**EUROPEANISATION AS A FACTOR OF NATIONAL INTEREST-GROUP
POLITICAL-CULTURAL CHANGE: THE CASE OF INTEREST GROUPS IN
SLOVENIA**

Danica Fink Hafner, Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za družbene vede, Kardeljeva ploščad 5,
1000 Ljubljana, e-mail: danica.fink-hafner@fdv.uni-lj.si

Mitja Hafner Fink, Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za družbene vede, Kardeljeva ploščad 5, 1000
Ljubljana, e-mail: mitja.hafner-fink@fdv.uni-lj.si

Meta Novak, Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za družbene vede, Kardeljeva ploščad 5, 1000
Ljubljana, e-mail: meta.novak@fdv.uni-lj.si

Abstract

Based on a social constructivist framing, this article seeks to address the gap in the literature on the impact of Europeanisation on the national interest group political culture in general and in the post-communist context in particular. The impacts of Europeanisation on interest group domestic policy behaviour, in terms of national interest groups networking with their European counterparts, their contacts with EU-level decision-makers, and their access to EU funds, are tested based on the panel surveys which were conducted in 1996 and 2012 of the most influential interest groups in eleven policy fields in Slovenia. Our key findings are that Europeanisation does support changes in the national interest group political culture in the direction of a more proactive approach in influencing national policy processes. However, Europeanisation explains only a small portion of the variability among the domestic policy behaviour of interest groups.

KEY WORDS: Europeanisation, interest groups, political culture, change, Slovenia

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INTRODUCTION

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

Indeed, research into the adaptations of institutions (the executive, the parliament, and the national systems for the coordination of EU matters) has been so rich as to incorporate not only case studies of old and new member states, but also comparative analyses and typologies. At the same time, research into interest representation has been more scattered and biased. So far, the literature on political parties¹ has often applied theoretical-conceptual approaches that were previously developed within the framework of nation states and which predominantly focused on party phenomena in older EU member states and at the EU level. Similarly, interest group research within the context of European integration has been growing in various literature subfields, such as civil society, organised interests, social movements, the European public sphere and EU governance.² However, it has been considerably diverse and provides no conclusive findings.³ The two criticisms mentioned (namely, the lack of constructivist research and the lack of analysis into the incorporating

of various Europeanisation phenomena into the domestic realm) are particularly valid in the case of the research into interest groups in post-communist countries, which have been EU member states since 2004.

On the one hand, the research into interest groups in the context of European integration has employed many theoretical/ conceptual frameworks in order to study the roles and impacts of interest groups within their national political systems.⁴ Even though empirical research into the European adaptation and activity of interest groups has proliferated, especially since the beginning of the 1990s, a significant meta-analysis and general theory of interest intermediation at the European level still appears to be lacking.⁵ Likewise, the differences between the political cultures of the participating agents and the non-participating agents⁶ have remained underresearched. On the other hand, however, the literature describing the changes in the political culture since the 1960s (primarily examining the advanced industrial societies) has focused on domestic social change and has tended to ignore the effects of globalisation (of which European integration is a part) on the political culture of national actors.⁷

Taking into account the previous findings of the role played by the national context in the Europeanisation processes⁸, and in line with the expectation that EU membership would strengthen civil society in post-communist EU member states, we hypothesise that the Europeanisation of national interest groups tends to transform the political culture of interest groups in the direction of their playing a more pro-active role in national policymaking. More precisely, while using the working definition of ‘interest-group Europeanisation’ to mean national interest groups networking with their counterparts in the EU and with EU-level institutions – including the receipt of EU funding, we will test the differences between (1) the political and cultural characteristics of national interest groups involved in European networking and funding, and (2) the national interest groups not involved in European networking and funding. In line with the assumptions that external (EU)

influences on civil society organisations in post-communist countries bring about a stronger and more pro-active civil society in these countries, we hypothesise that the Europeanisation of national interest groups (namely, when national interest groups network with their European counterparts, establish contacts with EU level decision-makers and receive resources from EU funds) actually makes a difference to the political culture of interest groups in the direction expected (for the purpose of this article, 'political culture' is defined in behavioural terms only).

