

Interest Representation in the European Union

Determinants of Access to Commission's Expert Groups

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ABSTRACT

European associations provide a unique type of access goods to European Union (EU) decision-making institutions. However, not all European associations gain the same level of access to the European Commission and little is known about the underlying reasons behind this variation. In this vein, this research poses the following question: *why are some European associations more likely to gain (a stronger degree of) access to Commission's expert groups than others?* This study focuses on the governance structure and the representativeness of European associations, two critical factors that affect the type of information they can offer to the Commission and, as a result, their level of access. The analyses draw on a new dataset of 248 European associations based in Brussels. On the one hand, it is shown how the decision-making system as well as the functional differentiation are significantly related with the likelihood to gain (a stronger degree of) access to Commission's expert groups. On the other hand, the analyses confirm that representativeness is important to provide the European encompassing interests that facilitate access to the Commission.

KEYWORDS: Commission's expert groups, European association, access goods, governance structure, representativeness, access.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) has become increasingly important as a supranational institution passing directives and regulations with a direct effect on 28 countries and its 500 million inhabitants. The delegation of competences to the EU throughout the last decades has not been neglected by interest groups, who are increasingly conscious of the powers of EU institutions and the effects on their interests (Coen & Richardson, 2009).

The relationship between the EU and interest groups can be explained by the limited resources and the democratic deficit of EU institutions, which are dependent on the expertise and the legitimacy that can be provided by external actors (Bouwen, 2009; Klüver, 2013). Interest groups have the necessary information to develop public policy initiatives. The interaction with interest groups is regarded as a governance mechanism that facilitates effective policy-making and implementation processes that cannot be carried out autonomously by EU institutions (Engel & Hértier, 2003). At the same time, since interest groups are directly affected by EU policies, including them in the decision-making process is expected to increase the legitimacy of EU institutions (Hértier & Rhodes, 2011).

Despite the broad variety of interest groups that aim to influence the EU's decision-making process, the European Commission (henceforth Commission) has clearly stated its preference for contacting with European associations that aggregate interests over meeting with individual interest groups or national associations.¹ European associations (also known as umbrella organizations or EU-level interest groups) can offer information about the European encompassing interests, which is essential for the decision-making process. Moreover, including European association in the decision-making process is expected to strengthen the legitimacy and the effectiveness of the EU's legislative process (Bouwen, 2002, 2004; Eising, 2007a).

European associations have become an important collaborative setting among lobby groups that aim to influence the EU policy-making process (Greenwood, 2007). Recent studies have shown how European associations have higher levels of access to the Commission and the European Parliament (EP) than large firms and national associations (Bouwen, 2002, 2004; Eising 2007a). Despite the growing relevance of European associations, the academic community has paid scarce attention to this type of interest group. Furthermore, the focus has been placed on European business associations (Bouwen, 2004; Eising, 2007a, 2007b; Greenwood & Webster, 2000), neglecting the potential importance of other type of associations composed of nonprofits, civil society, professionals, public authorities, and labor unions (Rasmussen & Gross, 2014). In addition, previous studies do not consider European associations alone; hence, they do not permit us to grasp the variation within this type of groups, which might affect the type of information they supply to EU institutions and their level of access to the Commission.

As noted by Eising (2007b) and Chalmers (2013), little attention has been paid to the supply side in the relationship between lobbies and EU institutions. This study seeks to further our knowledge on the supply side by focusing on the internal configuration and the representativeness of European associations, which are expected to affect the access goods they can offer and, as a result, their likelihood to gain access to the Commission. In other words, this study aims to respond to the following question: *why are some European associations more likely to gain (a stronger degree of) access to Commission's expert groups than others?*

The interaction between public and private actors is not only explained by the 'material gains (power and resources), but also for the promise of greater policy effectiveness and legitimacy' (Hérier & Rhodes, 2011, p. 108). The Commission is expected to interact with those associations that can offer them better access goods in terms of information, improving the effectiveness and strengthening the legitimacy of the legislative process. The main argument of this study is that the governance structure as well as the degree and type of representativeness of European associations affect the type of information they can offer and, consequently, their level of access to the Commission. The Commission is expected to favor interaction with those groups that contribute to a legitimate and effective legislation in the EU.

The study aims to contribute to the literature about interest groups by taking into account the internal configuration of European associations and analyzing how this affects the access goods they provide and, as a consequence, their level of access to the Commission (Chalmers, 2013). The findings are also expected to be valuable for the literature on EU governance (Hérier & Rhodes, 2011). Understanding interest group systems and their interactions with EU policy-makers give us an idea of how the Commission functions, which are its priorities and what type of governance does it promote. At a practical level, the findings of the research should be of interest to both EU decision-makers and representatives of European associations as it shows which the most successful European associations are, and why.

