & Dobbins in this volume). A half century of authoritarianism destroyed traditional parties, weakened classes and interests, and undermined the social trust necessary to kick-start social participation (Crawford & Lijphart, 1995). Moreover, when this particularly relates to the Gal-Tan dimension, the whole region underwent the process of Europeanization in the form of EU accession talks, which became an overriding national priority (Vachudova & Hooghe, 2009). As Hooghe et al. (2002) suggested, the Gal-Tan is more useful here in predicting stances towards EU than the standard left-right division.

4 Data sources and methodology

The countries included in this study are Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovenia. By including three “old” West European democracies with newcomers from CEE, we are able to compare how interest groups position themselves in different environments and find out whether there are any substantial differences between East and West.

Each country is different, not only in size and population, but also the state of civil society, institutional representation of its interests as well as the structure of party systems and political parties. Furthermore, we can expect the institutional nature of an interest group system to play a role here. Here, one discerns two dominant systems: neo-corporatism and pluralism (see Chapter 5 in this volume). This distinction refers to variation regarding “the extent of state autonomy, the

degree of societal organization, the variety, legitimacy and degree of interest group participation” (Eising, 2008; Fraussen & Beyers, 2016). A pluralist system is mainly fragmented and shaped by competition among interest groups for policy-makers’ attention. By contrast, in neo-corporatist settings, access is highly organized, usually granted to few privileged groups (Binderkrantz & Christiansen, 2015; Christiansen et al., 2018). As Western European countries and Slovenia have been portrayed as neo-corporatist, other CEE countries, including Poland and Lithuania, have had weak organized arrangements with a plethora of actors competing for influence (Hassel, 2008). Taking this into account, the selection of both Eastern and Western European countries differing on a range of other factors (e.g. level of corporatism, party system properties, interest group populations) makes the findings reasonably generalizable within the European context.

In order to measure ideological positions of interest groups and political parties, I use the “Gal-Tan” and economic “left-right” scale. While the economic placement is still crucial for party competition, the former allows us to capture the cultural and post-material dimension of politics (Hooghe et al., 2002; Bornschier, 2010; Rohrschneider & Whitefield, 2012). The Gal-Tan scale indicates positions involving such issues as gay marriage, abortion, the role of religion, immigration, multiculturalism, and environmentalism (Wheatley & Mendez, 2019). Furthermore, it has been shown in other studies that Gal-Tan could be very useful in predicting party positions on the above-mentioned matters. The only drawback is that the data comes from 2014 and therefore might not necessarily be up-to-date with current developments on party positions and emergence of new parties (Hanley & Sikk, 2016) (Table 12.1).

Party positions are measured based on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2014 (CHES). The CHES data provide expert evaluations on dozens of issues and it so far has been one of the most popular and reliable sources on party research. CHES treats Gal-Tan as stances on democratic freedoms and rights (Polk et al., 2017, p. 19). “Libertarian” or “postmaterialist” parties favor expanded personal freedoms, for example, access to abortion, active euthanasia, same-sex marriage, or greater democratic participation. “Traditional” or “authoritarian” parties often reject these ideas; they value order, tradition, and stability, and believe that the government should be a firm moral authority on social and cultural issues. Similarly, on the economic left-right scale, “parties want government to play an active role in the economy. Parties on the economic right emphasize a reduced economic role for government: privatization, lower taxes, less regulation, less government spending, and a leaner welfare state” (Polk et al, 2017, p. 18).

Subsequently, the data on interest groups come from Comparative Interest Group Survey (CIGS), a multinational project which investigates dozens of European countries.¹ Surveys were conducted in 2016 in Slovenia, Lithuania, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Poland joined the project between 2017 and 2018. For the purpose of this chapter, we use data from 4,100 interest groups from Poland, Slovenia, and Lithuania – the only three post-communist countries involved in the project – as well as three Western European democracies:

TABLE 12.1 Political parties included in the analysis

Country	Party	Vote	Seats	Family ^a
Lithuania	LSDP	18.4	26.2	Socialist
Lithuania	TS-LKD	15.1	23.4	Conservative
Lithuania	LVZS	3.9	.7	Agrarian/center
Lithuania	LLRA	5.8	5.7	Regionalist
Lithuania	TT	7.3	7.8	Conservative
Lithuania	DP	19.8	20.6	Liberal
Lithuania	LRLS	8.6	7.1	Liberal
Lithuania	DK	8.0	5	No family
Poland	SLD	8.19	5.9	Socialist
Poland	PO	39.2	45	Christian democracy
Poland	PiS	29.9	34.1	Radical right
Poland	PSL	8.4	6.1	Agrarian/center
Poland	RP	10	8.69	Liberal
Poland	KNP	1.1	0	Conservative
Poland	PR	0.2	0	Conservative
Poland	SP			Conservative
Slovenia	SDS	20.7	23.3	Christian democracy
Slovenia	SD	6	6.7	Socialist
Slovenia	SLS	4	0	Regionalist
Slovenia	NSI	5.6	5.6	Conservative
Slovenia	DeSUS	10.2	11.1	Rad right
Slovenia	SMC	34.5	40	Liberal
Slovenia	ZL	6	6.7	Conservative
Slovenia	ZaAB	4.4	4.4	Conservative
Slovenia	PS	3	0	Conservative
Netherlands	CDA	8.5	8.69	No family
Netherlands	PvdA	24.8	25.3	Socialist
Netherlands	VVD	26.6	27.3	Liberal
Netherlands	D66	8	8	Liberal
Netherlands	GL	2.3	2.7	Green
Netherlands	SGP	2.1	2	Confessional
Netherlands	SP	9.69	10	Rad left
Netherlands	CU	3.1	3.3	Confessional
Netherlands	PVV	10.1	10	Radical right
Netherlands	PvdD	1.9	1.3	Green
Netherlands	50PLUS	1.9	1.3	No family
Sweden	V	5.7	6	Rad left
Sweden	SAP	31	32.4	Socialist
Sweden	C	6.1	6.3	Agrarian/center
Sweden	FP	5.4	5.4	Liberal
Sweden	M	23.3	24.1	Conservative
Sweden	KD	4.6	4.6	Christian democracy
Sweden	MP	6.9	7.2	Green
Sweden	SD	12.9	14	Radical right
Sweden	PIRAT	0.4	0	No family
Sweden	FI	3.1	0	No family

Country	Party	Vote	Seats	Family ^a
Belgium	PS	11.7	15.3	Socialist
Belgium	SPA	8.80	8.69	Socialist
Belgium	ECOLO	3.3	4	Green
Belgium	Groen	5.3	4	Green
Belgium	MR	9.6	13.3	Liberal
Belgium	VLD	9.80	9.30	Liberal
Belgium	cdH	5	6	Christian democracy
Belgium	CD&V	11.6	12	Christian democracy
Belgium	N-VA	20.3	22	Regionalist
Belgium	FDf	1.8	1.3	Regionalist
Belgium	VB	3.7	2	Rad right
Belgium	PVDA	3.7	1.3	Rad left
Belgium	PP	1.5	0.7	Conservative

a The typology of political parties according to Chapell Hill Expert Survey, not the author of the chapter. See <https://www.chesdata.eu>.

Source: CHES 2014.

TABLE 12.2 Types of interest groups and their populations

	<i>Belgium</i>	<i>The Netherlands</i>	<i>Sweden</i>	<i>Lithuania</i>	<i>Poland</i>	<i>Slovenia</i>
Business associations (1)	0.23 (219)	0.16 (138)	0.19 (192)	0.22 (80)	0.29 (112)	0.09 (41)
Professional associations (2)	0.19 (182)	0.17 (145)	0.12 (185)	0.29 (106)	0.05 (18)	0.33 (147)
Labour (3)	0.02 (19)	0.01 (12)	0.03 (43)	0.06 (23)	0.03 (14)	0.07 (34)
Identity organizations (4)	0.15 (142)	0.22 (192)	0.07 (103)	0.14 (51)	0.10 (39)	0.14 (63)
Cause organizations (5)	0.20 (196)	0.14 (120)	0.46 (416)	0.08 (32)	0.40 (157)	0.08 (35)
Leisure associations (6)	0.14 (137)	0.13 (115)	0.09 (144)	0.08 (29)	0.03 (10)	0.22 (98)
Associations of public authorities (7)	0.04 (35)	0.16 (141)	0.02 (25)	0.05 (20)	0.05 (20)	0.02 (10)
Rest (8)	0.03 (29)	0.01 (3)	0.02 (32)	0.07 (26)	0.07 (26)	0.02 (10)
	959	866	1,111	367	397	438

Belgium, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Table 12.2 provides a typology of surveyed organizations as well as distributions across different countries.

The sampling procedures applied to gather the data differ between different countries, which is normal if we take into account difficulties in accessing the information. The response rate ranged from 27% for Poland, 36% for Slovenia, 40% for Lithuania, 38% for the Netherlands, 41% for Belgium, and 42% for Sweden.

To measure the economic left–right dimension, interviewees were asked:

Interest organizations and civil society associations have different views on the role of government in economic matters. Some want government to play an active role in the economy, e.g. through taxation, regulation, government spending, or a strong welfare state. Others prefer a reduced economic role for government, e.g. through privatization, lower taxes, less regulation, less government spending, or a leaner welfare state. On a scale from 0 to 10, where “0” means that government should play a much reduced role in the economy and “10” means that government should play a very active role in the economy, where would you position your organization on this scale?

