

## Interest Group Politics in the EU: The National Level

Andreas Dür  
[Andreas.Duer@sbg.ac.at](mailto:Andreas.Duer@sbg.ac.at)  
University of Salzburg

Gemma Mateo  
[Gemma.Mateo@ucd.ie](mailto:Gemma.Mateo@ucd.ie)  
University of Salzburg

### Abstract

Which societal actors are involved in lobbying on initiatives towards market integration in the EU? With studies of EU lobbying mainly focusing on EU federations, lobbying by *national-level* associations has largely been neglected. We submit that this is a major neglect, as the increasing importance of EU regulations in the wake of market integration in Europe makes us expect that many such domestic interest groups should be active in lobbying on EU legislation. Using original data from a survey of interest groups in Ireland, which we carried out between October 2008 and March 2009, we find support for this expectation. We conclude that national-level interest groups are heavily involved in the process of market integration and that there is systematic variation in the amount of EU lobbying across these groups.

*Acknowledgments:* This research is part of a project entitled “Ireland and ‘Grand Bargains’ in the EU”, financed by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (Government of Ireland Thematic Project Grants 2006/2007). The research would have been impossible without the many respondents that were willing to invest some time in filling in and returning our questionnaire. Moreover, we are grateful to Justin Leinaweaver, Stephen Massey, and Niall Morris for research assistance.

Version: 18 August 2009  
Word count: 7,700

## **Introduction**

Over the last decade, a large number of studies have been published on the role of interest groups in the process of European integration (for an overview, see Beyers et al. 2008). This literature touches upon such questions as how decisions are taken within the federations that have been established at the level of the European Union (EU), the strategies that EU-level interest groups use to influence EU legislation, and the link between interest groups and democratic governance in the EU. What is largely absent from this literature, though, is a systematic analysis of the lobbying activity by national (and sub-national) associations on EU legislation (for exceptions, see Pappi and Henning 1999; Beyers 2002; Eising 2004, 2009; Constantelos 2007; Geer et al. 2008). This is so although early on authors recognised that in a multi-level system of governance such as the EU “interest groups at any territorial level are free to lobby government at any number of levels” (Constantelos 1996: 30).

We think that the relative neglect of the multilevel nature of EU lobbying is a major shortcoming, as we expect a substantial number of national-level groups to engage in lobbying on EU matters. In fact, already in the early 1990s an influential article mentioned “an increasing volume of direct contacts” between the European Commission and national business associations (Streeck and Schmitter 1991: 137). We expect the involvement of national-level associations in the EU legislative process to have further increased over the two decades that have passed since the publication of that article. This is so, first, because for most societal actors the potential costs and benefits from EU legislation have increased over the last few years as the scope of EU legislation has broadened. Several treaty revisions over the last decade have caused an expansion in the scope of the EU’s authority into policy fields such as justice and internal affairs and environmental protection.

Second, the costs of lobbying on EU legislation relative to national legislation have decreased as a result of technological progress. The ever-increasing role of the internet in communication has brought down the costs of being informed about developments in Brussels even for associations that act from a geographic distance. At the same time, the decline in air fares has made it easier for national associations to represent their interests in Brussels. Finally, the increase in the number of EU member states as a result of several rounds of enlargement, and the parallel increase in interest heterogeneity within EU-level federations, has boosted the coordination and transaction costs of relying on EU federations for the representation of associations' interests with the EU institutions. As a result of these parallel developments, we expect national associations to have further increased their lobbying on EU legislation over the last two decades. An analysis of the EU lobbying by national associations thus seems to be particularly propitious at this moment (see also Coen 2007: 341).

Our hunch is that the lobbying by national associations can be explained by a relatively simple political economy model that sees associations maximising their utility under budget constraints. We develop such a political economy model and derive a series of hypotheses from it. Among our expectations is that groups that engage in a lot of lobbying on national legislation should also be particularly active on EU legislation. Moreover, we expect national-level business associations to lobby more on EU legislation than non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The reason is that because of collective action problems, it should be easier for the former to be informed about EU legislative proposals that may impact on the interests of their members. Furthermore, associations that are active in policy fields with a lot of EU legislation, such as agriculture and trade, should be particularly involved in the EU

legislative process. Finally, associations that are used to inside lobbying should lobby more on EU legislation than associations whose main expertise is in outside lobbying.

We test these expectations derived from our political-economy argument on data that originate from a survey of Irish associations, which we carried out in late 2008 and early 2009. Our focus on Ireland nicely complements previous studies in the field. Rainer Eising (2009), for example, focused his study of national business associations on three large countries (France, Germany, and the United Kingdom), whereas we look at associations from a relatively small country. Moreover, in contrast to Jan Beyers's (2002) analysis of Belgian groups, we provide a study of associations from a country that is geographically (and probably also culturally) far more distant from the European institutions. In our survey, we contacted 402 associations, and received responses from 165 associations, which amounts to a response rate of 41 percent. The resulting data allow us to empirically examine the hypotheses that we propose.

In making the argument and carrying out the empirical analysis, the paper contributes to the literatures on interest group lobbying in the EU and on the political economy of European market integration. With respect to the former, we provide answers to questions such as: Whose voices are being heard in the EU? Are there any biases in terms of who has access to policy makers? With respect to the latter, we show that national-level societal actors are heavily involved in shaping the course of market integration and that market integration leads to changes in the behaviour of societal actors.

### **A Political Economy Explanation of EU Lobbying**

The EU has an increasingly large impact on the chances of societal actors to achieve political outcomes in line with their preferences. The EU's policy output has major

implications for actors as diverse as companies that want to receive protection against foreign imports, chemical producers concerned about environmental standards, and development NGOs interested in the provision of aid to developing countries. Given the importance of the EU for these societal actors, one would expect them to try to influence EU legislation. These influence attempts can take place through at least three channels: through national political actors, hoping that they will defend their interests in the Council of Ministers and vis-à-vis the European Commission; through EU federations that mainly interact with the EU institutions; and directly with the EU-level institutions, in particular the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Building on the vast political economy literature, we develop an intentionally simple model that allows for the derivation of a few hypotheses that address two dependent variables: 1.) the absolute amount of lobbying an association carries out on EU legislation; and 2.) the share of an association's overall lobbying effort that is aimed at EU legislation. Whereas the first dependent variable addresses the question of differences in absolute levels of lobbying on EU legislation, the second one builds on the idea that there are also differences in the share of their limited resources that Irish associations invest on lobbying on EU legislation.