The study proceeds as follows: the first section describes the unit of analysis. Secondly the theoretical framework, based on information exchange theory is presented. The main argument is that those associations that can offer quality and relevant access goods gain more access to the Commission (Greenwood, 2002). Thirdly, the paper discusses the academic literature on governance structure and representativeness, and poses the main hypotheses. Fourthly, the research design and the results derived from the statistical analyses are presented. Finally, the paper discusses the findings and concludes with some take-home messages and ideas for further research. More specifically, it is shown how those associations that are more able to represent the European encompassing interests thanks to their governance structure and representativeness are more likely to gain (a stronger degree of) access to the Commission. In addition, setting a

governance structure that facilitates the effectiveness of the policy outcome and that produces expert knowledge increases the chances of gaining access to the Commission.

2. EUROPEAN ASSOCIATIONS: THE BOOM OF COLLABORATION AMONG INTEREST GROUPS

Beyers et al. (2008, p. 1103) define interest group *politics* as ‘the organization, aggregation, articulation, and intermediation of societal interests that seek to shape public policies’. Following this definition, the authors signal three features that interest groups share:

- **Organization:** interest groups are not broad movements, but organized forms of political behavior.
- **Political interest:** interest groups want to influence policy outcomes.
- **Informality:** interest groups perform their activities without seeking public office.

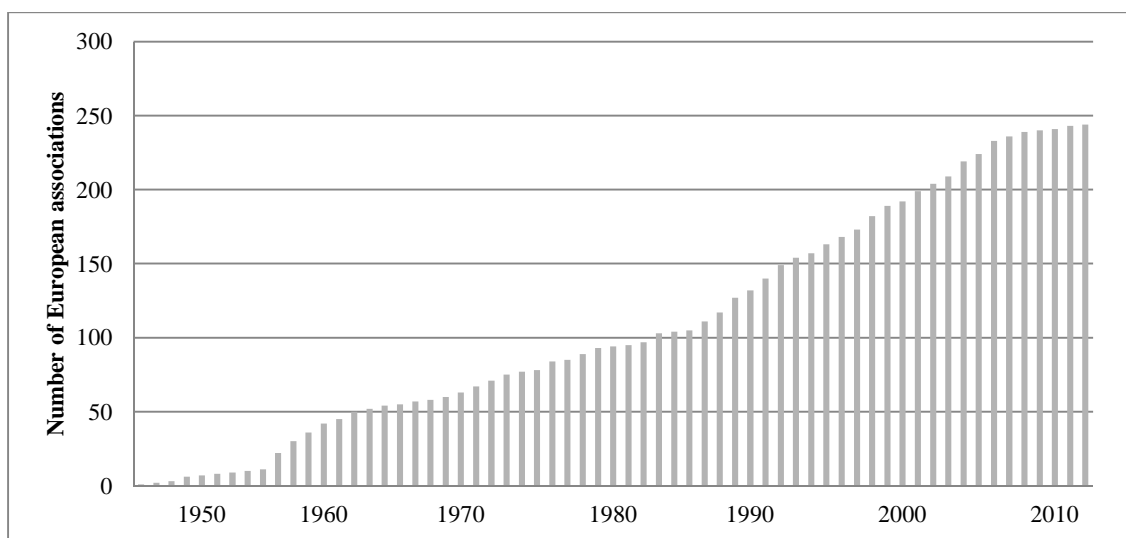
In western representative democracies, interest groups have an important role as intermediaries, channeling the concerns of citizens to politicians (Putnam, 1993). As noted by Easton (1971), interest groups transfer the demands of citizens to decision-makers in order to shape political outputs. Despite their relevance, Baroni et al. (2014, p. 2) note that the study of interest groups ‘suffers from a certain lack of precision with regard to its basic unit of analysis’, that is, the interest group concept itself. This is not the case in this study since it focuses on a particular type of interest groups: European associations.

European associations are defined here as formalized alliances between three or more legally autonomous organizations and/or national associations that come together at the EU level in order collaborate among themselves and shape EU public policies. Following Van Gils and Zwart (2009), these associations are understood as a long term cooperative agreements in which partners share resources and risks with the final aim of improving partners’ competitive position.