Similar to CHES, interest groups were asked about their positions on “personal freedoms”:

Interest organizations and civil society associations have different views on personal freedoms and rights. Some support greater personal freedom, e.g. access to abortion, euthanasia, same-sex marriage, or greater democratic participation (libertarian views). Others reject these ideas; they value order, tradition, and stability, and believe that the government should be a firm moral authority on social and cultural issues (traditional views). On a scale of 0 to 10, where “0” is “of no importance” and “10” is “of great importance”, how important would you say are social, moral, and cultural issues of this kind to your organization in its lobbying and advocacy activities?

The important difference between both survey questionnaires is the fact that while in CIGS “0” indicates that state should play a reduced role in economy, in CHES “0” means that parties want government to play an active role in the economy. To synchronize both datasets, I reversed the CHES scale to mirror the CIGS data points. This means that parties and groups placed farthest right on the horizontal axis assume that state should play a key role in the economy (see Table 12.1).

The CIGS project follows a broad definition of interest groups, where the group is an entity standing between the state and the civil society. Its aim is to aggregate and represent the interests (e.g. companies, workers), a cause (e.g. the environment, health, consumers), or some constituency (e.g. refugees, unemployed, poor) (Beyers et al., 2016). Therefore, it allowed us to catch a variety of groups: business associations, employers’ associations, citizens groups, trade unions, or third sector organizations.

Below I present a descriptive analysis of Gal-Tan and economic placements of political parties and interest groups. I am particularly interested in whether the latter could occupy spaces left by political parties, or, whether either of them follow suit and strategically place themselves. The positive aspect of such an analysis is that we can spatially map policy preferences, clearly identify patterns, and compare them between certain actors (parties, groups, and citizens). The

drawbacks we should be aware of are that two-dimensional positioning strips the analysis of the necessary context. Moreover, if used to compare different countries (or cultures) with different experiences, we never know how to understand “traditional”, “liberal”, or “active role of the state”, not to mention language-specific subtleties.

5 Results

Figure 12.1 presents the Gal-Tan and economic left-right placement of political parties according to CHES data. As we can see, there are substantial differences between countries. Obviously, in democratic regimes, political parties cannot stray too far away from public opinion and the electorate, meaning that extreme spaces are less populated. However, in the six countries of interest, there are no parties placed in left-tan spaces, with the outermost position around 7.0. Regarding CEE countries, the explanation might lie in the legacy and unpopularity of communism. When the democratic transformation began, parties – especially post-communist ones – were incentivized to abandon left-authoritarian positions and move towards Tan positions. As Vachudova and Hooghe (2009) suggest, EU accession talks and EU membership influenced party politics in such a way that eventually political parties fine-tuned their programs to EU standards. Furthermore, the process of Europeanization, marketization, and course towards neoliberalism could have prevented parties from extreme left-leaning policies (Haughton, 2014; Coman, 2017). As for Western European democracies, the supply and demand dynamics of party systems after the Second World War

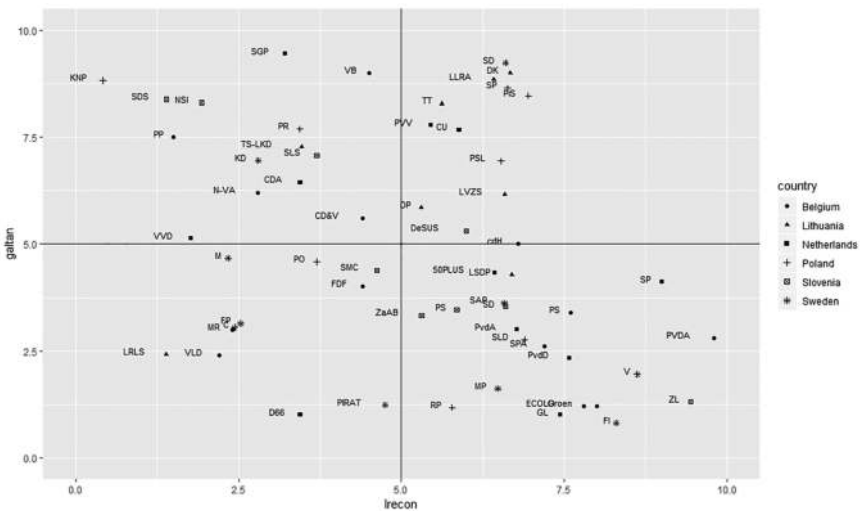


FIGURE 12.1 Gal-Tan and economic left-right placement of political parties.

Source: CHES 2014.

perhaps have never materialized to establish institutional actors representing nationalist, traditional agendas melting with redistributive policies.

Thus, what gap do interest groups fill for political parties? Apart from abandoned outmost spaces in each quadrant, populating vast spaces in tan-economic left would be worthy of further investigation, particularly from a bottom-up perspective. However, it could be safely assumed that as party politics has moved to the 45 degree axis between tan-right and tan-left to presumably seek political gain and moderate voters, it does not mean that these spaces are not populated by interest organizations that are not subjected to verification in elections and are not constrained by adjusting to EU and market policies.

There are some similarities between Lithuanian and Polish political parties, where many have been located around the upper half. Moreover, there is no shortage of parties in the authoritarian half, which might be symptomatic of current events in the region, sometimes referred to as the illiberal turn or democratic backsliding (Sata & Karolewski, 2020). Moreover, only three parties are located in the right-green-alternative-libertarian quadrant.

Now, we move to self-placement of interest organizations. Similar to party positioning, Lithuania and Poland appear to have more in common with each other than with Slovenia. Even though we can see clear bias towards right-wing authoritarian politics and an almost empty left-authoritarian quadrant, it is definitely interesting that interest groups tend to be more evenly distributed than Polish and Lithuanian parties, particularly in the right-wing economic and Gal quadrant. The difference between these two countries lies in the extreme position. While in Lithuania, there are many such groups, in Poland there are only

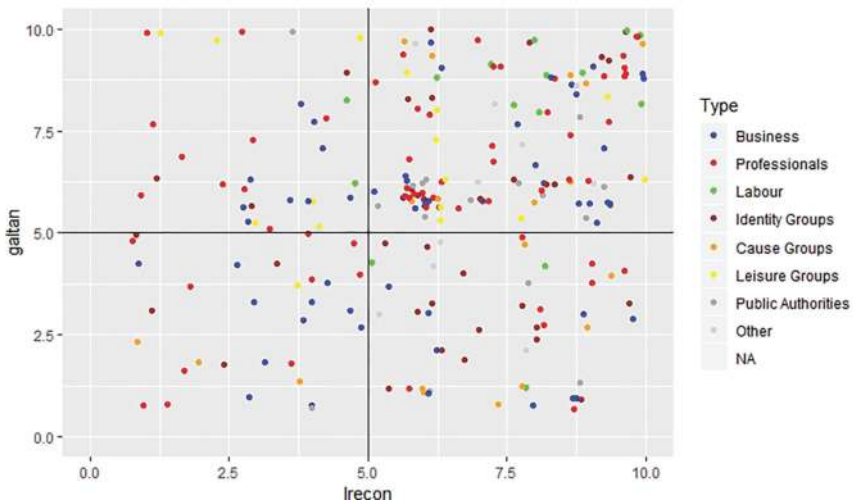


FIGURE 12.2 Gal-Tan and economic left-right self-placement of interest groups in Lithuania.

Source: CIGS.

few. Regarding which types of groups “fill the blanks”, the case of Lithuania is quite representative. However, they are mostly trade unions, business groups, and professional associations. In Poland though, the outmost positions in the upper-right corner are filled by cause groups and business associations.

By contrast, Slovenian interest groups appear to be more left-leaning, culturally often self-placed in extreme areas, where hardly any Lithuanian and Polish groups were to be found and with sparsely populated right-authoritarian areas.

The divergence between Slovenia and other countries in the region is striking and lays ground for further research how interest organizations emerge to “satisfy” the demand for certain types of representation among citizens. It is also safe to say that Slovenian interest organizations do not compensate for political parties in the above-mentioned gap in the upper-right quadrant. Interestingly, in the Slovenian case, we have plenty of groups presenting extreme positions in the lower-left corner, which means the highest support for state’s reduced role in economic matters as well as libertarian point of view of cultural issues. In view of the neo-corporatist tradition of the Slovenian state, the further analysis should focus on whether interest groups represent a neo-liberal counter-movement. What would support this hypothesis is the type of groups – a handful of associations of professionals, business, and cause groups.

Apart from Slovenia, we see dozens of groups populating spaces left by political parties. Particularly interesting is the large number of such groups in Sweden, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The disillusionment with market politics after the Euro-crisis could be one factor. However, the shift towards the center-right

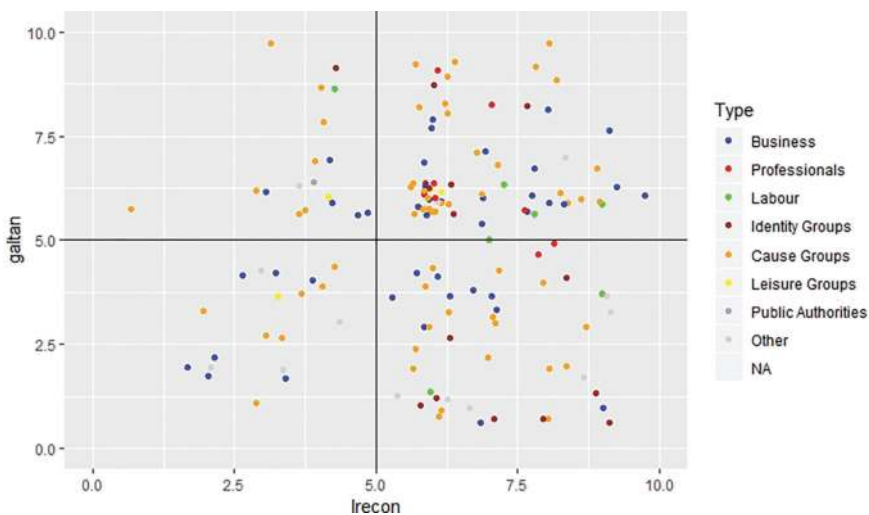


FIGURE 12.3 Gal-Tan and economic left-right self-placement of interest groups in Poland.