The argument starts with the assumption that each association has a fixed and limited amount of resources, where the overall endowment with resources varies across associations. Relevant resources are not only financial means, but also legitimacy, political support, knowledge, and expertise and information. Such resources are necessary for influencing policy outcomes for several reasons: associations need resources to be informed about relevant policy developments, to organise outside lobbying activities, and to use as currency in exchange for access and

influence from decision-makers. Associations can decide to allocate a larger or a smaller amount of their resources to lobbying on EU legislation, but they cannot (in the short run) increase their overall amount of resources. The fact that the overall resources are limited introduces opportunity costs: the more an association invests on lobbying on national legislation, the less it can invest on EU legislation, and vice versa. A further assumption of the argument is that associations act with the aim of maximising their benefits from influencing legislation. These benefits concern both the direct gains from achieving a specific policy output that is in line with their interests (the logic of influence, in the terminology of Schmitter and Streek 1981) and the indirect gains that arise if influencing policy allows them to increase their number of members and/or financial contributions (the logic of membership).

It can be expected that the larger the share of overall resources that an association dedicates to EU legislation, the larger the gains it derives from EU legislation (and the lower the gains from national legislation, since fewer resources will be spent there). This strictly positive relationship between resources spent and gains can be understood in two different (but possibly complementary) ways. On the one hand, it can be assumed that benefit is a continuous variable and the investment of resources on lobbying leads to an incremental increases in the value of this variable (that is, as one increases the lobbying effort on a piece of legislation, one can expect an increasingly favourable policy output). On the other hand, the strictly positive relationship arises if lobbying increases the probability of getting a benefit. At the same time, there are diminishing returns to investing ever more on a specific piece of legislation. This is so because policy makers will find it unattractive completely to give in to the pressures from one interest group. By contrast, they will find it easy to give a small concession to a group that was heavily disadvantaged in an earlier

proposal.<sup>1</sup> For our simple model, this assumption of diminishing returns has no effect on cross-group variation, as across many proposals, we expect that groups will sometimes find their interests reflected in the original proposal and at other times not.

Given these assumptions, variation across associations in their absolute level of lobbying on EU legislation should be driven by variation in the resource endowments of associations. In general, those associations that are well endowed with resources should engage in a lot of lobbying on legislation emanating at both the EU and the national level. We expect that there are many relatively small associations that find it difficult to get politically active independent of the level at which authority is located in a multi-level system. Others, by contrast, should be well organised internally and have the necessary resources to monitor and try to influence legislation at all relevant levels of governance. Consequently, there should be a high correlation between the amount of lobbying on national and on EU legislation, an expectation that Beyers (2002: 593) calls the “positive persistence hypothesis”. In form of a hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1:* The more active an association is with respect to national legislation, the more active it is with respect to EU legislation.

On average, moreover, it can be expected that business associations are better endowed with resources than NGOs. By definition, NGOs do not have a well-defined constituency with concentrated material gains or losses from a specific piece of legislation. Collective action problems should therefore be more severe for NGOs that

---

<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, there may be initially increasing returns to investing more on a piece of legislation, as an association has to achieve a certain amount of visibility to effectively defend a stance.

defend a diffuse interest than business associations that protect the material interests of a relatively small number of members (Olson 1965; Dür and De Bièvre 2007). The collective action problems should make the initial mobilisation of NGOs more difficult than the creation of business associations and labour unions. It should also obstruct lobbying on a specific piece of legislation once an NGO is created, because an NGO should find it more difficult to galvanize its members in opposition to or in support of a specific legislative proposal. Getting members involved in a lobbying campaign is often a necessary condition for influence, because only members may hold the resources that an association can exchange for access and influence. Activating members should be particularly difficult for NGOs with respect to EU legislation, which tends to receive less public attention in the media than national legislation (Peter et al. 2003; Meyer 2005). This expectation of a bias against NGOs with respect to lobbying on EU legislation is shared by a series of authors (see, for example, Schneider and Baltz 2003; Coen 2007: 335). Our second hypothesis hence is:

*Hypothesis 2:* National business associations have an advantage over national NGOs in getting mobilized with respect to EU legislation.

More interesting than the question of the absolute level of EU lobbying is the question of associations' allocation of their resources to either EU or national legislation. A small association may decide to allocate a larger share of its scarce resources to lobbying on EU legislation than a relatively large association. The decision on where an association focuses its resources should be a function of the relative costs of lobbying on EU and national legislation; and the relative gains from lobbying on EU and national legislation. The lobbying costs are not least shaped by

the decision-makers' responsiveness to lobbying expenditures. Decision-makers' responsiveness, in turn, should depend on their own endowment with resources and the availability of alternative sources of resources (see also Dür 2008: 1214-15). The potential lobbying benefits largely depend on the significance of the piece of legislation that is under discussion for the interests of the association (and the visibility with its members that any success at influencing a policy outcome has).

Associations should increase their investment of resources on lobbying at one level until the returns to this investment equal the returns from investing another unit of lobbying expenditure on lobbying at the other level. In general, we expect associations to increase their lobbying on EU legislation as the cost of doing so declines relative to the cost of lobbying on national legislation and the potential benefits of lobbying on EU legislation increase relative to those from lobbying on national legislation. Obviously, the assumption of diminishing returns means that the more an association already focuses on EU (national) legislation, the less likely it will be that it will increase this lobbying even further. In any case, the reasoning leads to the concrete expectation that there should be variation across policy fields in the relative focus on EU legislation. In fields with substantial EU authority, the potential gains from lobbying on EU legislation should be higher than in other fields, therefore providing an incentive for associations to concentrate their lobbying effort on EU legislation. This is in line with V.O. Key's (1956: 168) adage that "where power rests, there influence is brought to bear." Our third hypothesis hence is:

*Hypothesis 3:* Associations that are active in policy fields in which the EU's competencies are large are particularly involved in EU lobbying.