The case study of Slovenia is valuable because Slovenia has a rich interest-group tradition in terms of the number of organisational memberships per person as well as its (neo) corporatist arrangements compared to other post-communist EU member states.⁹ In addition, the available empirical data gathered from the same interest groups at two points in time (the 1996 project, L57832 Policy Networks and Lobbying in Slovenia, and the 2012 project, N5-0014 INTEREURO - www.intereuro.eu; both funded by the Slovenian Research Agency) – namely, eight years prior to Slovenia's joining the EU in 2004 and eight years after its accession, allows us to learn about both (1) the dynamics relating to the interest-group contextual path-dependence in the various stages of Slovenia's joining the EU, and (2) the mechanism through which European integration processes have influenced national interest-group behaviour in a new post-communist EU member state. With this dynamic insight, and the combination of long-term analysis with a comparison of different policy fields, this article attempts to address the methodological gap identified by Saurugger.¹⁰

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

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Constructivist theoretisation of European integration processes

Constructivism has developed into two main streams – social and theoretical constructivism.¹¹ *Social constructivism* emerged from the segment of international relations (IR) which examines the character or quality of social reality in international relations whilst taking account of both the material and ideational aspects of that reality. The ideational includes both the individual and collective levels and is dynamic.¹² *Theoretical constructivism* is more interested in the knowledge of reality. Here the knowledge is understood in a broad sense. IR social constructivism applied in the context of the EU would be typically interested in the social interaction of states (e.g. Alexander Wendt), the impact of national norms in the international realm (e.g. Peter Katzenstein), the impacts of images of international or supra-national (EU) governance on the political actors in Europe (e.g. Thomas Diez), and the impacts of European norms on domestic politics (e.g. Thomas Risse).¹³ The latter is particularly useful for our research since it goes beyond the state-centred IR notions. It takes into account cross-border interactions and organised interest-group activity, as well as the role of ideas, the impact of shared beliefs and the dominant discourses on (meso-level) policy processes.¹⁴ What makes it particularly relevant to our research is the rooting of constructivism in ‘*a social ontology which insists that human agents do not exist independently from their social environment and their collectively shared systems of meanings ('culture' in a broad sense)*’.¹⁵ Furthermore, through daily practice, human agency not only creates and reproduces, but also changes culture.¹⁶

Although socialisation through European contacts is important and can be studied in its own right¹⁷, in this article we will focus only on the linkage between the national interest-group Europeanisation (the European networking of national interest groups with their counterparts in the

EU and with EU-level institutions – including the receipt of EU funding) and its impact on the policy behaviour of these interest groups at the national level without looking ‘into the black box’ of socialisation processes.

The concept of political culture and the research into interest groups

Modern research into interest groups takes account of the fact that a comparative study of interest groups and the political processes can only be meaningful if interest-group systems are investigated in terms of both their culture and political structure.¹⁸ In line with the Westerncentric view, an early conceptualisation of the comparative study of interest groups distinguished variations among Western interest-group systems (as is the case with national political systems); however, it tended to relate to ‘other’ interest groups (political systems) simply as ‘nonWestern’.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the observation by Western authors that cultural changes may take place through networking²⁰ remains valuable. So too do the distinctions between the ideological, the operational and the real political culture (based on evidence), together with the identification in the early 1980s of variations in the political cultures of communist countries.²¹

In this article we will build on the idea that political culture can be defined as ‘the set of attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments which give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behaviour in the political system’.²² Since political culture covers political ideals as well as the operating norms of a polity, and is at the same time also a manifestation of the psychological and subjective dimensions of politics²³, it in fact encompasses both norms and behaviour, the subjective and activist dimensions of politics. Since political culture can be employed in studying meso-level politics, it may ‘travel’ among various systems, or it may exhibit variations within a particular political system over time.²⁴ Nevertheless, taking into account the interactiveness between the political structure and the culture²⁵, it would be

unrealistic to expect any major change in interest-group culture in postcommunist new EU member states since 2004.

Europeanisation and interest-group political culture change

So far, research has revealed that since European Union integration, interest groups can no longer be active only at the national level. An increasing number of interest groups are entering the area of EU policymaking.²⁶ In addition, European, national, and regional political processes are no longer distinctly separated. In terms of the vertical dimension of the EU multilevel setting, interest groups also participate in EU policymaking and EU-implementation.²⁷ Continued interaction among the EU-level and domestic-level interest groups has led to the development of a Europeanisation literature.²⁸ The authors who refer to the Europeanisation of civil society²⁹ reveal both the increased role of interest groups in governance at the EU level, the adoption of explicitly European rather than purely national dimension of civil society in the EU political system, as well as the weakness of the resource-poor NGO segment of the EU-level civil society.