Source: CIGS.

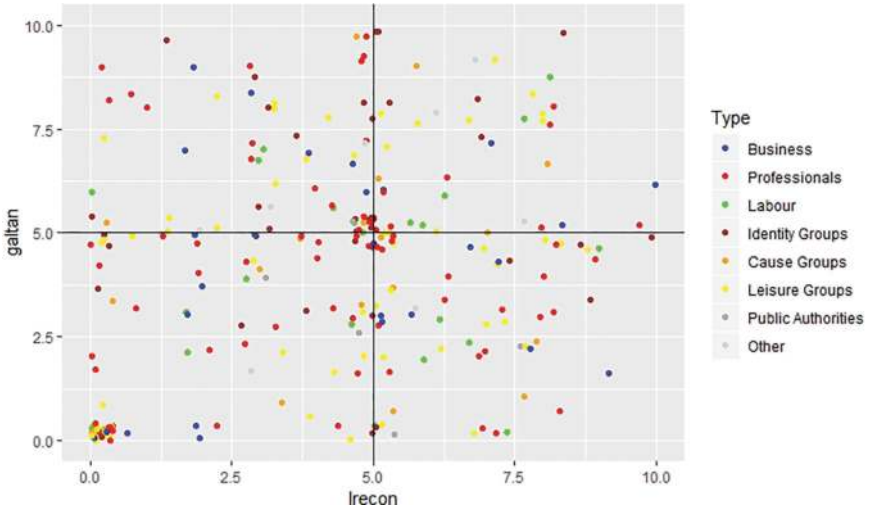


FIGURE 12.4 Gal-Tan and economic left-right self-placement of interest groups in Slovenia.

Source: CIGS.

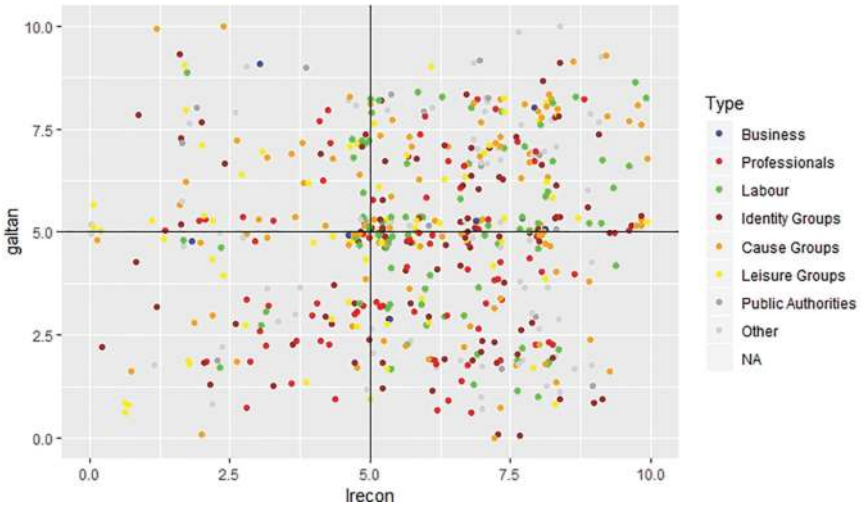


FIGURE 12.5 Gal-Tan and economic left-right self-placement of interest groups in the Netherlands.

Source: CIGS.

“traditional” space is another issue and begs for further investigation, accounting for cross-national surveys of populations as well.

In terms of what types of groups fill the spaces left by political parties, we do not see any dominating trend. In the Netherlands, these spaces are dominated

mostly by trade unions and cause groups. In Sweden business groups and some cause and identity groups spilled over to the “more active role of the state” half, but are not entirely in Tan areas. In Belgium, we have the most representative case where a myriad of different organizations occupy areas left by political parties.

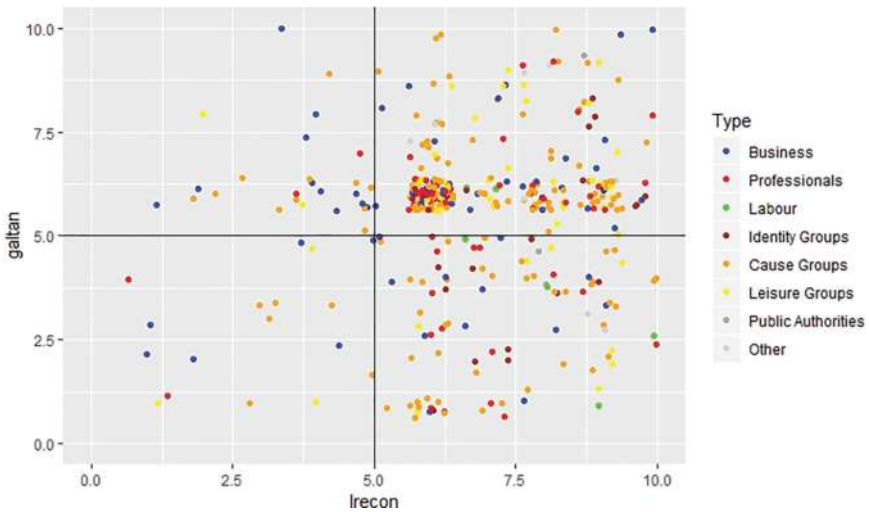


FIGURE 12.6 Gal-Tan and economic left-right self-placement of interest groups in Sweden.

Source: CIGS.

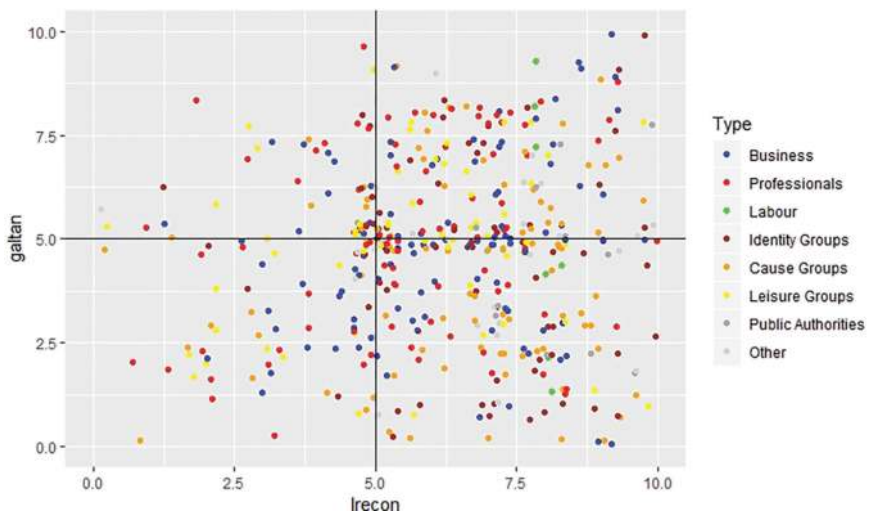


FIGURE 12.7 Gal-Tan and economic left-right self-placement of interest groups in Belgium.

Source: CIGS.

6 Conclusions

The goal of this chapter was to analyze the propensity with which interest groups populate two-dimensional ideological spaces left by political parties. I used the Chapel Hill Expert Survey as well as novel data from a multinational interest group survey project to investigate six EU countries representing the east and west of the continent. The CHES data allowed us to identify the gap, which could be seen in the upper-right quadrant, suggesting a shortage of representation of voters strongly supporting an active role of the state with a traditional and nationalist cultural agenda. By analyzing the interest group survey data, I found out that in five of six countries, there are groups that could potentially compensate for the absence of political parties. This does not necessarily suggest causal inference, where voters are – firstly – aware of the existence of organizations representing their points of view. Secondly, even though they could have been aware of their existence, it does not mean that there are no other factors in play here that would make citizens reluctant to rely more on interest organizations than on political parties, even though the latter are not congruent with their beliefs.

The fundamental question – whether groups can compensate for political parties – boils down to being able to influence public policy processes and therefore satisfy needs of groups' constituencies. As the gap is somewhere between culturally right-wing (Tan) and economically redistributive policies, the impact of groups might be rather limited, but again to assess that, further research is needed.

Secondly, it is worth asking whether interest groups themselves would like to compensate for political parties. There is some evidence that groups face similar internal and external challenges, particularly involving their membership base, funding, and growing professionalization during their evolution from grass-root movements.

Interest groups appear to cover a wider range of ideological spaces than political parties. This pattern allows us to be wary of region-specific generalizations as there is very much variability in the dynamic relations between political parties and interest groups in CEE. Furthermore, interest groups follow – more or less – country-specific patterns. If we see political parties dominating certain ideological areas, the same is likely to happen with interest groups, for example the left-Gal combination in Slovenia and clear right-authoritarian bias in Poland.