The last hypothesis that we derive from our argument also concerns the question of the relative importance given to lobbying on EU and national legislation. The expectation is that associations that predominantly use strategies in their lobbying at the national level that also work well at the European level should engage in relatively more EU lobbying, because they should find it less costly to do so. In particular, the costs of lobbying on EU legislation should be lower for associations that are used to inside lobbying. Inside lobbying refers to the process of establishing direct contacts with decision-makers with the aim of influencing policy output, whereas outside lobbying is any activity that aims at either changing public opinion or mobilising latent public support for a position with the aim of influencing policy output (Kollman 1998). The reason why associations with expertise in inside lobbying should face lower costs when engaging in direct lobbying with EU institutions is that the EU's political system is characterised by little media coverage and the absence of a European public, thus making an outside lobbying strategy very difficult.<sup>2</sup> In form of a hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 4:* Associations that are more used to inside lobbying engage in more EU lobbying.

A widely held assumption is that NGOs rely more on outside strategies than business associations (Gais and Walker 1991). If this assumption is correct, we would expect

---

<sup>2</sup> Kohler-Koch (1997: 7) suggests that even in lobbying the European Parliament, inside tactics are advantageous. She refers to an "unwritten code of conduct" that tells interest groups to abstain from mobilising the public and concentrate on the provision of information instead.

business associations to be relatively (and not only in absolute terms as argued above) more active on EU legislation than NGOs.

### **The Data**

To test these expectations, we rely on a survey of Irish associations that we carried out in late 2008 and early 2009. For this survey, we asked 402 Irish associations to respond to a questionnaire on their lobbying activity (for a more detailed discussion of our approach, see Dür and Mateo 2009). The population that we considered were all Republic of Ireland-based associations included in the *Administration Yearbook & Diary 2008* (Institute of Public Administration 2008), except sporting associations, political parties, and learned societies. We are confident that the yearbook's listings are reasonably comprehensive and that our panel is a good representation of the population of *associations* that potentially engage in lobbying. What we did not consider were firms that may engage in lobbying independent of and in addition to associations.

Broken down by type of association, we contacted 155 business associations (38 percent of total), 115 NGOs (29 percent), 86 professional associations (21 percent), 17 agricultural associations (4 percent), 17 labour unions (4 percent), and 12 associations that we could not classify (3 percent). The distinction between business and professional associations is the least clear-cut: we defined professional associations as groups for which membership is linked to a specific training, and where members are mainly individuals. The main objective of these groups is to provide services to their members. Business associations, by contrast, mainly have companies as members and above all exist for the purpose of engaging in lobbying.

For the survey, we used an open-source tool called LimeSurvey. We contacted all associations by e-mail, asking representatives of the associations to complete an

*Table 1: The measures of the dependent variables*

<b>Dependent variables</b>	<b>Proxy 1</b>	<b>Proxy 2</b>
1.) <i>Absolute importance of lobbying on EU legislation (Hypotheses 1 and 2)</i>	a.) Number of institutions with which an association had 6 or more contacts b.) Mean frequency of contacts on EU legislation across all EU and Irish institutions	Sum of values across list of tactics used on EU legislation
2.) <i>Relative importance of lobbying on EU legislation (Hypotheses 3 and 4)</i>	Lobbying on EU legislation as a percentage of overall legislative lobbying	Sum of values across list of tactics used on EU legislation relative to sum of values across tactics on both EU and national legislation (* 100)

online questionnaire. To maximise the response rate, we also sent hardcopies of the questionnaire to associations that did not respond to the e-mail invitation. In the end, we achieved a response rate of 41 percent. The relatively high response rate should ensure that our findings are representative of the population of Irish associations, even though it seems plausible that there is a slight bias in favour of responses from associations that actually engage in lobbying (that is, we should overestimate the extent of lobbying). By type of associations, the response rates are as follows: 53 percent for labour unions, 47 percent for professional associations, 42 percent for NGOs, 35 percent for agricultural associations, and 34 percent for business associations.

The dependent variable in our research is the extent of lobbying by these associations on EU legislation, in absolute terms and relative to their overall lobbying activity. Our questionnaire allows us to calculate two proxies for each of the two variables (see Table 1). A measure for the first dependent variable stems from the following question: “How often have you been in contact with the following Irish [EU] institutions with respect to *EU legislative proposals* over the last two years?” The Irish institutions that we listed were the top level of government (ministers etc.),

the government bureaucracy (officials in ministries etc.), Irish regulatory agencies, deputies in the Dail, deputies in the Seanad, political parties, and committees of the Oireachtas. The EU-level institutions that we listed were the top level of the European Commission, desk officers (or equivalent) in the European Commission, EU regulatory agencies, national representatives in the COREPER, the Irish Permanent Representation in Brussels, members of the European Parliament, European Parliament committees, the European Commission representation in Ireland, and the European Parliament office in Ireland. Respondents could indicate that they had no, one, 2-5, 6-9, 10-19, or 20 and more contacts with these institutions.

Since it is not necessarily appropriate to assume that these data are of ratio type, we converted them into a ratio variable by counting the number of institutions with which an association had six or more contacts over the last two years. The mean value on this variable across all Irish institutions is 1.56 and across all EU institutions 0.7. 63 associations (38 percent) had 6 or more contacts with at least one of the Irish institutions on EU legislation over the last two years. Only 31 (19 percent) had 6 or more contacts with at least one of the EU institutions. Across both the EU and the Irish institutions, 6 associations had 6 or more contacts with 10 or more institutions, while 81 did not have at least six contacts with any institution. Making the assumption that the data are of ratio type, we also calculated the mean contact frequency for each association across all institutions. The larger this value, the more an association engages in lobbying on EU legislation. The mean across all Irish institutions is 1.6, which is equivalent to an average of 2-5 contacts over the last two years; for EU institutions, the mean is 0.8, which means an average of one contact over the last two years. The main problem with both of these measures is that they only capture inside lobbying.