Three reasons explain why interest groups are increasingly coming together and establishing European associations (see Figure 1). The first one is an explicit demand coming from the Commission (2002), which favors interaction with associations representing aggregated and broad interests. Secondly, national associations and individual organizations have established European associations as a reaction to the growing powers and competences of European institutions, and the loss of national governments’ capacity to veto EU policies (Eising 2007a). Hence, interest groups have had to adapt to the Europeanization process and the growing relevance of EU institutions.

Finally, as noted by Baumgartner and Jones (1993), there has been a multiplication of interest organizations which has ‘forced interaction among groups that were once able to exist independently’ (Hojnacki, 1997, p. 64). In some instances these interactions have led to the establishment of European associations. This formalization allows members to share the high costs of permanent representation in Brussels as well as compile information and skills from different members (Hojnacki, 1997; Truman, 1971). The limited amount, and even scarcity, of public resources has fostered the interdependence among interest groups when promoting their policy views.

Figure 1: The formation of European associations in the last century



Source: Author’s own compilation based on a sample of 248 European associations (for more information about the sample, see section “5.1. Sample”)

The establishment, survival and even growth of European associations depends on what incentives do they offer to their members (i.e. national associations and/or individual organizations) (Schmitter & Streeck, 1999, p. 19).² Members have to perceive a competitive advantage in joining these associations, which justifies the annual payments and the loss of discretion when defending certain positions (Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008).

3. EU GOVERNANCE: ACCESS AND EXPERT GROUPS

3.1. Access goods: information exchange theory

This study focuses on access and not on influence. Using influence as dependent variable requires another type of investigation such as tracing the process through which interest groups advocate for specific policies, analyzing the level of attainment of interest groups’ preferences, and asking the extent to which interest groups perceive they have influenced the final policy

output (Dür, 2008). Previous investigations have shown the methodological difficulties in operationalizing and measuring influence due to its elusiveness (Lowery, 2013).

Access, defined as the ‘frequency of contacts between interest organizations and EU institutions’ (Eising, 2007b, p. 386), is regarded as a crucial step in gaining influence. Those interest groups with access to policy-makers receive higher consideration (Hansens 1991, p. 11). Therefore, access implies political importance and, eventually, ‘higher likelihood of political influence’ (Eising, 2007b, p. 387). Binderkrantz, Christiansen and Pedersen (2014, p. 98) signal that groups that do not take part in the policy process are less likely to successfully defend their interests. In short, although access does not mean influence, it constitutes an important step towards influencing decision-makers (Bouwen, 2004; Eising, 2007b; Gornitzka & Sverdrup, 2010; Rasmussen & Gross, 2014).

Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), note that organizations are not internally self-sufficient and require resources from the environment. In order to produce sound policies, the Commission is dependent on the information that interest groups have (Binderkrantz et al., 2014; Bouwen, 2004; Braun, 2012; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Hence, access is seen as a result of exchange of resources between interest groups and decision-makers who act as gatekeepers (Eising, 2007b). Based on this theory, interest groups gain access to the Commission because they offer relevant and quality information that decision-makers need (Bowen, 2004; Eising, 2007a, 2007b; Rasmussen & Gross, 2014).

Bouwen (2002, 2004), distinguishes between three access goods that correspond to three different types of information: expert knowledge, information about the European encompassing interests, and information about the domestic encompassing interests. While the first is focused on the expertise and the technical knowledge that can be provided by interest groups, the second and third types of information are related to political knowledge. Hence, there is a clear distinction between factual information on complex policy areas, and the information about grass-root preferences (Gornitzka & Sverdrup, 2010). Following Bouwen’s categorization, this study focuses on the information about European encompassing interests and the expert information. Encompassing domestic interests are no expected to be relevant since the unit of analysis is European associations.

The Commission interacts with interest groups so as to prepare ‘technically implementable and politically feasible decisions’ (Binderkrantz et al., 2014, p. 100). Additionally, through wide consultation with private interests, the Commission aims to legitimize its decisions and secure private and political support for proposals in the legislative process (Bouwen, 2006; Binderkrantz et al., 2014).

It is worth noting that the EU, and especially the Commission, has traditionally relied on policy effectiveness and output legitimacy based on expert knowledge. Although necessary, this type of legitimacy is not sufficient basis for authoritative decision-making at the EU level (Skogstad, 2011). The democratic deficit of EU institutions (i.e. their deficiencies in representation and representativeness), lead to the promotion of participatory mechanisms, fostering input legitimacy at the beginning of the 2000s (see White Paper on Good Governance of the Commission, 2001, and the Communication of the Commission: Towards a Reinforced Culture of Consultation and Dialogue, 2002). In this vein, the Commission not only needs expert knowledge, it also requires political knowledge based on wide consultation processes. As clearly noted by Heidbreder (2012, p. 8), there has been a shift beyond an ‘output-oriented understanding of EU policies *for the people* to an input-oriented dimension of democratic legitimacy, calling for authentic participation and governance *by the people*’. Therefore, the Commission is not anymore a technocratic body that only seeks expert information to solve technical issues (Majone, 1999); it also demands political information about grass-root preferences, enhancing input legitimacy and facilitating policy effectiveness and compliance.