Due to the greater supply of interest groups than political parties, citizens could find atypical combinations that suit them. The fundamental question – and material for further analysis – is whether citizens really look for party alternatives and whether interest organizations seek the vast support of citizens. It would be fascinating to combine the current research with a bottom-up approach and use cross-country data from the European Social Survey to thoroughly investigate the supply and demand dynamics of voters' representation. The bottom line is that in five of six countries, some interest groups are where political parties are

not. Sounding like a truism, associative democracy is vital for the health and stability of representative and democratic governments.

Note

- 1 See <http://www.cigsurvey.eu/>. As for today (mid-2020) the project includes Belgium, Lithuania, Poland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Slovenia, Italy, and Spain. Data are currently being collected for Montenegro, the Czech Republic and Portugal.

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Conclusions



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13

ROUNDING UP OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE WORLD OF ORGANIZED INTERESTS IN THE POST-COMMUNIST CEE REGION

Michael Dobbins, Emilia Piotrowska, and Rafał Riedel

1 Introduction

In this book, we journeyed through the world of organized interests in the post-communist region. Functional systems of interest intermediation and dynamic links between the political system and civil society are important pre-conditions for successful democratic consolidation. In CEE, organized interests operate in a particularly fluid environment. Economic systems have undergone complete structural makeovers, political systems have been fundamentally redesigned, and policy-specific reforms have transformed pre-existing institutions to the core. The transformation on numerous fronts has opened new avenues for activity for organized interests in multiple arenas. Unlike in the communist system, where interest intermediation was channeled through the communist party and state bureaucratic apparatus, CEE interest groups now operate within parliaments, ministerial bodies, and new interest intermediation forums, while also fostering ties with government and oppositional parties. They are now free to calibrate their strategies to their needs and demands of their members and leadership, consolidate their ties with like-minded or rivaling groups, or actively lobby the public outside formal political channels.

European integration has also offered a multitude of new opportunities for interest groups from the region to gain experience and expertise from and share resources with like-minded groups abroad. However, these new openings for civil society and advocacy organizations at the transnational level have arguably coincided with closings and, to some extent, crackdowns on civil society in the countries affected by democratic backsliding. In particular, Poland and Hungary have recently experienced a re-centralization of policy-making processes, a shift away from liberal, globalist ideals, and reinvigoration of illiberal, national-conservative forces. These changes have significant implications for the functioning of

interest groups and other civic societal actors, as they may need to adapt to the de-democratization tendencies and the re-emergence of clientelist networks.

The authors of the chapters aimed to comparatively grasp the activities, strategies, constraints, interrelationships, and concrete influence of organized interests in the region from multiple angles. To accommodate the heterogeneity of the region, the authors affiliated with the core OrgIntCEE project applied a large arsenal of qualitative and quantitative methods to the study of interest groups in three diverse policy areas – higher education, healthcare, and climate-energy – which are critical for the future viability and competitiveness of four CEE countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia – and beyond. Three external authors also provided detailed insights into additional dimensions, which are essential to understanding the dynamics of civil society and overall policy-making in the region: the Catholic Church, labor unions, and the interlinkages between interest groups and political parties.

The differentiated perspectives added new nuanced insights into the well-established perception that civil society is weak in the region, that interest organizations are inexperienced, lack professional lobbying skills, and that policy-making is mainly centralized, state-driven, and over-particized. The authors provided in-depth analysis of patterns of interest intermediation, lobbying strategies, and the broader effects of the transformation and Europeanization processes as well as domestic reform processes on populations of interest groups. In this final chapter, we wish to briefly revisit the findings of the chapters. Then we present some new data reflecting broader trends in the four countries. The new data and illustrations are also based on our survey of organized interests (see Annex). On the one hand, they offer additional support to some of the major findings of the chapters, while also painting a more comprehensive, overarching picture. They also enable us to draw some generalizable conclusions about the state of civil society, lobbying, and advocacy in the region.

2 A review of our findings

The first two empirical chapters contributed to the growing body of literature on organizational populations (see Berkhout & Lowery, 2008; Nownes, 2004), while tracing the determinants for the increases and decreases of interest group populations operating in our three core policy fields – energy, healthcare, and higher education. In **Chapter 2**, Rafael Labanino, Michael Dobbins, and Rafał Riedel showed that “varieties of communism”, spanning from the more bureaucratic-authoritarian Czech(oslovak) version to the national-accommodative versions of Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia significantly impacted communist and pre-transition organizational formations. The accommodative regimes proved much more conducive to the foundation of civic organizations than the more rigid Czech(oslovak) regime, whereby periods of experimentation with economic reforms and political liberalization also boosted foundation rates. In Slovenia, by contrast, organized interests proliferated under communism. The nature of regime

change also proved crucial, as political fragmentation, partisan competition, and increasing grassroots mobilization (e.g. in Hungary) brought about stronger formation rates than in Poland, where there was a relatively united front against the communist party. For all countries though, the authors showed that there was an at least moderate level of organizational activity under communism, and thus no “*tabula rasa*” during 1989–1990. In fact, for Hungary, organizations founded before 1989 are even more viable in the post-communist phase than those founded after the breakdown of communism. With their findings, the authors contribute both to the “varieties of communism” literature and to the scholarly debate about the heritage of the pre-1989 past, including the ever-existing dilemma about the sources of strength and weakness of the CEE civil societies.

In **Chapter 3**, Michael Dobbins, Rafael Pablo Labanino, and Brigitte Horváthová look at how organizational populations evolved after 1989. They hypothesized that organizational populations would be boosted by the transition to democracy, the European integration process as well as major domestic policy-specific reform processes, many of which are linked with Europeanization. They also argued that populations may eventually become saturated, or “density-dependent”, leading to a slow-down in formations, while also providing some preliminary insights on the impact of national-conservatism or illiberal democracy in Hungary and Poland on organizational populations.

Their data show that the transition to democracy was an enormous impetus for organizational formations, but that Hungary and Slovenia – as already shown in Chapter 2 – had large pre-existing populations due to the relative openness of their *anciens régimes*, the ideological diversity of civic initiatives during the struggle for Slovenian nationhood, as well as the nature of regime change. The late 1990s and early to mid-2000s – marked by the European integration process and large-scale national reforms – heralded another acceleration in organizational formations. Their data also showed that “democratic backsliding”, in particular in Hungary, has not provided a conducive climate for organizational formations. However, the authors also found evidence of “density-dependence” in all national-level organizational populations, making it difficult to distinguish between saturation effects and the impact of national-conservative governance. Finally, and importantly from a civil society perspective, they showed that many organizations founded in the past decade are “diffuse” civic or cause groups representing interests that otherwise are often difficult to organize due to Olson’s collective action dilemma (1965). With the exception of Hungary, where the 2000–2010 decade was more favorable to such organizational formations, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia witnessed strong growth in environmental, patients’ and students’ organizations representing broader societal goals in the past ten years. These three countries also experienced a boom in new groups representing renewable energy businesses, while renewable organizations proliferated in the 2000–2010 period in Hungary.

In the next segment, we tackled advocacy patterns in the region from two different angles. In **Chapter 4**, Szczepan Czarnecki explored lobbying tactics

in CEE. Directly tying into the distinction between “civic” and “concentrated” (i.e. business) groups elaborated on above, he explored whether group type and the nature of issues impact the lobbying strategies chosen by organized interests. His findings for CEE are largely in line with those of Binderkrantz et al. (2015) that ideationally oriented civic groups operating in the “public interest” tend to pursue “outsider” strategies. They mobilize the public by means of protests, petitions, and directly engaging with potential supporters. Yet, he also shows that they do not shy away from direct strategies targeting the parliament and government and thus apply a broader array of lobbying approaches than classical concentrated interests. Czarnecki also shows that issues matter. Groups pursuing non-divisible goals, e.g. environmental protection more frequently pursue outsider lobbying tactics, while groups with more divisible or negotiable goals prefer insiders strategies.

Chapter 5 by Michael Dobbins, Emilia Piotrowska, and Maximilian von Bronk is embedded in the literature on interest intermediation between the state and organized interests (Avdagic, 2005; Ost, 2011; Schmitter, 1989; Streeck & Kenworthy, 2003). Building on and adapting previous classifications of corporatism by Jahn (2016) and Siaroff (1999), they explore how interests of rivaling interests groups in the healthcare sector (e.g. the medical profession, patients, healthcare workers) are channeled into policy-making. Drawing on survey data and a catalogue of indicators of “healthcare corporatism”, they first aggregate scores for different groups of organizations (e.g. healthcare workers, patients) for multiple dimensions of interest intermediation (e.g. consultations with rivaling interest groups, the state, and regulatory agencies; the perceived level of policy coordination). Then they examine to what extent certain organizations dominate the policy-making process, while also providing some descriptive details on institutionalized interest intermediation forums in post-communist healthcare.

The data show that all four systems are approximately half-way towards the corporatist ideal-type of policy-making, with Slovenia in the lead, while Hungary gravitates more towards a state-centered paradigm. Poland and the Czech Republic bear stronger features of pluralism. In any case, the standardized data show that healthcare policy-making in all four countries is more consultative than in the past, although strong country variations exist regarding the intensity of consultations with different groups of organizations. Healthcare workers’ organizations are more heavily involved in the Slovenian policy-making process than in other countries. Policy-making in Hungary is dominated by the medical profession, whereas the Czech and Polish systems offer more advocacy avenues for patients’ organizations.