When looking at civil society in a post-communist context in the EU accession and EU member states in the post-1990s, both Europeanisation and democratisation processes matter. Not only this, civil society has also been considered to be a necessary pre-condition for democratisation of the (former) communist countries, and as such it has also been supported externally by Western countries and international organisations (including the European Community/European Union). Furthermore, there have been both high hopes as well as doubts that the Europeanisation of interest groups could serve as a democratising factor.³⁰ However, just as Europeanisation was not ‘per se’ the primary goal of interest groups in older democracies, so too interest groups from post-communist EU accession states (and later EU member states) regard Europeanisation as an instrument for achieving their objectives rather than as a conscious end-goal³¹. On one hand, it was already the case in the accession stage that the networking of interest groups from post-communist accession

countries with Eurogroups depended on the willingness of Eurogroups to transfer some of their sectoral information, analysis and expert knowledge to the newcomers on subjects of EU policies, European institutions and legislative procedures within the EU. On the other hand, national interest groups in the new member states instrumentalised such empowerment in their own domestic realm.³² This insight seems to be largely the same as the research findings in old(er) EU member states, which have demonstrated that although EU policies have affected the political opportunity structures³³ of interest groups, resources and domestic embeddedness³⁴ can also influence the political behaviour of interest groups in the European Union.³⁵ Additionally, the closer the relations with the national institutions the less European activities might be necessary for insider interest groups as they may also affect EU policymaking via national executives as members of the EU Council.³⁶ In this article, we primarily relate to the national-level activity of interest groups under the influence of the domestic interest groups linked with the EU level.

The (post)communist path-dependence

Two main deficiencies can be observed in the predominantly Western literature³⁷. Firstly, actors can be either civil or non-civil.³⁸ Secondly, an established myth about the general weakness of civil society in post-communists countries has persisted. In parallel with this, some literature has emerged based on a greater awareness of the particularities of specific kinds of interest groups (e.g. trade unions, environmental, gender or regional interest groups) and their Europeanisation.³⁹ Furthermore, the study of interest groups in a post-communist context has increasingly recognised several dynamic aspects, namely: the different communist legacies of various interest groups within the same country (e.g. an increase in the development of environmental organisations, a decline in trade unions)⁴⁰; the important variations among the interest-group systems of post-communist countries⁴¹, including changes in the strength of civil society over time in various post-communist countries to varying extents and in idiosyncratic ways⁴²; and an uneven Europeanisation of post-

socialist interest-group systems in top-down and bottom-up terms.⁴³ The legacy of the EU's impact on civil society in the post-communist countries in the accession stage is believed to be ambivalent⁴⁴, with findings indicating that various EU-level resources have empowered interest groups in Central Eastern Europe to act more efficiently at the domestic national and sub-national level⁴⁵, as well as findings indicating that post-communist interest groups have had only a weak bottom-up impact on EU-level politics.⁴⁶ In line with research into various older EU member states, which indicates the substantial impact of European integration on shaping the domestic systems of interest representation⁴⁷ (including European organisational connectedness⁴⁸), and in line with the fact that interest groups could make use of opportunities for multilevel venue shopping⁴⁹, we would expect Europeanisation to exert a considerable influence on the behaviour of national interest groups in post-communist EU member states.'

THE THEORETICAL-ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE ARTICLE

While there are several key 'umbrella' research questions which have found a place in the research on interest-group politics within the framework of the European integration processes (Table 1), our investigation - broadly speaking - fits into the segment of research on the impact of interest-group resources and interest-group involvement in European integration on their role in domestic policymaking (marked in grey in Table 1).

[Table 1 about here]

For the purpose of our research, a social-constructivist approach is combined with the concept of political culture. This approach is appropriate for studying the politics of interest groups within the

framework of the multi-level political system of the EU, where interactions between levels are expected to make a difference at the particular level of the system – be it the sub-national, national or supranational. More precisely, our analysis focuses on the impact of the Europeanisation of national interest groups on their political culture. While political culture is a general phenomenon which can be approached from many different angles⁵⁰, due to the limited availability of data, we will restrict our focus to the political behaviour/activity of interest groups.