The literature has investigated how different factors affect the type of information that interest groups provide to EU institutions. Bouwen (2002, 2004) and Eising (2007a, 2007b), note that the information provided varies depending on the interest group: firms provide expert knowledge, national associations offer information about domestic encompassing interests, and European associations supply European encompassing interests. These authors empirically show how the types of interest groups affect the information they supply and, consequently, their level of access to different EU institutions. The nature of the interest group (e.g. whether they are businesses, nonprofits or civil society) has also been studied as a factor that affects the type of information offered and the level of access to EU institutions (Binderkrantz et al., 2014; Chalmers, 2014; Dür & Mateo, 2013). In addition, Rasmussen and Gross (2014) have shown how representativeness is also an important factor determining the type of information an interest group can provide. However, their focus is placed on the size and region of EU member states represented by interest groups. The resource endowment (i.e. budget and/or personnel) of interest groups is also an important determinant when producing relevant information for EU institutions (Dür & Mateo, 2013; Rasmussen & Gross, 2014). Finally, Gornitzka and Sverdrup (2010) highlight the importance of being specialized and having scientific knowledge when gaining access to the Commission.

Drawing from these investigations, this study takes into account factors that have been previously taken into account and considers two under-researched variables that are expected to affect the capacity to provide quality access goods required by the Commission: the governance

structure and the degree and type of representativeness of European associations. Before moving to these two variables, it is important to present the expert groups of the Commission.

3.2. Commission's expert groups

The literature on interest groups distinguishes between inside and outside strategies. Whereas the former implies gaining access to decision-makers, either formally or informally, the latter is oriented towards raising awareness among citizens and media through, for instance, demonstrations and campaigns (Dür & Mateo, 2013). Depending on the strategy, interest groups seek access to different institutions: the Commission constitutes the predominant insider arena, and the EP and media groups are normally more sensitive to outside strategies (Dür & Bièvre, 2007). As noted by Binderkrantz et al. (2014, p. 96), some groups may provide 'detailed technical information valuable to a bureaucrat preparing a policy decision but not very attractive for a journalist selling newspapers'. Although inside lobbying is considered more effective and prevalent at the EU level than outside strategies (Dür & Mateo 2013; Grant, 2000; Mahoney, 2008), inside strategies are less visible to group's constituency than public campaigns or demonstrations. This visibility, in some cases, is what ensures the survival of the interest group (Binderkrantz, 2008, p. 179; Dür & Mateo, 2013; Gais & Walker 1991, p. 106).

Therefore, the Commission is only one of the venues of a multilayered polity with numerous points of access that go from the regional to the EU level (Eising, 2007b). Each EU institution is targeted at different degrees depending on the type and strategy of interest groups (Beyers, 2004). Hence, interest groups that seek access to bureaucrats in the Commission are not always the same that go to other venues such as representatives of national governments at the Council of Ministers, politicians in the EP, or the media.

This study focuses on the Commission as it is has the sole right of legislative initiative and is the most targeted and accessed EU institution by European associations (Rasmussen & Gross, 2014). European associations normally concentrate on the formulation of EU policies, therefore, their main target is the Commission since it is where almost all policy initiatives begin (Eising, 2007a; Klüver, 2012a). In order to develop the policy proposals, the Commission is especially in need of expert information and information about European encompassing interests (Bouwen, 2002, 2004).

More specifically, this research concentrates on Commission's expert groups (also known as expert committees), which are consultative entities that comprise external experts 'advising the Commission in the preparation of legislative proposals and policy initiatives as well as in its tasks of monitoring, coordinating and cooperating with the member states' (Gornitzka &

Sverdrup, 2010, p. 50). The Commission defines these entities as ‘a body set up by the Commission or its departments to provide it with advice and expertise, comprising at least 6 public and/or private-sector members and meeting more than once.’³

Expert groups set up by the Commission are regarded as policy instrument that clearly reflects our current governance systems in which different kinds of public policy networks bargain, deliberate, and propose concrete measure (Eising & Kohler-Koch, 1999; Gornitzka & Sverdrup, 2008; Kohler-Koch & Rittberger, 2006). Moreover, these groups reflect the necessity of the Commission to interact with interest groups in order to gain information and develop consistent policies (Bouwen, 2002, 2004).