Chapter 6 authored by Szczepan Czarnecki, Emilia Piotrowska, and Rafał Riedel deals with climate and energy policies in CEE. The chapter explores the ways in which green advocacy groups gain access to the policy-making process in Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic in comparison to other organized interests operating in climate and energy policy. The authors explain patterns of access to two types of executive bodies: governing parties

and regulatory authorities. Taking a resource-exchange perspective, they argue that access is determined by the match of supply and demand of resources, but also conditioned by various types of provided expertise, selected aspects of professionalization, and financial resources. They find that scientific expertise and a focus on fundraising is of crucial importance in accessing regulatory authorities as well as governing parties. Focusing on human resources and organizational development as well as acquired EU funds turn out to be less relevant factors.

Chapter 7 written by Brigitte Horváthová and Michael Dobbins also deals with CEE healthcare from a different angle by exploring the characteristics of individual interest organizations, which enable their access to policy-makers. They hypothesize that financial and human resources, specialized expertise, the level of professionalization, and longevity enhance the position of interest groups. They also test Olson's (1965) classic hypothesis that concentrated groups (here the medical profession) are at an advantage over more diffuse groups (i.e. patients).

They first present an array of descriptive and comparative statistical data from our standardized survey reflecting the perceived influence of groups, their venues of political access, and their activities aimed at organizational professionalization. Their ordinal logistic regression analyses show that human resources, i.e. employed staff and membership, are key determinants of access to governmental policy-makers, whereas the financial strength of an organization does not play a significant role. Horváthová and Dobbins also show that factors such as expertise and, in particular, organizational professionalization tend to be more important than finances. Particularly noteworthy is their finding that inter-organizational cooperation, which generally is somewhat underdeveloped in CEE (see below), strongly facilitates access to policy-makers.

Chapter 8 by Aleš Vlk, Michael Dobbins, and Rafał Riedel is one of the first analyses of higher education policy in the context of post-communist national-conservatism, democratic backsliding, and other forms of authoritarian populism. They address an empirical puzzle from a stakeholder perspective: despite very similar starting points, why has Polish higher education recently experienced a significant degree of centralization, while Czech academics have largely preserved their tradition of internal stakeholder democracy? For Poland, they show that university rectors, who are well-organized in the Rectors' Conference (KRASP) and numerous other governing bodies, exploited their organizational advantage over more diffused other academic interest representations. A coalescence of rectors' interests with those of the state seeking to impose more hierarchical, managerial governance structures simultaneously enabled the government to re-assert control over the sector. The reform not only re-organized university governance by endowing rectors with unprecedented power at the cost of other previously influential, yet fragmented stakeholder groups, but also places more power in the hands of politicians.

In the Czech Republic, rectors and other high-ranking stakeholders have successfully carried out a balancing act between the political sphere (i.e. through

parliamentary mandates) and their universities. Together with the extreme degree of inter-university decentralization, this has had the effect that Czech rectors have not succeeded centralizing their institutions. Instead, corporatist, stakeholder-oriented governance structures have been upheld.

Chapter 9, written by Rafał Riedel and Szczepan Czarnecki, deals with the intersections of two processes, namely Europeanization and professionalization. The analysis explores how the EU impacts the level of professionalization of CEE interest groups, as understood in the classical top-down Europeanization approaches, while also addressing how other types of Europeanization (e.g. cross-loading through trans-border exchange with like-minded groups) affect their level of professionalization. The key finding is that various types of Europeanization pressures produce diversified outcomes regarding the professionalization of organized interests. Counter-intuitively, it is not membership in supranational umbrella organizations (i.e. a standard parameter of Europeanization) or funding from EU-level interest organizations that necessarily lead to professionalization, rather to a much greater extent strong ties with like-minded EU organizations. Thus, the results show that cross-loading Europeanization mechanisms such as transnational communication and linkages are a stronger catalyst for organizational development than traditional top-down or bottom-up mechanisms.

Chapter 10 authored by Tomasz Kubin focuses on labor unions, which are an essential part of the ecosystem of organized interests. He explores how coal mining unions justify and lobby their standpoints on EU climate and energy policies. Specifically, he addresses why the Polish government consistently has refused to declare climate neutrality as a long-term goal, while the Czech government changed its position at the European Council meeting in December 2019. He shows that the position of coal mining trade unions towards EU climate and energy policy is clearly negative and that they use arguments that go beyond the interests of the mining sector. Hence, they aim to convey the impression that they also act in the interest of other social groups. In other words, the tactics adopted by trade unions are not based on “silencing” the issue and achieving their goals “quietly”, rather on “going public” with their positions and arguments. Kubin provides an important case study analysis describing and explaining the lobbying tactics adopted in a sector that is strategically essential for the carbon-dependent economies of numerous CEE states.

Joanna Kulska provides another interesting Polish-Czech comparison in **Chapter 11**. She focuses on the Catholic Church, which holds extremely different positions in Poland (where it is exceptionally strong and influential) and the Czech Republic (where it is weak and marginal). The author analyzes the evolving role, goals, and strategies applied by the Church, taking into consideration the significantly different positions of religion in the social-political contexts of both countries. The analysis places itself in the increasingly developing strand of research in comparative politics emphasizing the role of cultural and, more specifically, religious determinants in explaining policy-making. In the highly illustrative Polish

case, the state and church exhibit extraordinarily close bonds, through which both sides exploit their mutual dependence. She also addresses how the Catholic Church relates to a “darker side” of civil society and illiberal democracy in general. Once a key part of the democratic transformation, the process of pluralization and the building of a strong, active, and independent sphere of engaged citizens challenging the state, some segments of civil society are now turning away from those values. Instead, this illiberal civil society leans towards authoritarian forces promoting top-down processes of building alternative organizations and movements supportive of government policies (Ekiert, 2019). In Poland, this has already resulted in the adoption of new financing rules for NGOs and the support for organizations with a more nationalist and Roman Catholic profile (Mandes, 2020). The semi-authoritarian populists ruling in Poland use Catholicism as a political ideology, and the Polish Catholic Church entertains its influential position in the political system dominated by (so-called) Christian and conservative forces. This mutually inter-dependent constellation produces political outcomes that endanger the liberal democratic order and free, pluralistic civic society.

Last but not least, **Chapter 12** by Paweł Kamiński contributes to the stream of literature claiming that associative democracy is vital for the health and stability of representative and accountable democratic governments. He follows the recognized wisdom that political parties and interest groups are the two most important actors functioning as “transmission belts” between the public and the state, bringing citizens’ demands to the political agenda. He explores whether interest groups “compensate” in representing citizens in policy areas left open by political parties, or quite contrary, whether they follow the same pattern of biased representation and indifference towards civil society. Using quantitative and comparative data gathered between 2016 and 2018 from three “old” and “new” member states, respectively, he sheds light on the interplay between interest groups and political parties in the context of civic engagement. His essential conclusion is that in the vast majority of the analyzed countries, interest groups occupy positions neglected by political parties.

3 Some final general trends

To wrap up, we now briefly revisit our survey data and present some simple comparative figures. This will enable us to detect various country-specific trends, while also addressing the strengths and weaknesses in the consolidation of mature interest group systems in CEE. We do not wish to engage in new in-depth causal analysis, rather simply outline some broader characteristics of the development of interest groups and interest intermediation systems in the region. In doing so, we return to four main dimensions in interest group studies, which the book has covered – the *ecosystem dimension*, *coordination/consultation dimension*,¹ *access and power dimension*, and *professionalization dimension*.

For this final overview, we simply aggregated all responses to various survey questions by country. We excluded responding organizations with less than

50 individual members or 10 business or institutional members so that the data only reflect the perceptions of mid-sized or larger organizations that are more predestined to be involved in the policy-making process.

First, returning to the opening chapters, we address the **ecosystem dimension**. We asked our respondents about changes in the number of organizations and their membership over time:

In your opinion, is the number of interest organizations attempting to influence decision-making and legislation in your area increasing, decreasing, or stable over the past 10–15 years? (1 – strongly decreasing, 2 – decreasing, 3 – the same, 4 – increasing, 5 – strongly increasing)

The illustration largely confirms the finding of Dobbins et al. (2020) (Chapter 3) that organizational populations have become more or less “saturated” and that the main periods of foundational activity lie in the past (the immediate transformation phase, the Europeanization phase of the late 1990s and 2000s). While we do see some slight bumps, the aggregated results point to a relatively stable playing field with only slight increases in new foundations, despite different points of departure in terms of pre-existing organized interests under communism (see Chapters 2 and 3). Yet, if we ask whether individual organizations’ membership is increasing or decreasing over time, we see slightly stronger dynamics (Figure 13.1).

How has the size of your organization’s membership changed in the past 10–15 years (or since its founding, if founded more recently)? (1– much less, 2 – less, 3 – the same, 4 – more, 5 – much more)



FIGURE 13.1 Perception of increases in the number and size of interest groups.

Across the board, responding organizations report that their membership bases are growing, even in Hungary where only few new organizations have been founded in our policy areas since 2010 (see Chapter 3) and policy-making tends to be carried out in closed technocratic state-industry circles (see Horváthová & Dobbins, 2019 for energy policy; see Chapter 5 for healthcare). Yet altogether, we do see notable changes over time in terms of interest group expansion and mobilization.

Second, we look at the **coordination and consultation dimension** to address the intensity of deliberations, the points of contact of organizations as well as advocacy structures. One key indicator of an effective interest intermediation system, and in particular those of a corporatist type, are targeted efforts to bring rivaling organizations to the table to jointly coordinate policy. We therefore asked:

How would you rate the level of policy coordination/political exchange between the state and your interest group? (1 – very weak, 2 – weak, 3 – moderate, 4 – strong, 5 – very strong)

Most groups indicated a relatively low level, shedding doubt on corporatist-like policy-making. However, the scores do rise somewhat if we exclusively look at umbrella organizations (for a more nuanced picture of healthcare, see Chapter 5 in this volume; for energy policy interest intermediation, see Horváthová et al. forthcoming, for higher education, see Dobbins et al., forthcoming; for labor policy, Rozbicka et al., 2020).

