Europeanised or European? Representation by civil society organisations in EU policy-making

Dr Sandra Kröger, University of Exeter
Brussels, 26 January 2017

OSE Lunchtime Session at the EESC
Overview of research question(s)
Cases and data
Selected findings
Discussion
Structure of the talk

- Overview of research question(s)
- Cases and data
- Selected findings
- Discussion
How do CSOs contribute to political representation in EU policy-making?

Do they work against the institutional deficit (missing link between domestic and EU policy processes) and as such are Europeanised?

Do they work against the social deficit (no European demos and therefore no legitimate supranational polity) and as such are European?

No a priori assumptions
Structure of the talk

- Overview of research question(s)
- Cases and data
- Selected findings
- Discussion
Cases and data

- ‘Members’ (AGRI), ‘cause’ (ENV) and ‘weak interests’ (SOC) groups;
- 65 interviews and questionnaires;
- 15 AGRI, 22 ENV, 28 SOC;
- 42 German, 13 British, 6 European.
Structure of the talk

- Overview of research question(s)
- Cases and data
- **Selected findings**
- Discussion
Europeanisation of CSOs?

- EU high or medium importance in organization
- EU regularly an issue in daily work
- Inform about EU policies on website

Agricultural groups
Environmental groups
Anti-poverty groups
I. Incentives and Disincentives?

- **AGRI**: Incentives: Single market, common regulation, CAP, financial security = Resources and legislative activity;
  Disincentives: complexity, consensus-building, lowest common denominator policies, governed from far Brussels = political environment;

- **ENV**: Incentives: common political/legal framework = legislative activity;
  Disincentives: complexity, lack of resources and difficulties with EU-funding, fewer contacts at the EU level, language problems, lack of interest by constituencies = mostly organisational factors.
I. Incentives and Disincentives?

- SOC: Incentives: Less adversarial, getting heard and pressurizing national governments, mutual learning, funding opportunities = political environment;

- Disincentives: complexity, lowest common denominator policies, bureaucratic demands of EU funding; lack of resources, fewer contacts, language, lack of interest by constituencies = political environment and organisational factors;

- Larger groups can cope, smaller not
II. The legitimacy of it all

- For their contribution to be legitimate, CSOs need a reliable link to their social constituency;

- Requires governance structures which allow members to be involved and their actual involvement in the development of policy positions.

- But also requires satisfaction with the representation by the European umbrellas.
II. The legitimacy of it all

- AGRI: democratic structures are in place and used;
- ENV: Have democratic structures in place, however not systematically used in all cases when it comes to EU affairs;
- SOC: most have democratic structures in place and also use them, though not throughout when it comes to EU affairs.
Contact with EU umbrella

- Strong and regular
- Rather strong but irregular
- Weak and rare
- No link

AGRI
ENV
ANTI-POV
Satisfaction with E. umbrella

- Happy
- Rather satisfied
- Rather unsatisfied
- Don't know
III. Role for CSOs?

- Strategic or principled?

- Strategic: defend/represent the organisation’s immediate interest: lobbying and funding;

- Principled: contribute to a public sphere, not least through public protests, desire to cooperate with other supranational CSOs; importance of contributing to EU democracy.
Importance of lobbying

- Lobbying domestically highly relevant
- Lobbying at EU-level highly relevant

AGRI actors | ENV actors | SOC actors
Importance of funding

- Funding domestically highly relevant
- EU-funding highly relevant

AGRI actors, ENV actors, SOC actors
Role of protest

Protest domestically highly relevant

Protest at EU-level highly relevant

- AGRI actors
- ENV actors
- SOC actors
Importance of supranational cooperation

- AGRI: 21.4 per cent ‘very important’ (28.6 domestically)
- ENV: 59.1 per cent ‘very important’ (54.5 domestically)
- SOC: 46.2 per cent ‘very important’ (37 domestically)
Importance of contributing to democracy

- Contributing to domestic democracy highly relevant
- Contributing to EU democracy highly relevant

AGRI actors
ENV actors
SOC actors
Lobbying or ‘more’?

- AGRI: engaged to defend their material interests whilst contributing to EU democracy is of comparatively little importance.

- ENV: Lobbying is also quite important, similarly low interest in contributing to EU democracy – a bit surprising – though more interested in supranational cooperation;

- SOC: Comparatively the strongest interest in EU democracy, though weak role for public sphere.
Structure of the presentation

- Overview of research question(s)
- Cases and data
- Selected findings
- Discussion
Those groups that find it easiest to Europeanize their activities, and where the legitimacy of representation is highest, show the least interest in contributing to EU democracy and vice versa.

CSOs do not provide the kind of Europeanization of their constituencies that would seem necessary for the creation of a supranational polity. Not for lack of democratic structures but because they are not used by more than a few key national policy officers. Consulted actors were most likely cases.
However: the question of strategic and principled usages of the EU is not an either-or question.

Whilst lobbying is deemed more important than contributing to EU democracy, the latter matters for actors, it just matters less.

Also: contributing to democratisation of the EU by making it a pluralistic regime.

Figures from national level more worrying?
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!