The relevance of expert groups has grown over time. On the one hand, there has been a significant increase of the number of expert groups constituted in the last decades. Nowadays, there are around 800 expert groups formed by the Directorates-General (DGs) of the Commission, making it the ‘largest organized information system in the EU’ (Gornitzka & Sverdrup, 2010, p. 50). On the other hand, the political significance of these groups has not been ignored by the EP. This institution pushed to make the information about expert groups more transparent, making access an object of inter-institutional scrutiny (Gornitzka & Sverdrup, 2010).

One of the most important characteristics of expert groups is that their composition is determined by the Commission. The Commission decides which organizations are more valuable and can provide the necessary knowledge, expertise and legitimacy to the policy proposal. The Commission can open a call for applications to access expert groups by a Commission decision or other legal act, or by a Commission service with the agreement of the Secretariat General (Gornitzka & Sverdrup, 2010). DGs select what they believe are the most relevant organizations in order to develop a particular regulation or directive (Gornitzka & Sverdrup, 2010). The criterion to select the members of expert groups is determined in an ad hoc basis, following the requirements of the policy initiative. One of the cross-cutting requirements, apart from high level of expertise and gender balance, is geographical balance. However, previous studies on the practice of membership selection show that subjective reasons can lead some DGs to ignore the aforementioned guidelines (Larsson & Murk, 2007) or to select members strategically (Larsson, 2003).

Before turning to the main hypotheses, it is important to acknowledge that the Commission has other sources of gaining information. Clear examples are the open consultation process of the Commission and the informal meeting between representatives of the Commission and interest groups. Hence, this study does not attempt to cover the full spectre of information sources;

instead, it focuses on the ‘largest and most organized information system’, that is, the expert groups of the Commission (Gornitzka & Sverdrup, 2010, p. 51).

4. DETERMINANTS OF ACCESS TO COMMISSION’S EXPERT GROUPS

Not all European associations are equally able to supply the access goods demanded by the Commission. Different levels of access to Commission’s expert groups are the result of a varying ability to provide the information demanded by the Commission.

The following section takes into account two variables that are especially important when analyzing interest groups and that, so far, have been under-researched in the field of lobbies: the governance structure and the degree and type of representativeness. The intention of this study is to exclusively analyze internal characteristics of European associations since they are expected to affect the type of information offered and, consequently, determine the likelihood to gain (a stronger degree of) access to the Commission. Additionally, a set of variables that have been taken into account in previous studies are included in this research so as to control the main hypothesis and test the robustness of the models.

As developed below, the overarching hypothesis of this study claims that the governance structure and the representativeness of European associations affect their capacity to provide valuable and quality access goods. Since the Commission is dependent upon interest groups’ information to develop effective and legitimate proposals, it is expected to find a significant correlation between the governance structure and the representativeness of European associations and their level of access to Commission’s expert groups.

4.1. Governance structure

The governance structure of European associations is expected to affect the type of information that associations can offer to the Commission. European associations are normally best in offering European encompassing interests (Eising, 2007b), which has been one of the main reasons why the Commission favors the interaction with these associations. However, European associations are not exempt of limitations (Pijnenburg, 1998; Greenwood & Webster, 2000). As a collaborative setting, European associations have to face governability dilemmas and the lowest common denominator problem, which might hamper their capacity to be valuable interlocutors for EU institutions.

European associations have been characterized by a lack of internal hierarchy, insufficient resources, country related differences between members in political culture and approaches to lobbying, large distance between the association and individual organizations, and the presence of controversial issues that divide the association's membership (Pijnenburg, 1998). While Mazey and Richardson (2005, p. 247) define European associations as 'sluggish policy actors, due to their complex and slow internal decision-making processes', Greenwood and Webster, note that these associations are more focused on serving their members than on gaining access to EU institutions. Moreover, they consider the representatives of associations as people 'who lack the expertise to inform policy formulation' (Greenwood & Webster, 2000, p. 65).

Despite these limitations, European associations have higher levels of access to the Commission than individual firms and national associations (Berkhout et al., 2015; Bouwen, 2004; Eising, 2007b). One plausible explanation is that some associations are able to overcome their shortcomings and become valuable and effective interlocutors for EU decision-makers. This study argues that the governance structure of European associations, as a determinant that affects the capacity to produce valuable information, may foster or hamper the level of access to the Commission. As Greenwood (1999) signals, apart from the economic muscle, internal organization matters in political significance (Greenwood, 1999).