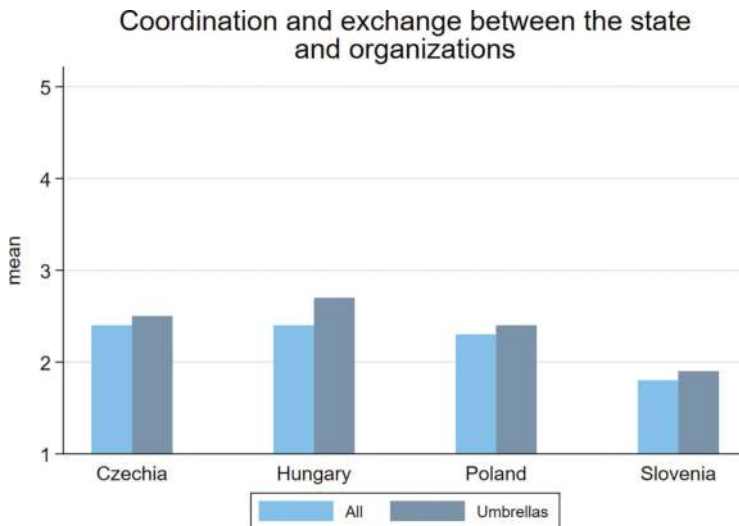


FIGURE 13.2 Perception of the level of policy coordination between the state and organizations.

Particularly interesting is the very low score for Slovenia, which contradicts Jahn's (2016) classification of Slovenia as the most corporatist country in CEE, at least in socio-economic policy-making. While Slovenia did receive the highest score for "healthcare corporatism" (see Chapter 5), respondents pointed out that coordination often takes place among the medical profession outside the state. Moreover, there exist many smaller patients' groups without large umbrella organizations speaking for patients with one voice. In both healthcare and higher education (see Dobbins et al., forthcoming), numerous well-established workers' organizations compete for influence over wages and working conditions. For healthcare, this takes place within the Economic and Social Council (ESC), whereas for higher education, there is no formalized platform for such coordination. Moreover, Slovenia exhibits an enormous diversity of student and academic interest groups (see Chapter 3), making joint policy coordination among all of them enormously difficult. This, therefore, may explain the strikingly weak perception of policy coordination.

Remaining within the **consultation/coordination dimension**, we also explored the intensity of contacts between interest organizations and various political institutions, which in turn enables us to assess what public bodies they calibrate their strategies towards. We asked:

In the last five years, approximately how many times did the government consult interest groups in your field of activity? (1 – never, 2 – annually, 3 – bi-annually, 4 – monthly, 5 – weekly)

Approximately how often does your organization consult with regulatory authorities in your field of activity? (1 – never, 2 – annually, 3 – bi-annually, 4 – monthly, 5 – weekly)

Approximately how often does your organization consult with political parties? (1 – never, 2 – annually, 3 – bi-annually, 4 – monthly, 5 – weekly)

As a reflection of a more mature interest intermediation system and consensus-oriented, corporatist policy-making (see also Chapter 5), we inquired whether organizations regularly consult organizations with opposed or rivaling positions.

Approximately how often does your organization consult with organizations representing opposing interests? (1 – never, 2 – annually, 3 – bi-annually, 4 – monthly, 5 – weekly)

In terms of consultations with governments and rivaling interest groups, annual to bi-annual consultations seem to be the prevalent norm, whereas regulatory authorities seem to be a major point of contact. Particularly eye-catching is the weak degree of interactions with political parties in all countries, in particular in Hungary (and with the partial exception of the Czech Republic). This indeed lends additional support to Kamiński's argument (see Chapter 12) that organized interests in the region² are occupying political and territory which political parties are abandoning. In other words, there seems to be a pronounced deficit when

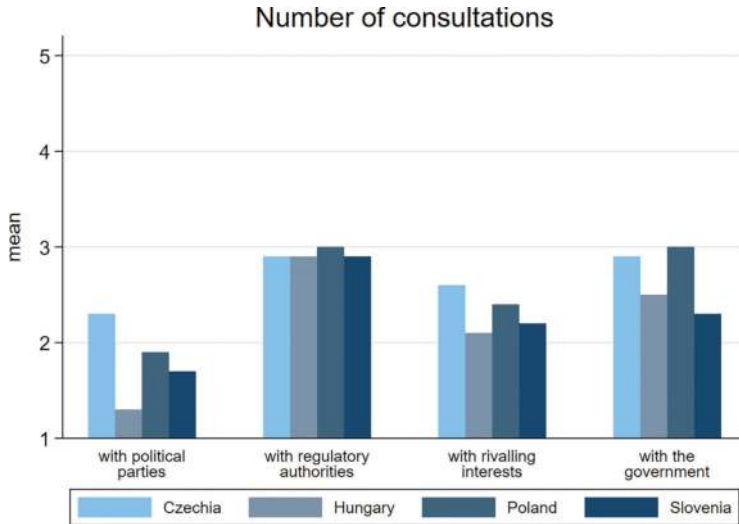


FIGURE 13.3 Frequency of consultations between organizations, political bodies, and rivaling organizations.

it comes to collective mobilization and strategic coordination between parties and civil society organizations, with both apparently constituting two separate venues of political advocacy.

This impression is somewhat reinforced when it comes to our data on cooperation between organized interests. Not only is strong cooperation and coalition-building between like-minded organizations a sign of a well-developed system of advocacy and interest intermediation, but also a key variable for the success of interest groups in reaching their objectives (Junk, 2020; Klüver, 2011; Mahoney, 2007). We asked:

How frequently does your organization cooperate with other interest organizations in fundraising/representation on advisory boards/joint statements/joint political strategies? (1 – never, 2 – occasionally, 3 – frequently)

Other than fundraising, which appears to remain the domain of individual organizations, we see relatively strong dynamics in strategic cooperation between organizations. Interestingly, Hungarian organizations are somewhat more cooperative than others, at least regarding joint strategies. We would postulate that this is an effect of the generally weaker access to political institutions, forcing organizations into joint coordination.

Now let us look at how organizations fare in country comparison on the **power and access dimension**. We asked:

How difficult is it for your organization to access governing parties/opposition parties/regulatory authorities? (1 – very difficult, 2 – difficult, 3 – moderate, 4 – easy, 5 – very easy)

How would you describe your level of participation in parliamentary hearings/parliamentary committees? (1 – no participation, 2 – low participation, 3 – occasional participation, 4 – high participation, 5 – very high participation)

Particularly shocking is the finding for Hungary where ties between interest groups and the governing party (*Fidesz*) are effectively non-existent, and organizations tend to lobby oppositional parties while also neglecting the National Assembly.

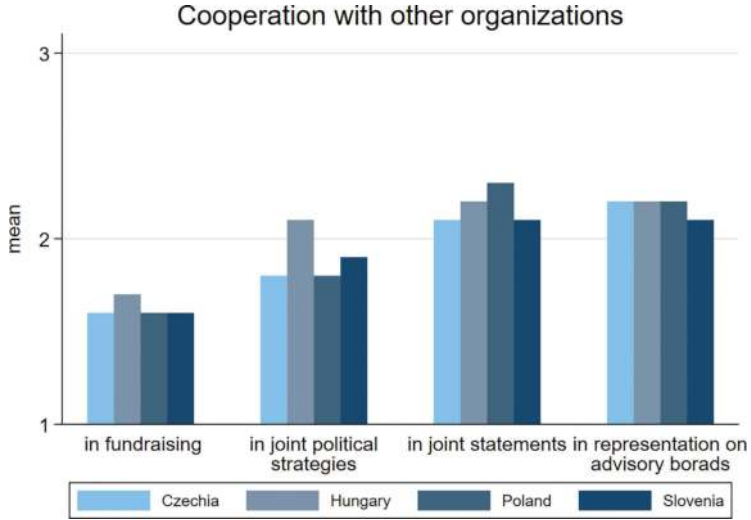


FIGURE 13.4 Willingness to cooperate with other organizations.

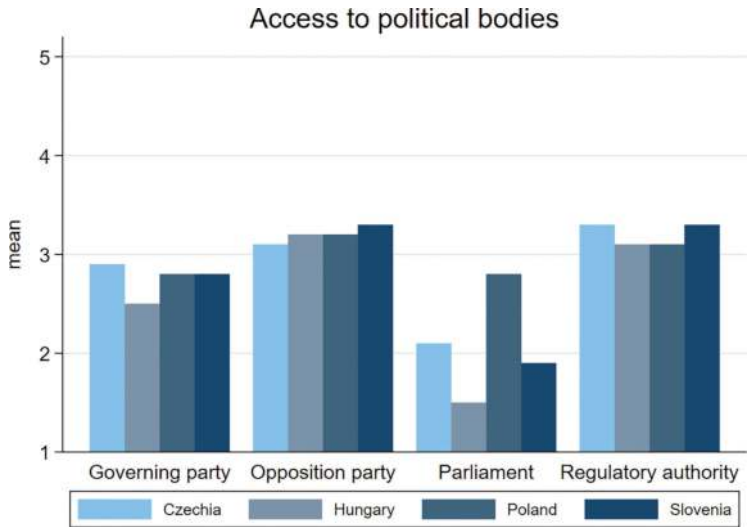


FIGURE 13.5 Perception of ease of access to political bodies by organizations.