The second measure of the first dependent variable results from the question: “Please indicate how often your organisation uses the following actions to influence EU legislation”. The tactics that we listed were direct contacts with policymakers and/or public officials, participating in meetings organised by political institutions, preparing a detailed position paper, distributing folders and brochures, organising or participating in demonstrations and/or street actions, distributing a press release, organising a press conference, initiating a public debate on the internet, trying to mobilise other associations/interest groups, and hiring a consultant. Respondents could indicate that they use these tactics never, less than yearly, once a year, about 2-5 times a year, about 6-9 times a year, about 10 to 15 times a year, approximately biweekly, or on a weekly basis. Using this data, we created an index by attaching a score to each response (never=0, less than yearly=1, once a year=2, etc.) and summing up these scores for each association.

For the second dependent variable, the most relevant question in the survey was: “In representing your members’ interests, approximately how much time (in percent [%]) do you spend on monitoring and influencing [Irish legislation, EU legislation, Other]?” The responses to this question offer a relative assessment of the importance of lobbying on EU legislation. Ten of the associations that responded to our survey do not engage in any legislative lobbying. A further 27 do no lobbying on EU legislation at all (but some lobbying on national or other legislation). For 42 associations, lobbying on EU legislation takes up 50 percent or more of their time. Two of the associations only engage in lobbying on EU legislation. The average importance of lobbying on EU association for the 155 associations that engage in at least some legislative lobbying is 28 percent.

To calculate the second measure of the second dependent variable, we divided the second measure of the first dependent variable (namely the sum across all tactics on EU legislation) by the sum across all tactics that an association uses on both national and EU legislation. The percentage that we derive from this calculation indicates whether an association does not use any tactics on EU legislation (score of 0) or only uses tactics on EU legislation (score of 100). The resulting measure shows that 126 associations lobbied more on Irish than on EU legislation, whereas only 14 lobbied more on EU legislation. The mean of 29.8 still indicates substantial lobbying activity on EU legislation.

While the main purpose of this section has been to introduce several measures of our two dependent variables, the discussion has also provided a justification for our research: evidently, there is a substantial amount of lobbying on EU legislation. While Irish associations focus more on Irish than on EU legislation, only very few of them engage in no EU lobbying at all. Irish associations clearly have been pulled into the EU policy-making process. This is a finding that we share with Eising (2009) who came to the conclusion that “today many national actors indeed follow a dual strategy to promote their interests.”

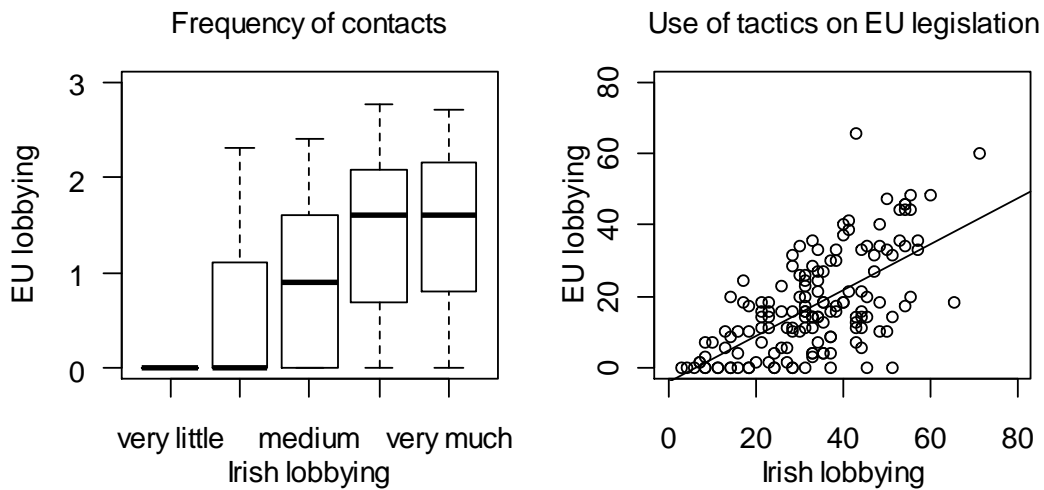
### **The Findings**

In this section, we first present some descriptive evidence on our four hypotheses, before examining them by way of regression analysis.

#### *Descriptive evidence*

In the first hypothesis, we suggested that those associations that are active on national legislation should also be particularly active on EU legislation. We use the proxies listed in Table 1 for the absolute amount of lobbying on EU legislation as measures of the dependent variable. For the independent variable, we rely on the frequency with

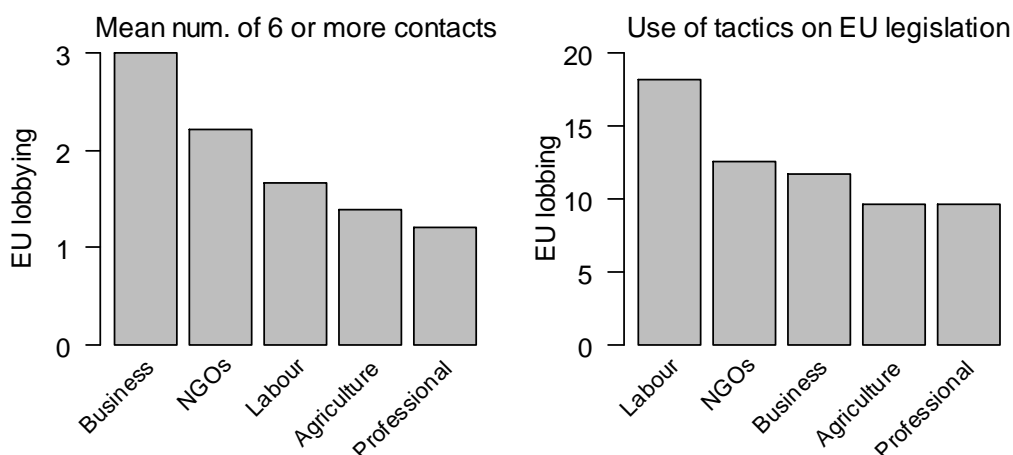
Figures 1a and 1b: Correlation between Irish and EU lobbying



which associations use ten tactics on Irish legislation. In Figure 1a, we show a boxplot of the amount of lobbying on the x-axis and the (log of the) number of institutions with which an association had six or more contacts on the y axis. For Figure 1b, we converted the measure of Irish lobbying into an index that ranges from 0 (no tactics used on Irish legislation) to 100 (all tactics used the maximum number of times). For this scatterplot, the use of tactics on EU legislation serves as measure of the dependent variable. In both figures, the relationship between the independent and the measures of the dependent variables is strong. While not shown, the result using the mean number of contacts with political institutions on EU legislation over the last two years as dependent variable is similar.