According to organizational theory, the governance structure is the main driver to successfully formulate and implement strategies (Greenwood & Miller, 2010). The governance structure sets the preconditions to attain the collective aim of the collaborative. Following the seminal piece of Chandler (1962), the governance structure is critical for the implementation of specific strategies. According to this author, the structure is a reflection of the strategy. Thus, without an appropriate structure, European associations will not be able to successfully provide the type of information that may grant access the Commission.

Despite the acknowledged relevance of the governance structure when accomplishing the desired goals, it is surprising the limited amount of empirical studies that have looked at the internal configuration of interest groups when analyzing their level of access to EU institutions. In order to cover this research gap, this study takes into account three variables that are expected to inform us about the capacity of associations to produce valuable information for the Commission. These are: the decision-making system of the governance and the executive boards, the size of the executive board, and the functional differentiation set up to deal with the policy demands of the Commission. The choice of these variables draws from corporate governance literature (Martinez-Diaz, 2009) which identifies three relevant levels in organizations: the governance board, the executive board, and the management, which includes the departments established to conduct the daily work.⁴

The governance board (also known as general assembly or plenary meeting), gathers all the members in the association. It appoints the president, vice-presidents, the treasurer, and the members of the executive board (also known as board of directors or administrative board), which can normally be renewed for a second term. The governance board develops and determines the guidelines of the organizations and meets every year.⁵ The executive board monitors the work of the association and decides how to implement the guidelines determined by the governance board. The representatives in the executive board gather more than twice a year.⁶ Nonetheless, when unexpected situations arise, these statutory bodies can organize extraordinary meetings in order to determine the position and the strategy of the association. Finally, the governance and the executive boards appoint the director or secretary general, who is responsible for the daily management and coordinates the work of the different departments within the association.

4.1.1. Decision-making system

The decision-making system in the governance and the executive boards is expected to be determinant for the functioning of European associations (Miller, 2005). Previous studies have signaled that the decision-making system informs us about the level of control that members can exert on the association. Systems based on consensus or qualified majorities make associations dependent on their constituency when choosing a course of action (Beyers, 2008, p. 1203; Greenwood, 2003).⁷ Decision-making systems based on unanimity can also affect the efficiency of the association, increasing the risk of stasis (Greenwood & Webster, 2000). That is, the need to reach consensus may reduce the capacity to offer relevant and quality information to the Commission.

Nonetheless, this study argues that those associations that take decisions based on consensus or qualified majority, have more access to the Commission because they are more able to represent the European encompassing interests (Bouwen, 2002, 2004). Consensus and qualified majority systems ensure an internal alignment between the members in the association. It is worth to mention here that ‘the Commission does not operate in vacuum’ (Dür, Bernhagen & Marshall, 2015, p. 956). More specifically, the proposals developed by the Commission need the support of the Council of Ministers (composed of representatives of national governments), which requires qualified majority and, in some instances, unanimity. So as to ensure a steady legislative output (Sandholtz & Zysman, 1989), the Commission is expected to favor access to those associations whose statutory bodies take decisions based on qualified majority or unanimity. Therefore, the Commission not only demands broad-based interest (Commission, 2002), it is also interested in strong and clear positions.

Decision taken by qualified majority or consensus may be especially relevant when the Commission seeks European encompassing interests (Bouwen, 2002, 2004). The political significance of these decisions is much stronger than the ones obtained through simple majority systems. Even though consensus may imply diluted or watered down positions (i.e. lowest common denominator problem), these positions are more compelling and easy to defend in front of the Council of Ministers or the EP. This is so because all the questions asked by the officials have already been tackled and more or less integrated in the decision and position making process of the association. In sum, decisions taken by qualified majority or consensus are expected to facilitate the legislative and the implementation processes.

In contrast, European associations using simple-majority systems are expected to have less access to the Commission because their members may advocate against decisions taken by the association, hindering the legislative and the implementation processes at the EU and national level. The exit option derived from simple majority systems reduces the capacity of associations to offer European encompassing interests.

Hypothesis 1a: European associations whose governance and executive boards take decisions based on consensus or qualified majority are more likely to enjoy (a stronger degree of) access to Commission's expert groups than those whose voting systems are based on simple majority.

4.1.2. Executive board size

Executive boards of European associations are mainly focused on controlling and monitoring the association. Moreover, they draw up strategies to be approved by the governance board (McNulty & Pettigrew, 1999), monitor the implementation of the strategy, and provide resources and advice (Baysinger & Butler, 1985; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Westphal, 1999).