DATA, METHOD AND ANALYTICAL MODEL

In order to test our hypothesis that the Europeanisation of national interest groups transforms their political culture in the direction of playing a more pro-active role in national policymaking, we used data from two face-to-face surveys of representatives of seventy interest groups in the spring of 1996 and from ninety-seven interest groups between March and May 2012. In both surveys, we used essentially the same measurement instrument, namely a survey questionnaire. The population consisted of the most active interest groups from eleven policy fields: economic, social, housing and agricultural policy, policy towards the disabled, environmental protection, health, education, culture, sports policy and policy in the field of marketing/public relations. We made our selection of interest groups according to those which had been identified as active by previous empirical research as well as by consulting scholars and experts in these particular policy sectors in Slovenia. The questionnaire used for the 1996 survey was only adapted in 2012 to Slovenia's full EU membership circumstances. To allow cross-time comparison, both data-sets from 1996 and 2012 were merged into one data-set of a panel of the fifty interest groups, which participated in both time periods. To test the effect of Europeanisation, we conducted our analysis in two main steps. In the first step, within the panel of fifty interest groups, we observed changes from 1996 to 2012 in the general level of activity intended to influence policy-making processes. In the second

step, we used a linear regression model to test the effect of Europeanisation on the differences between interest groups regarding their behaviour and activities in 2012 (the ninetyseven organisations surveyed in 2012 were included in the analysis).

Two main variables were used in this study to test our hypothesis: independent variables on *Europeanisation* and dependent variables on *interest-group activity in influencing policy process*.

Activities designed to influence policy processes (as a dependent variable or an outcome) were measured by a composite index, which included five indicators of time spent for the following five particular activities: (a) organising concrete actions to solve broader social problems; (b) organising training for leadership or for members of an organisation/ group to lobby successfully; (c) drafting bills or amendments to bills in the procedure; (d) making contact with the persons who make decisions on the problem areas in which the organisation/group seeks a solution; (e) implementing or commissioning research about the social problems an organisation/ group is addressing. The time spent on each individual activity was measured on a five-point scale (1 – no time at all ... 5 – a lot of time). A principal component analysis was performed beforehand for the population of interest groups in 2012 and the results supported our expectation that all five indicators measured the same variable⁵¹ - *activities for influencing policy processes*. Therefore, the index was prepared as an average value for all five indicators – again on the five-point scale⁵².

Furthermore, we prepared our main explanatory (independent) variable, *Europeanisation*, as a composite index. Complete operationalisation of the concept of Europeanisation (interest groups networking with their European counterparts, national interest-group contacts with EU decisionmakers, and resources received from the EU) was possible only for the 2012 data⁵³. Several questions from our 2012 interviews could be taken as an indicator of networking with foreign interest organisations and Europeanisation. In order to form an indicator of

Europeanisation, we conducted principal component analyses on variables that exclusively measure the connections and impacts of European organisations. The following variables were included in the analysis: (a) the interest group gains the majority of its support or assistance from interest organisations, from EU member states, or from EU-level interest groups (binary); (b) the EU structural funds are a key source of funding for the interest group (binary); (c) the interest group supports candidates at elections to the European Parliament (5-point scale); (d) the interest group has contacts with EU officials (5-point scale); and (e) the interest group has contacts with members of European parliament (5-point scale). The analysis confirmed our expectations: only one meaningful component (with an eigenvalue above 1) was extracted and loadings for all five indicators were high enough to include all of them in the composite index of Europeanisation.⁵⁴

THE LEVEL OF INTEREST-GROUP ACTIVITY AIMED AT INFLUENCING POLICY PROCESSES – THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN 1996 AND 2012

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

[Table 2 about here]