Our second hypothesis was that national business associations should have an advantage over national NGOs in getting mobilized with respect to EU legislation. We again take the two measures of the dependent variable, and calculate means for five types of associations: agricultural associations, business associations, labour unions, NGOs, and professional associations. Interestingly, the hypothesis is confirmed only for the first measure of the dependent variable. Clearly, Irish business associations have a larger number of intensive contacts with political institutions on

Figures 2a and 2b: EU lobbying by type of association



EU legislation. Nevertheless, with respect to the use of tactics, NGOs appear to be slightly more active than business associations. The reason for this finding may be that NGOs are more active with respect to outside lobbying tactics than business associations, which makes them appear more active overall.<sup>3</sup> The data thus only provide partial support for our hypothesis; however, in the light of the previous finding by Beyers (2002: 604) that specific interests from Belgium are hardly more active than diffuse interests this result is not so surprising. Independent of which measure of the dependent variable is used, agricultural and professional associations turn out to do less lobbying on EU legislation than the other types of associations.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 refer to the second dependent variable, namely the *relative* importance associations attach to EU lobbying. In the third hypothesis, we propose that associations that are active in policy fields in which the EU's competencies are large should be particularly involved in EU lobbying. Unsurprisingly, measuring the independent variable for this hypothesis is tricky. We considered several measures of

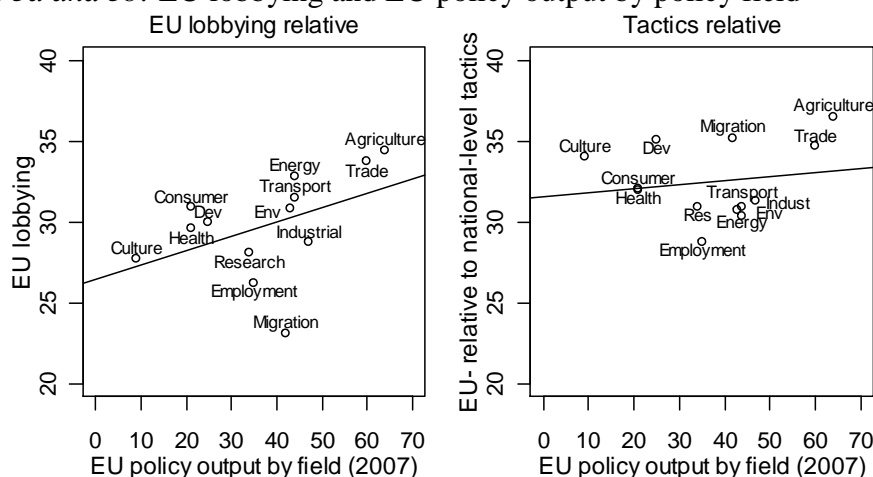
---

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that NGOs and business associations have the same mean when excluding eight sub-national chambers of commerce from the data. It is not astonishing that these sub-national associations engage in less EU lobbying than other business associations.

the extent of EU policy competencies by policy field: one way of measuring this variable is to count the number of articles in the Treaty of Nice that delegate authority to the EU for each policy field. The results of this exercise are not convincing, however: for example, the treaty contains eleven articles that deal with research policy (articles 163-173), nine that are concerned with migration policy (articles 61-69), and only four that establish the rules for European trade policy (articles 131-134). This is not a plausible measure of the extent of EU policy competencies because there is general agreement that trade policy is among the fields that are most integrated at the EU level. The data by Fabio Franchino (2004) on the extent of delegation to member states and the Commission in major EU legislation broadly confirms the hunch that the EU has most competencies in policy fields such as agriculture, trade, and transport, but unfortunately he has no data for most of the policy fields that we included in our questionnaire (probably also because many of these policy fields only have been part of the process of European integration in the 1990s and 2000s, and Franchino's most recent law is from 1993).

Still another approach that we considered was looking at the number of staff in each Directorate General. The mapping from Directorate General to policy field is difficult, however, not least because several directorates (such as Justice, Freedom and Security) deal with more than one policy field. Moreover, the staff in each directorate would have to be counted relative to staff in national ministries, because some policy fields need more staff than others. We could not get data on national staff in government departments in Ireland, however. The best data for this is contained in Department of Finance (2009), but this data happens to be very difficult to map to policy fields (for example, there is a Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in Ireland, which deals with three policy fields at the same time).