The number of representatives in the executive board has been largely considered as a critical explanatory variable affecting the performance of organizations (Lipton & Lorsch, 1992). Resource dependence theory suggests that large boards boost knowledge and access to it, as well as experience (Dalton & Dalton, 2005). Pfeffer (1972, p. 226), signals that board size is a rational organizational response to the conditions of the external environment. Additionally, Boone et al. (2007) note that the information requirements of complex environments and operations (in this case the EU and the legislative process), tend to require large boards. Therefore, in order to gain access to the Commission, European associations are expected to establish large boards that facilitate access to knowledge and expertise. In addition, large boards are expected to channel information between the organization and environmental contingencies

and ensure organizational survival (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Hillman, Withers & Collins, 2009).

Since one of the main tasks of the executive board is to develop and monitor the strategies of associations, large boards are better prepared to respond to new demands from the Commission. More specifically, large boards can be more proactive and determine the internal strategies to properly face Commission's requirements. Furthermore, following Hillman et al. (2009), it is expected that the larger the board, the better the executive branch of the association can represent broad-based interest and the singularities of the different members in the association. Therefore, large boards are better fitted to provide information about the European encompassing interests, fostering the legitimacy that the association can offer to the Commission.

Hypothesis 1b: European associations with large executive boards are more likely to enjoy (a stronger degree of) access to Commission's expert groups than those with small executive boards.

4.1.3. Functional differentiation

Pugh et al. (1968), define functional differentiation as the 'division of labor within an organization and the distribution of official duties among a number of positions' (Klüver, 2012b, p. 495). Functional differentiation can be understood as horizontal complexity (Hall, 1977) and implies the establishment of units, departments, division, or working groups under the executive bodies, with the aim of focusing on policy issues and of producing evidence-based information.

As has been discussed by Chalmers (2013) and Klüver (2012b), the establishment of units is expected to increase the chances to become demanded by EU institutions. Although the Commission has considerable in-house expertise (Klüver 2012a), it has limited resources which makes it dependent on external technical knowledge (Bouwen, 2004; Trondal, 2004). Establishing departments help the European association to go beyond the information about the European encompassing interests and offer technical and evidence-based information that is also demanded by the Commission. Following Bouwen's (2002) argument, having expert knowledge facilitates access to the Commission, which is normally in need of technical expertise.

European associations with departments are expected to overcome their inability to produce policy positions with detailed information required by policy-makers (Beyers, 2008). The

establishment of divisions is also expected to lead to more proactive associations that do not wait until the demand from the Commission arises, but that are knowledgeable and prepared beforehand.

This functional differentiation is especially important to access the Commission which is horizontally differentiated into 33 DGs, each of them focused in his policy domain. Since the DGs are the ones responsible for establishing expert groups, those European associations with units that deal with policy issues of interest for DGs, are expected to be more demanded by the Commission. Following Klüver (2012b, p. 496), European associations with units should be better prepared ‘to monitor the behavior of the Commission, to notice the emergence of new policy initiatives at early stages and to develop information required by the Commission.’

Hypothesis 1c: European associations with more departments are more likely to enjoy (a stronger degree of) access to Commission’s expert groups than those without or with fewer departments.

4.2. Representativeness

The core mechanism of interest groups activity is representation (Eising, 2014). At the EU level, interest groups are representing their members towards the Commission, as well as towards other EU institutions, the general public, the media, or other interest groups. However, not all interest groups have the same level of representativeness.

Representativeness at the EU level can be read as the capacity to provide European encompassing interests and legitimacy to EU policies. The interaction with European associations with high levels of representativeness is expected to increase the legitimacy of the Commission since it ensures that ‘political decisions are to some degree based on the will of those who will be affected by them’ (Timotijevic, Raats & Barnett, 2011, p. 491). In addition, wide representativeness reduces the chances of excluding critical parties affected by the policy outcomes.

Although there have been different definitions of representativeness (Timotijevic et al., 2011), this study relies on the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on the “White Paper on European Governance” (2002, p. 3-4). In this opinion, representativeness implies the following: ‘represent general concerns that tally with the interest of European society; comprise bodies that are recognized at member state level as representatives of particular interests; have member organizations in most of the EU members states (...); and have authority to represent and act at European level.’ Based on this opinion, the study looks at

three aspects that can foster the level of representativeness: the number of member states represented in associations; the type of members within associations and how this can affect the broadness of their claims; and the internationality of associations.