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

As discovered by previous research on interest groups⁵⁵, interest groups do not decide to join EU associations based on any specific cost-benefit analysis, but rather due to more diffuse considerations. Since complete exit from EU policymaking may not be feasible, membership of EU umbrella organisations is worth paying for⁵⁶. Indeed, many of the organisations interviewed, regardless of their membership of international organisations (including European organisations), turn to similar organisations abroad when attempting to influence policymaking at the national level in Slovenia. Again, the share of the organisations interviewed which receive support from abroad is higher in 2012 (66 percent) than in 1996 (57.4 percent). Support may not only be financial or material. In fact, only five organisations reported receiving material support. Knowhow and experience remains the most important form of support provided at both time points. In 2012, forty-eight organisations reported receiving support in the form of information and analysis, thirty-six in the form of expert help, and twenty-two organisations reported that they secured the backing of representatives of foreign organisations who came to Slovenia to meet with

Slovenian decision-makers. Other forms of support include exchanges of experience, letters of support from interest groups in other European nations sent to Slovenian decisionmakers, as well as moral support or moral help.

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

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

EUROPEANISATION AS A FACTOR DETERMINING INTEREST-ORGANISATION ACTIVITY INFLUENCING POLICY PROCESSES IN 2012

In general we assume that those interest organisations which are more Europeanised (namely those which are funded from EU funds, have frequent contact with EU officials, receive support from

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

[Table 3 about here]

Finally we tested the effect of *Europeanisation* on *interest-group activity* using the linear multiple regression model where the effect of Europeanisation was controlled for the following two variables (also possible factors of interest-group activity): 1) an interest group type (economic/non-economic interest group)⁵⁷; and 2) professionalisation (operationalised with the number of fulltime employed staff)⁵⁸. The extent of the Europeanisation of interest groups and their level of activity were measured with the composite measurement (indices) presented above. We prepared two regression models: 1) in the first model (Model 1), we observed only the effect of our primary independent variable, Europeanisation; 2) in the second model (Model 2), we added (as control

variables) a further two factors (predictors) of interest-group activity, namely the type and level of professionalisation (FTE) (see Table 4). Both models are statistically significant; however, at the same time, the predictive power of the independent variables included (R^2) is rather low: only 11.6 percent of the variability of interest-group activity is explained by Model 1 and still less than one fifth of the variability (18.2 percent) by Model 2 (Table 4). In general, these results confirm our hypothesis about the influence of Europeanisation: a higher degree of Europeanisation indicates a correspondingly higher level of interest-group activity – with an increase of the Europeanisation index by one unit value, the index measuring the activities for influencing policy processes increases by 0.233 of unit (Table 4 – Model 2).

[Table 4 about here]

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

factors strongly contributing to the variability of interest-organisation activity in influencing policy processes. Among them may be institutional factors (the political system opportunity structure including the neo-corporatist arrangements), the organisational characteristics of the interest group, and economic factors. These organisational factors may also be alternative explanations for the more active role of interest groups in 2012 besides the Europeanisation process. However, we ought to bear in mind that, although organisations from different policy fields are included in our analysis, they are in some aspects actually quite similar. Most of the organisations have their headquarters in Ljubljana (the capital of Slovenia)⁵⁹, which makes it easier for them to influence the (national) policy making process. It is also important to emphasise that the survey includes only those interest groups that were identified as active participants within the national policy making process (based on our information from previous empirical research as well as from our consulting scholars – experts in the particular policy sectors in Slovenia). Furthermore there are only minor differences in the level of education of the IG leadership (the survey respondents were mostly leaders of the interviewed organisations⁶⁰) and their education is only rarely below college level⁶¹. Despite this fact, the interest groups surveyed differ regarding their level of activity in influencing the policy-making process.

Furthermore, our analyses also show that the level of activity in 1996 (when controlled for the effect of Europeanisation) significantly determines the level of activity in 2012.⁶² Additional analyses also show the importance of various interest group resources: full-time employed, budget, the ownership of business premises, and connections with politics (e.g. the previous political functions of leading interest group members). But, even with these additional factors, the explanatory power of the regression model is not substantially improved; the highest level it reaches is around 26 percent. It is also important to stress that, along with the inclusion of these additional factors into the regression model, the level of Europeanisation remains the most important factor.⁶³

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

CONCLUSIONS

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

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

Through these lenses, Europeanised interest-group activity may be regarded as a bridge in the EU's impacting on both particular policy activism and policy shaping in an EU member state (as previously also suggested by Hicks⁶⁴). It may also be that the EU's potential to intervene in the politics of new EU member states varies significantly across policy fields⁶⁵; however, due to the limited existing data this has not been tested and remains a further area for future research.