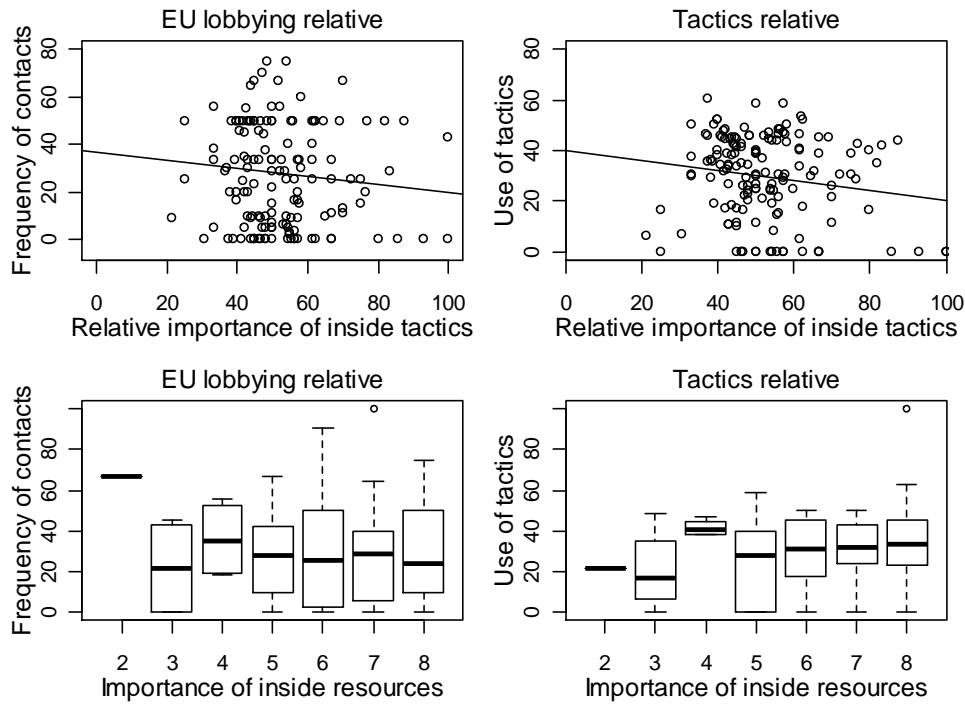
Figures 3a and 3b: EU lobbying and EU policy output by policy field



In the end, therefore, we opted to use policy output by Directorate General as a proxy. In practice, we counted the number of policy proposals, recommendations and consultations for which a Directorate General had primary responsibility in 2007. Again, as with staff numbers, some interpretation was necessary to map directorates to policy fields. Nevertheless, in the end we considered this to be the best approach. The values on this variable are intuitive: agriculture and trade turn out to be the policy fields with most EU authority, whereas the EU has least competence for cultural, health, and consumer policy. As dependent variables, we used those listed in Table 1, both calculated separately for the 13 policy fields that we distinguish.

The results are shown in Figures 3a and 3b. As can be seen, for both measures of the dependent variable the data support the hypothesis. However, this support is stronger in the case of the first measure of the dependent variable (Figure 3a) than in the case of the second measure (Figure 3b). A problem with our approach is that the differences between the two measures of the dependent variables used are rather large, especially with respect to migration (the null hypothesis of no correlation between the two measures could not be rejected).

Figures 4a-d: EU lobbying and inside tactics



Our fourth and final hypothesis is that associations with expertise in inside lobbying focus more on EU lobbying than other associations. To measure the independent variable (reliance on inside lobbying), we used two different approaches. On the one hand, we relied on a question in the survey that asked associations to indicate the frequency with which they used a series of tactics. The response options included three inside lobbying tactics (direct contacts, attendance at meetings, and of position papers) and five outside tactics (distribution of brochures, demonstrations, press releases, press conferences, and the organisation of internet debates). On the other hand, we created a measure using the responses to the question on the importance of two resources for their lobbying activity that clearly are linked to inside lobbying: technical expertise and formal involvement in expert committees or advisory boards. As dependent variable, we again used the two measures from before.

The result is surprising. In the first two plots, using the first measure of the independent variable, the results clearly run counter to our expectation. The scatter

plots show a negative relationship between concentration on inside tactics and extent of EU legislative lobbying. In Figure 4c, there is no relationship between the two variables, and only in Figure 4d, is there even a small positive relationship between concentration on inside strategies and relative focus on EU lobbying, as expected in Hypothesis 4.

Overall, the descriptive analysis has provided support for Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, but has cast doubt on Hypothesis 4. In the following regression analysis, we assess whether these bivariate results are robust in a multivariate setting.

### *Regression Analysis*

To test the hypotheses proposed above in a multivariate setting, we use several models, relying on the measures of the dependent variables listed in Table 1. The expectation formulated in Hypothesis 1 is captured by an index of the amount of legislative lobbying at the national level that each association undertakes. For Hypothesis 2, we include dummy variables for NGOs, professional associations, agricultural associations, labour unions, and other associations. Our reference category is business associations, meaning that the estimated coefficients can be interpreted relative to the coefficient for this type of associations. With respect to Hypothesis 3, we include a variable that takes the value of 2 for associations for which trade and agricultural policy are important or very important, 1 for associations for which at least one of these two policy fields is important or very important, and 0 for all others. Finally, Hypothesis 4 is tested by the inclusion of the mean frequency of use of three inside lobbying tactics (direct contacts, attendance at meetings, and preparation of position papers). As control variables, we included membership in an EU federation and the (natural log of the) number of staff. Because of listwise

Table 2: Regression results

	<i>Model 1a</i> (Frequency of contact)	<i>Model 1b</i> (Use of tactics)	<i>Model 2a</i> (Percentage)	<i>Model 2b</i> (Relative use of tactics)
<i>Irish lobbying</i>	0.06*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)		
<i>NGOs</i>	-0.50** (0.24)	-0.02 (0.16)		
<i>Professional associations</i>	-0.84*** (0.28)	-0.05 (0.17)		
<i>Policy fields (business and agriculture)</i>			1.50** (0.64)	5.06** (1.95)
<i>Inside strategy</i>			-0.42 (0.35)	2.88*** (1.07)
<i>EU federation</i>	0.73*** (0.20)	0.20 (0.13)	1.87** (0.85)	3.85 (2.56)
<i>Staff</i>	-0.05 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.06)	-0.15 (0.36)	-1.14 (1.10)
<i>Constant</i>	-1.69*** (0.35)	0.78*** (0.21)	8.00*** (1.18)	17.10*** (3.52)
<i>N</i>	165	165	150	155
<i>Theta</i>	1.17	1.74		
<i>Log. lik.</i>	-283.29	-550.30		
<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>			0.06	0.11

Note: \*\*\* p < 0.01; \*\* p < 0.05; \* p < 0.1. In Models 1a and 1b, the coefficients for agricultural associations, labour unions, and other associations are not shown.

deletion of missing values, the number of cases slightly varies across the four models that we estimate.