These general results also lend evidence of a shift towards de-parliamentarization across CEE, which is (to some extent, as underlined by the Europeanization literature) also a result of the supranationalization of lobbying activities and transferring of advocacy activities to Brussels (see Fink-Hafner, 2011). However, the Polish case is significantly different with the parliament as a main venue for interest intermediation, and with organizations targeting all political institutions equally.

To further grasp the **power and access dimension**, we asked organizations how they perceive their own opportunity structures vis-à-vis those of others and whether they assess their opportunities to influence policy more favorably than 10–15 years ago:

Do you think that opportunities for participation in the policy process are equally distributed among interest organizations? (1 – very much to the favor of other organizations, 2 – somewhat to the favor of other organizations, 3 – equally distributed, 4 – somewhat to the favor of our organization, 5 – very much to the favor of our organization)

To what extent do you assess the ability of your organization to assert its interests as opposed to 10–15 years ago (or since its founding, if founded more recently)? (1 – much less than before, 2 – less than before, 3 – the same, 4 – greater now, 5 – much greater now)

Do you experience intensive competition from organizations active in your field that represent opposing interests or values? (1 – much less than before, 2 – less than before, 3 – the same, 4 – greater now, 5 – much greater now)

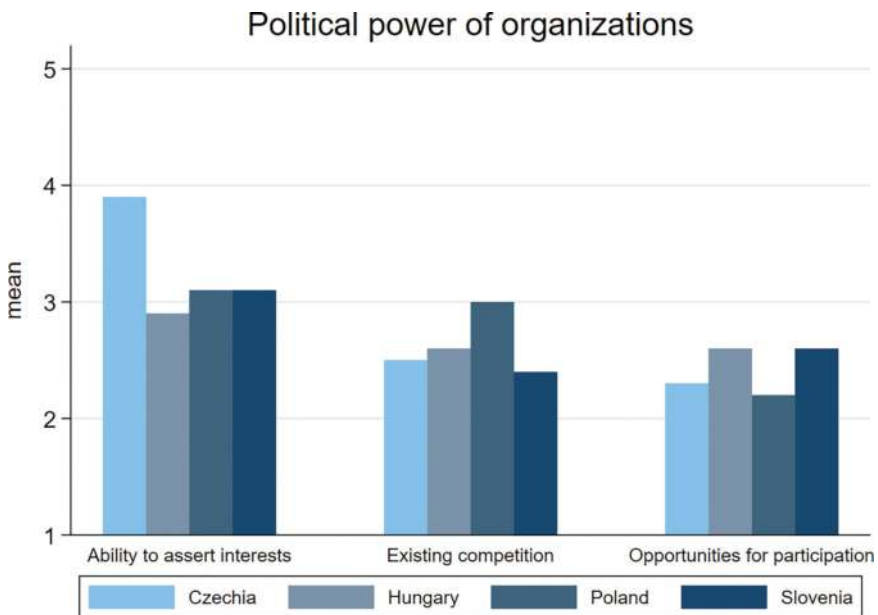


FIGURE 13.6 Perception of opportunity structures and influence.

The data again appear to confirm that the organizational playing fields have become rather consolidated (see ecosystem dimension above). At least with respect to perceived competition from similar organizations, we do not see an American-like system of dynamic competition among rivaling interest organizations in any of the countries, except to a limited extent in Poland. Unsurprisingly, organizations tend to subjectively report that their opportunities for participation and thus influence as worse than their rivals (Slovenia and Hungary to a lesser extent). However, when we ask directly about their perceived influence, the data paint a relatively positive picture, with Czech organizations visibly more optimistic than others. Yet, Polish and Slovenian organizations also (aggregately) evaluate their opportunities relatively favorably.

Turning back to Chapter 9, we also present some simple final data on the **professionalization dimension** based on their own assessments. We asked:

To what extent does your organization focus on the following activities as opposed to 10–15 years ago (or since its founding, if founded more recently): organizational development/HR development / training of lobbyists/fundraising/evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness/strategic planning? (1 – much less, 2 – less, 3 – the same, 4 – more, 5 – much more)

We see that organizations across CEE are becoming more and more professionalized, with a leading position of Slovenian groups and Hungarian groups as slight laggards. At the same time, especially in the democratically backsliding countries, we observe a growing aversion to lobbying, which may be the result of the anti-elitist mood of the authoritarian populist politics, but is worthy of further exploration. Importantly though, the chapters showed that the role of



FIGURE 13.7 Various aspects of professionalization of organizations.

professionalization in facilitating access to policy-makers is not the same. While Horváthová and Dobbins determined in Chapter 7 that professionalization – together with inter-organizational cooperation (see above) – provides a key for healthcare groups to access policy-makers, Chapter 6 by Szczepan Czarnecki, Rafał Riedel, and Emilia Piotrowska revealed that resources, and in particular financial capacity, are more central to political access than professionalization. In either case though, our data reflect an increasing activity in all aspects of professionalization, which our survey covered.

4 Pathways for future research

The newly generated data and analyses presented in this book shed new light on the current status of state–civil society relationships in post-communist CEE and in particular interest groups as key representatives of civil society. Despite this increasingly complete picture, we encourage scholars to conduct further research to fully grasp the dynamically changing ecosystems and playing fields of organized interests in the region.

Apart from the observed deficit in the scholarly interest dedicated to post-communist organized interests, which we wished to overcome with this book, we are also witnessing significant changes to the liberal democratic *status quo* in CEE, which constitutes a salient contextual variable for any analysis of the subject matter. The champions of the 1989 pro-democratic transition, most spectacularly Hungary, but to some extent also Poland, have taken a U-turn towards the still poorly understood realm of illiberal democracy. Amid encroachments on the *rule of law*, civil rights and free civil society in general have increasingly been questioned or gradually replaced by illiberal forms of civil society engagement (see Kulska in this volume). Clientelistic networks of inter-dependence between and among the state and societal actors are arguably also undermining the healthy advocacy process. No matter if they manifest themselves in oligarchic mafia state-like forms observed in Hungary (Magyar, 2016), or softer versions of Polish semi-authoritarianism, they are generally hostile to a well-functioning civic society. Ever more centralized policy-making and the state-driven, over-particized decision-making process create an unfavorable environment for balanced advocacy and lobbying activities. Thus, before CEE interest intermediation systems reached their potential and full maturity, they have arguably started to erode under the influence of the democratic backsliding tendencies. These patterns are worth scholarly investigation, enabling deeper explanations of various aspects of CEE civil society developments. This applies in particular to Olejnik's (2020) argument on the preferential treatment of state-subsidized groups, for which we were only able to provide inconclusive counter-evidence, or organized interests representing state-owned enterprises (see Kubin in this volume).

Tying into this, future studies should focus more on the territorial dimension of lobbying in the region. One interesting question is whether the increasing centralization of policy-making in numerous CEE countries is prompting organized

interests to increasingly target their advocacy activities at the European or regional level, or whether they react to political centralization by expanding their national-level activity. Along these lines, scholars should also address what interest group-related factors (see Chapters 6 and 7) best enable organized interests to operate simultaneously on multiple territorial levels and, in turn, how this affects their ability to shape policy. In other words, national and transnational “venue shopping” should be given more attention. While transnational lobbying is heavily contingent on the specific policy areas and incentives (see Chapter 9), it may also be equally influenced by domestic political dynamics and the openness or closure of political systems.

The analyses collected in this volume also challenged a number of well-established claims present in the literature, most notably the “weak civil society hypothesis”, as reflected in inexperienced interest organizations lacking professional lobbying skills (see Guasti, 2016; Howard, 2003). We show that CEE countries differ not only at the point of arrival, but also at the very point of departure understood as the beginning of transition processes, laying the foundations for various systems of interest representation. The precise picture is much more nuanced and shows many ways in which the country-specific or sector-specific characteristics of civic society manifest themselves in CEE. In this book, we provided a better understanding of the conditions of policy-making processes from the interest groups perspective as important players in post-communist democracies. We did so by comparatively exploring their position, structures, status, and patterns of behaviors, taking into account interest group-related factors, issue-related factors, socio-economic institutions, and aspects of Europeanization.

Apart from the provided in-depth analysis of patterns of interest intermediation, lobbying strategies, and the broader effects of the transformation and Europeanization processes as well as domestic reform processes on populations of interest groups, more research is imperative in all of the above-mentioned areas based on both qualitative and quantitative (as well as mixed) methods. This applies not only to the expansion of the countries but also to policy areas covered. Scholars should also focus more on the advocacy and lobbying tools used by organized interests, their communication strategies, as well as new social and protest movements. In addition, scholars of the region should integrate other variables for interest group success, which have also proven to hold strong explanatory value in recent interest group research. These include not only, for example, the size of coalitions (Junk, 2020; Mahoney, 2007), but also public opinion, the framing of issues (Rasch, 2018), the polarization of preferences (Bunea, 2013), and whether organizations are wishing to preserve or modify the *status quo*. Thus, a stronger focus on specific issues, their salience, and the public and organized group coalitions shaping policy would strongly enhance our understanding of lobbying and advocacy in the region.