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

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

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- ⁵⁴ The component with an eigenvalue above Kaiser's criterion of 1 explains 46.20 percent of the variance (KMO = 0.658). Using this component as a standardised measurement (index) for Europeanisation, we attained an appropriate level of reliability of measurement ($\Theta = 0.640$). The index scale is standardised as a deviation from the mean value, so its mean value is 0, and (on the group of 97 organisations in 2012) its minimum value is -1.282 and its maximum value is 2.947.
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- ⁵⁸ Value 0= no staff employed; value 1= 1-5 employees; 2= 6-10 employees; 3= 11-20 employees; 4= 21-100 employed; and 5= above 100 employees.
- ⁵⁹ Of the 96 organisations interviewed, only seven have their headquarters outside of the capital. ⁶⁰ For the 64 organisations, we interviewed presidents, the directors or leaders of the organisation; for 21 organisations we interviewed the secretary-general; and for the remaining 11 organisations, we interviewed members of the management.
- ⁶¹ 86 respondents have completed college or a university degree or higher. Ten respondents have only finished high school.
- ⁶² When we applied a regression analysis only for the IGs included in both surveys (1996 and 2012), we were able to compare both effects on the level of activities in 2012: the level of activities in 1996 and the level of Europeanisation in 2012. Due to the small number of cases (there were only 42 valid cases included in the analysis), we did not include additional factors in the model. The whole model (both factors) explained 21% of variance and the effects of both factors showed as significant. As we expected, the level of activity in 1996 had a stronger effect

(0.411) than the effect of Europeanisation (0.296).

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⁶⁴ Hicks, ‘Setting Agendas and Shaping Activism: EU Influence on Central and Eastern European Environmental Movements,’ 216, 227.

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Table 1: Exploring the top-down and bottom-up Europeanisation of interest-group politics

research questions	factors	top-down view	bottom-up view
impact of governing styles	national patterns of interest group intermediation	EU impact on national structures	the impact of national structures on EU-level patterns

impact of interest group resources	multi-level networking and EU funding of national interest groups	the impact of the national IG's European networking with their counterparts and the IG's linkages with EU level institutions on national IG resources and their role in domestic policymaking	the impact of national IG EU networking on EU-level interest group resources
impact of institutions on a twolevel game	domestic political system opportunity structure	the impact of national political system veto points in the implementation of EU accession agreement/EU policies	the impact on national IG role in managing EU affairs at home (via national parliament and national executive)

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

	N	Mean	Std. deviation (SD)	Std. error of mean (SEM)
2012	50	3.216	0.79472	0.11239
1996	50	2.732	0.63324	0.08955

t = 4.167; p < 0.01

Table 3: Activities for influencing policy processes and the Europeanisation of interest groups – bivariate analysis on 2012 data

Dimensions of Europeanisation:	Activities of IG for influencing policy process:			
	<i>A lot of time for</i>		<i>A lot of time for</i>	
	<i>training for lobbying</i>		<i>drafting bills</i>	
	χ^2		χ^2	
	%	Cramer's V	%	Cramer's V
<i>Financing from EU structural funds</i>		**4.452		
– yes			57.1	2.328
	30.4	0.214		0.155
– no	12.2		41.5	
<i>Support from interest organisations at EU level</i>				
<i>or from other European countries</i>		**6.149		
– yes				*3.726
	33.3	0.252	50.4	0.196

– no	12.2		40.8	
<i>Contacts with EU officials</i>		**3.994		
– from time to time or regularly	37.5	0.203	56.7	*3.328
– rarely or never	17.8		45.2	0.185

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

Table 4: Predictors of activity spent influencing policymaking – linear regression with regression coefficients (B) and standardised regression coefficients (Beta) (data from 2012)

	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	B	Std. Error	Beta
(Constant)	3.241	0.070		2.934	.121	
Europeanisation index	0.259	0.071	**0.354	0.233	.069	**0.319
(non) economic groups	-			0.319	.138	*0.215
Professionalisation	-			0.106	.047	*0.213
Adjusted R ² =0.116				Adjusted R ² =0.182		
F = 13.470**				F = 8.026**		
N=96				N=96		

** p<0.01; *p<0.05