In Models 1a and 1b, we assess Hypotheses 1 and 2 using the two measures of the dependent variable presented in Table 1. Since the data are of count type with a large number of zeros and overdispersion, we estimate negative binomial count data regression models. The findings of the model, which are presented in Table 2, are largely supportive of our hypotheses. Looking at Model 1a first, we find support for both Hypotheses 1 and 2. It is very clear that those associations that engage in a major lobbying effort on national legislation are also those associations that lobby on EU legislation (for a similar finding, see also Beyers 2002: 608). Moreover, NGOs lobby less on EU legislation than business associations. The statistically significant negative

effect for professional associations in this model is in line with existing research that suggests that professional associations engage in less lobbying than both business associations and NGOs (Greenwood 2007). According to this model, membership in an EU-federation increases an association's absolute amount of lobbying on EU legislation. This is not particularly surprising because membership in such a federation is by itself a signal that an association is interested in EU developments. The number of staff an association employs is not statistically significant.<sup>4</sup>

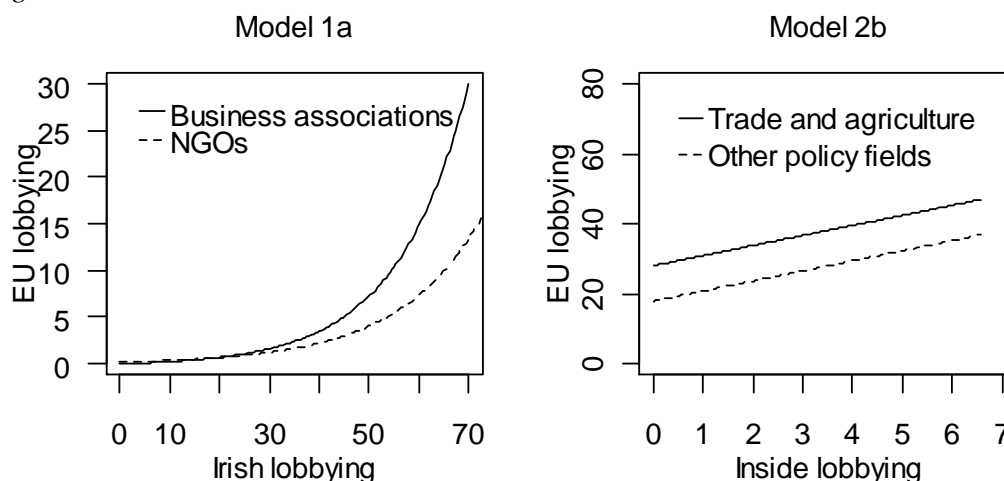
In Model 1b, the coefficient for Irish lobbying is of similar size as in the previous model and also remains highly statistically significant. By contrast, while the NGO coefficient continues to maintain its negative sign, it is no longer statistically significant. Interestingly, therefore, the finding from the descriptive analysis that NGOs do not use fewer tactics on EU legislation than business associations is confirmed in the multivariate analysis. This is intuitive because the first proxy is biased in favour of inside lobbying, where business associations are expected to have an advantage over NGOs. By contrast, the second proxy gives a lot of emphasis to a series of outside tactics where NGOs should be more active than business associations. What is astonishing is that the effect for professional associations disappears in this model. None of the control variables is statistically significant in this model.

Models 2a and 2b allow us to assess Hypotheses 3 and 4 that make claims about the *relative* importance that associations give to lobbying on EU legislation. In both models, we estimated an ordinary least squares regression. In Model 2a, however, because of non-normality we had to transform the dependent variable by

---

<sup>4</sup> When testing the robustness of our findings using a hurdle model that can deal with excess zeros in our data, we received substantively similar results.

Figures 5a and 5b: The substantive effect



adding 0.5 (to remove zeros) and then raising the value to the power of 0.66 (for such transformations, see for example Sheskin 2004: 406). The estimates presented are not sensitive to changes to the size of the constant that we add in the transformation of the dependent variable. In Model 2b we could use the original dependent variable without transformation. The impact of the policy field is very strong in both of these models: associations that are active in trade and agricultural policy engage in more EU lobbying than other associations. Only in Model 2b, however, is the coefficient that captures an association's relative expertise in inside lobbying statistically significant. With respect to the control variables, the coefficient for EU federations is statistically significant only in Model 2a, while the coefficient capturing the number of staff that an association employs is not statistically significant in either model. In these two models, the adjusted  $R^2$  is low at 0.06 and 0.11 respectively. After doing a sensitivity analysis and excluding a few influential observations, the adjusted  $R^2$  increases to 0.09 and 0.16 respectively.

Keeping other variables constant (at their mean or in case of dichotomous variables at a sensible level), we plot the partial effect of some of our key independent variables in Figures 5a and 5b. In Figure 5a, we show for Model 1a the substantive effect of an increase in lobbying on Irish legislation on an association's absolute level

of lobbying on EU legislation. We plot this separately for business associations and NGOs. As can be seen, the effect of the Irish lobbying variable on the dependent variable is substantial, with those associations that do not engage in any lobbying on national legislation hardly doing any lobbying on EU legislation. There is also a sizeable difference between NGOs and business associations. In Figure 5b, relying on Model 2b, we plot the effect of an increase in an association's focus on inside lobbying strategies. Again, we separate the effect for trade and agricultural associations, and other associations. The effect is sizeable, although not as strong as in Figure 5a.

### **Conclusion**

We have assessed the lobbying on EU legislation by Irish associations. The analysis has demonstrated that there is a substantial amount of lobbying on EU legislation by Irish associations. Lobbying on EU issues clearly has not been outsourced to EU federations, a finding that potentially has far-reaching consequences for the assessment of the democratic legitimacy of EU policies. The data also clearly confirm a positive persistence hypothesis, as those associations that lobby on national legislation are also those that are active on EU legislation. Moreover, we found some support for the hypothesis that associations with expertise in inside lobbying find it easier to become active with respect to EU legislation.