Another important stream of research worth further scientific exploration is the public (mis)perceptions of various forms of organized interests. Relatively little research addresses how the various forms of advocacy and lobbying are

welcomed or rejected by the public. These questions are of vital importance for the legitimacy and accountability of organized interests and their role and place in the socio-political system. Looking beyond our data on organizational professionalization, scholars should delve deeper into the internal dynamics of CEE interest groups and explore how they are governed internally, how they recruit and maintain their members, how they formulate their policy positions, and to what extent internal democratic decision-making has been institutionalized. Last but not least, comparative analyses between the consolidated western systems of interest intermediation and post-communist systems are highly desirable. Cross-country and cross-sectoral analyses exploring diversified similarities and differences between and among organized interests would provide a full(er) picture of the European advocacy and lobbying systems.

Notes

- 1 Also denoted as the *functional dimension* in Chapter 5.
- 2 His analysis deals with Poland, Slovenia, Lithuania and covers interest organizations from more policy areas.

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APPENDIX

OVERVIEW OF THE ORGINTCEE SURVEY

Survey Languages: Czech, English, Hungarian, Polish, Slovenian

Survey Timeframe: February 2019–June 2020

Survey Platform: LimeSurvey

Survey Questions

What is the name of your organization?
Does your organization represent business interests? Yes/No
Are you an umbrella organization? Yes/No
How many individuals are members of your organization?
How many firms are members of your organization?
How many interest organizations or institutions (e.g. hospitals) are members of your organization?
How many volunteers work for your organization?
Approximately how many paid (full-time/part-time) staff work for your organization?
Is your organization a member of a European, international or national umbrella association? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• International (No/Yes, Please name)• European (No/Yes, Please name)• National (No/Yes, Please name)
In your opinion, is the number of interest organizations attempting to influence decision-making and legislation in your area increasing, decreasing or stable over the past 10–15 years? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increasing• Decreasing• Stable

(Continued)

<p>Approximately how often does your organization consult with political parties?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never • Annually • Biannually • Monthly • Weekly
<p>If possible, please specify which political parties.</p>
<p>Approximately how often does your organization consult with interest groups representing opposing interests in your area of activity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never • Annually • Biannually • Monthly • Weekly
<p>If possible, please specify which ones.</p>
<p>Approximately how often does your organization consult with regulatory authorities in your field of activity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never • Annually • Biannually • Monthly • Weekly
<p>In the last five years, approximately how many times did the government consult interest groups in your field of activity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never • Annually • Biannually • Monthly • Weekly
<p>How many times did your organization participate in these consultations?</p>
<p>Approximately how many times did the previous government consult interest groups in your field of activity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never • Annually • Biannually • Monthly • Weekly

<p>How many times did your organization participate in these consultations?</p>
<p>How difficult is it for you to access the following institutions/organizations relevant to your field of activities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory authorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely difficult • Difficult • Sometimes possible • Easy • Extremely easy • Governing parties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely difficult • Difficult • Sometimes possible • Easy • Extremely easy • Opposition parties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely difficult • Difficult • Sometimes possible • Easy • Extremely easy
<p>How would you describe your level of participation in parliamentary hearings/parliamentary committees?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No participation • Low participation • Occasional participation • High participation • Very high participation
<p>How would you rate the level of policy coordination/political exchange between the state and your interest group?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very weak • Weak • Moderate • Strong • Very strong

(Continued)

Does your organization collaborate with other like-minded organizations in the following areas?

- Fundraising
 - Never
 - Occasionally
 - Frequently
- Representation on advisory bodies
 - Never
 - Occasionally
 - Frequently
- Joint statements
 - Never
 - Occasionally
 - Frequently
- Coordinating joint political strategies
 - Never
 - Occasionally
 - Frequently

Do you think that opportunities for participation in the policy process are equally distributed among interest organizations?

- Very much to the favour of other organizations
- Somewhat to the favour of other organizations
- Equally distributed
- Somewhat to the favour of our organization
- Very much to the favour of our organization

To what extent do you think resource-rich interest groups are overrepresented in the policy process?

- Very little
- Somewhat
- Very much

Do you experience intensive competition from organizations active in your field that represent opposing interests or values?

- Never
- Usually not
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

Interest organizations often supply specialized expertise to policy-makers and political institutions. Thinking about the information or expertise you supply how would you rate the importance of the following types of information for your influence on policy?

- Technical or scientific information
 - Unimportant
 - Somewhat important
 - Very important
- Economic information
 - Unimportant
 - Somewhat important
 - Very important
- Legal information
 - Unimportant
 - Somewhat important
 - Very important
- Impact assessments
 - Unimportant
 - Somewhat important
 - Very important

How has the size of your organization's membership changed in the past 10–15 years (or since its founding, if founded more recently)?

- Decreased very much
- Decreased
- Stable
- Increased
- Increased very much

Does your organization have any strong ties with like-minded organizations in other EU countries? Yes/No (please specify the organizations in the comment box)

In recent years, have you increasingly networked with like-minded organizations abroad when trying to influence national legislation?

- Yes, very much
- Yes, somewhat
- No

(Continued)

What kind of support does your organization receive from related organizations abroad? (Multiple choice with comments.)

- Professional help (expertise)
- Financial and material support
- Training (education) of stakeholders
- Preparation of joint statements and declarations about the general issues
- International exchange of personnel
- Other – please specify

What are the most important consequences of this relationship? (Multiple choice with comments.)

- Greater strength of your organization in placing issues on the domestic policy agenda
- Gaining permanent consultative or partnership status in relation to government actors
- Stronger inclusion of your organization in other key stages of policy-making
- Transfer of knowledge, expertise and experience
- Financial support
- Other – please specify

To what extent does your organization focus on the following activities as opposed to 10–15 years ago (or since its founding, if founded more recently)?

- Organizational development
 - Much less
 - Less
 - The same
 - More
 - Much more
- Human resource development
 - Much less
 - Less
 - The same
 - More
 - Much more
- Training of lobbyists
 - Much less
 - Less
 - The same
 - More
 - Much more
- Fundraising
 - Much less
 - Less
 - The same
 - More
 - Much more

- Evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness

- Much less
- Less
- The same
- More
- Much more

- Strategic planning

- Much less
- Less
- The same
- More
- Much more

In your view, how important are different levels of representation for your activities compared to 10–15 years ago (or since its founding, if founded more recently)?

- Local/regional

- Much less
- Less
- The same
- More
- Much more

- National

- Much less
- Less
- The same
- More
- Much more

- European/EU

- Much less
- Less
- The same
- More
- Much more

- International

- Much less
- Less
- The same
- More
- Much more

(Continued)

To what extent do you assess the ability of your organization to assert its interests as opposed to 10–15 years ago (or since its founding, if founded more recently)?

- Much less than before
- Less than before
- The same
- Greater now
- Much greater now

Finally, we are wondering about the financial health of your organization. How would you assess your financial planning horizon?

- Financially stable for less than one year
- Financially stable for one to two years
- Financially stable for three to five years
- Financially stable for about five years
- Financially stable for more than five years

Please indicate the approximate proportion of these sources of funding in your entire budget. (Multiple choice with comments.)

- Member fees
- Donations
- Subsidies/grants from national governments
- Commercial and marketing activities
- European Union funds/projects
- Other foundations/institutions/organizations

Data on the response rate

TABLE A.1 Response rate per country in the energy policy field

<i>Country</i>	<i>Responses in the energy policy field</i>	<i>% of total responses in the energy policy field per country</i>	<i>Number of invited organizations in the energy policy field per country</i>	<i>Response rate in the energy policy field in % per country</i>
Czechia	37	31.4	106	34.9
Hungary	26	22.0	71	36.6
Poland	25	21.2	102	24.5
Slovenia	30	25.4	46	65.2
Total per policy field	118	100	325	36.3

Note: Organizations were contacted up to three times per e-mail and organizations up to two times per phone.

TABLE A.2 Response rate per country in the healthcare policy field

<i>Country</i>	<i>Responses in the healthcare policy field</i>	<i>% of total responses in the healthcare policy field per country</i>	<i>Number of invited organizations in the healthcare policy field per country</i>	<i>Response rate in the healthcare policy field in % per country</i>
Czechia	68	31.3	211	32.2
Hungary	53	24.4	155	34.2
Poland	46	21.2	256	18.0
Slovenia	50	23.0	101	49.5
Total per policy field	217	100	723	30.0

Note: Organizations were contacted up to three times per e-mail and up to two times per phone.

TABLE A.3 Response rate per country in the higher education policy field

<i>Country</i>	<i>Responses in the higher education policy field</i>	<i>% of total responses in the higher education policy field per country</i>	<i>Number of invited organizations in the higher education policy field per country</i>	<i>Response rate in the higher education policy field in % per country</i>
Czechia	18	18.0	49	36.7
Hungary	18	18.0	49	36.7
Poland	26	26.0	37	70.3
Slovenia	38	38.0	81	46.9
Total per policy field	100	100	216	46.3

Note: Organizations were contacted up to three times per e-mail and up to two times per phone.

TABLE A.4 Total response rate per country in all policy fields

<i>Country</i>	<i>Total responses per country</i>	<i>% of total responses per country</i>	<i>Total number of invited organizations per country</i>	<i>Total response rate in % per country</i>
Czechia	123	28.3	366	33.6
Hungary	97	22.3	275	35.3
Poland	97	22.3	395	24.6
Slovenia	118	27.1	228	51.8
Total in all policy fields	435	100	1264	34.4

Note: Organizations were contacted up to three times per e-mail and up to two times per phone.

General note: Organizations perceived as critically important in the three policy areas (e.g. major umbrella organizations, large workers unions, large student unions, large medical associations) were contacted more intensely and nearly all responded to the survey. The data above reflect **all** organizations, including very specific organizations contacted less intensely (e.g. geography students association, alternative medical associations).

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