Furthermore, we showed that business associations have a small advantage over NGOs in mobilising on EU legislation. That this difference is not as important as hypothesised is not so astonishing given the existing literature. A previous study of trade policy lobbying, for example, has found that NGOs have relatively good access to EU policy-makers, even if this access does not necessarily translate into influence (Dür and De Bièvre 2007). Since we neglected firm lobbying in our analysis, the

relatively small difference between business associations and NGOs may also simply be a result of firms directly engaging in EU lobbying at the expense of business associations (for lobbying by firms in the EU, see for example McLaughlin et al. 1993; Coen 1997; Bennett 1999; Bernhagen and Mitchell 2009). Furthermore, there is variation across policy fields in the relative focus on EU legislation, with associations that are active with respect to agricultural and trade policy more likely to focus on EU legislation than other associations.

Given that our results stem from a single case study, it is important to ask how applicable these findings are to countries other than Ireland. The existing literature suggests that cross-national differences exist. Constantelos (2007), for example, finds cross-national differences between Italy and France, and Eising (2009) stresses differences among the three large EU member countries. Also from a theoretical point of view such differences seem likely. For example, interest groups from small EU member countries should engage in more direct EU lobbying than those from large member countries, because their governments have less power in the EU Council of Ministers. Nevertheless, we are convinced that the strong Europeanisation effect that we detected in the lobbying activity of Irish associations is an expression of a general pattern across Europe. Moreover, the fact that we based our reasoning on arguments that are not particular to Ireland makes us optimistic that additional country studies would largely confirm our results.

## **References**

- Bennett, R.J. (1999) 'Business Routes of Influence in Brussels: Exploring the Choice of Direct Representation', *Political Studies* 47(2): 240-57.
- Bernhagen, P. and Mitchell, N. J. (2009) 'The Determinants of Direct Corporate Lobbying in the European Union', *European Union Politics* 10 (2): 155-176.

- Beyers, J. (2002) 'Gaining and Seeking Access: The European Adaptation of Domestic Interest Associations', *European Journal of Political Research* 41 (5): 585-612.
- Beyers, J., Eising, R. and Maloney, W. (2008) 'Much We Study, Little We Know? The Study of Interest Group Politics in Europe and Elsewhere', *West European Politics* 31(6), 1103-28.
- Coen, D. (1997) 'The Evolution of Large Firm Political Action in the European Union', *Journal of European Public Policy* 4(1): 91-108.
- Coen, D. (2007) 'Empirical and Theoretical Studies in EU Lobbying', *Journal of European Public Policy* 14(3): 333-45.
- Constantelos, J. (1996) 'Multi-level Lobbying in the European Union: A Paired Sectoral Comparison across the French-Italian Border', *Regional and Federal Studies* 6 (1): 28-55.
- Constantelos, J. (2007) 'Interest Group Strategies in Multi-level Europe', *Journal of Public Affairs* 7 (1): 39-53.
- Department of Finance (2009) 'Analysis of Exchequer Pay and Pensions Bill, 2004-2009'.
- Dür, A. (2008) 'Interest Groups in the European Union: How Powerful Are They?', *West European Politics* 31(6): 1212-30,
- Dür, A. and De Bièvre, D. (2007) 'Inclusion without Influence? NGOs in European Trade Policy', *Journal of Public Policy* 27 (1): 79-101.
- Dür, A. and Mateo, G. (2009) 'Lobbying by Irish Associations on EU Legislation: Findings from a Survey', *DEI Working Paper 09-11*,

- Eising, R. (2004) 'Multilevel Governance and Business Interests in the European Union', *Governance: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* 17 (2): 211-45.
- Eising, R. (2009) *The Political Economy of State-Business Relations in Europe: Modes of Interest Intermediation, Varieties of Capitalism, and the Access to EU Policy-making*, London: Routledge.
- Franchino, F. (2004) 'Delegating Powers in the European Community', *British Journal of Political Science* 34(2): 269-293.
- Gais, T.L. and Walter, J.L. (1991) 'Pathways to Influence in American Politics', in J. L. Walker (ed), *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America: Patrons, Professions, and Social Movements*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp. 103-21.
- Greenwood, J. (2007) *Interest Representation in the European Union*, Houndmills: Palgrave.
- Greer, S.L., da Fonseca, E.M. and Adolph, C. (2008) 'Mobilizing Bias in Europe: Lobbies, Democracy and EU Health Policy-Making', *European Union Politics* 9(3): 403-433.
- Institute of Public Administration (2008) *Administration Yearbook & Diary 2008*, Dublin: IPA.
- Key, V.O. (1956) *American State Politics: An Introduction*, New York: Knopf.
- Kohler-Koch, B. (1997) 'Organized Interests in the EC and the European Parliament', *European Integration online Papers* 1 (9).
- Kollman, K. (1998) *Outside Lobbying: Public Opinion and Interest Group Strategies*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- McLaughlin, A.M., Jordan, G. and Maloney, W. (1993) 'Lobbying in the European Community', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 31(2): 191-212.

- Meyer, C.O. (2005) 'The Europeanization of Media Discourse: A Study of Quality Press Coverage of Economic Policy Co-ordination since Amsterdam', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 43(1): 121-148.
- Olson, M. (1965) *The Logic of Collective Action*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Pappi, F.U. and Henning, C.H.C.A. (1999) 'The Organization of Influence on the EC's Common Agricultural Policy: A Network Approach', *European Journal of Political Research* 36(2): 257-81.
- Peter, J., Semetko, H.A. and de Vreese, C.H. (2003) 'EU Politics on Television News: A Cross-National Comparative Study', *European Union Politics* 4(3): 305-327.
- Schmitter, P.C. and Streeck, W. (1981) 'The Organization of Business Interests: A Research Design to Study the Associative Action of Business in the Advanced Industrial Societies of Western Europe', Wissenschaftszentrum paper IIM/LMP 81-13.
- Schneider, G. and Baltz, K. (2003) 'The Power of Specialization: How Interest Groups Influence EU Legislation', *Rivista di Politica Economica* 93(1-2): 253-83.
- Sheskin, D. (2004) *Handbook of Parametric and Nonparametric Statistical Procedures* 3rd ed., CRC Press.
- Streeck, W. and Schmitter, P. (1991) 'From National Corporatism to Transnational Pluralism: Organized Interests in the Single European Market', *Politics & Society* 19(2): 133-64.