4.2.1. EU encompassingness

European encompassing interests refers to the ‘aggregated needs and preferences of a specific subset of society at the EU level’ (Klüever, 2010). The more encompassing and interest group is, the higher its level of representativeness (Salisbury, 1979, p. 222). In this vein, Hull (1993) notes that in order to secure its legitimacy, Commission officials prefer to interact with interest groups that can speak on behalf of interest throughout the Community. In addition to the legitimacy argument, a transaction cost perspective (Williamson, 1979) also justifies the interaction with groups that represent more member states because it is easier to interact with them than ‘negotiating separately with large number of national actors’ (Rasmussen & Gross, 2014, p. 7).

In contrast to previous studies (i.e. Dür & Mateo, 2013; Rasmussen & Gross, 2014), and because the focus is placed on European associations that gather organizations from different EU member states, this study does not distinguish whether interest groups come from small, medium or big EU member states (Rasmussen & Gross, 2014). Instead, the focus is placed on how many EU member states are represented by the members in the association.

It is important to note that encompassingness is a ‘double-edged sword’ (Beyers, 2008, p. 1201). On the one hand it strengthens the political relevance of an association because it represents many EU member states. On the other hand, it leads to collective action problems and constrains the forming of common positions (Schmitter & Streeck, 1999; Eising 2007a; Beyers, 2008). Nonetheless, since the unit of analysis of this study are European associations whose main advantage is to provide information about the European encompassing interests, it is expected that those representing more EU member states will have more probabilities to gain (a stronger degree of) access to the Commission.

Hypothesis 2a: European associations whose members represent more EU member states are more likely to enjoy (a stronger degree of) access to Commission’s expert groups than those that represent fewer EU member states.

4.2.2. Type of members

There are important differences among the members that compose European associations. The traditional form is to gather national and/or regional associations from EU member states (Coen & Richardson, 2009). However, over the last two decades and partly as a response to the lowest common denominator problem, European associations, especially in sectors with large firms, were encouraged to have direct firm membership (Coen, 2009; Eising, 2004). As noted by Greenwood (1999), in the late 1990s there was a pressure among business associations to incorporate individual firms in response to associations' external pressures: 'most mature EU business associations seem to be those that (...) link encompassingness of national associations with the political strength and lighter consultation requirements of large firms' (Greenwood 1999, p. 12). In short, since the 1990s it is easier to find European associations composed of national associations and individual organizations. Furthermore, individual organizations, such as firms and NGOs are gathering at the EU level by their own. Nowadays, large firms and other type of private organizations become organized at the EU level by-passing national associations (Cowles, 1997).

These categories might affect the type of information that European associations supply to the Commission. On the one hand, following Bouwen's work (2002, 2004), European associations that include national associations and individual organizations with technical expertise might be more demanded by the Commission since they provide information about the European encompassing interests as well as technical and specific knowledge. Gathering different types of members (i.e. national associations and individual organizations) is expected to increase the level of access because these associations are able to offer two different kinds of information to the Commission. In addition, the inclusion of individual organizations makes the association more result driven and more efficient, overcoming some of the limitations of European associations (Pijnenburg, 1998; Greenwood & Webster, 2000).

On the other hand, because the Commission prioritizes the interaction with broad over narrow interests (Commission, 2002), those European associations composed of individual organizations are expected to have less probabilities to access the Commission than those gathering national associations. Associations of individual organizations are less able to represent wide and encompassing interests. Moreover, they face the governability problems intrinsic to any European associations, reducing their capability to offer expert information. In sum, if the Commission needs European encompassing interests, it will contact associations with national associations; whereas if the Commission requires expert knowledge, it is expected to directly interact with individual organizations such as firms.

Hypothesis 2b: European associations composed by national associations are more likely to enjoy (a stronger degree of) access to Commission's expert groups than those that only gather individual organizations. However, European associations composed by national associations and individual organizations are more likely to enjoy (a stronger degree of) access to Commission's expert groups than those that only gather national associations.

4.2.3 Internationalization

The last explanatory variable regarding representativeness refers to the internationalization of European associations. Following EESC opinion (2002), the EU is mainly concerned with the interest of 'European society'. Although some EU policies may have consequences on third non-European countries, it is expected to find a negative relationship between the internationalization of European associations and their level of access to Commission's expert groups.

It is worth reminding that the Commission proposes directives and regulations that will have an effect on the 28 EU member states and their citizens. Although the position of international members might be relevant at some stage of the policy-making, it should not be a priority since the constituencies of international members are not as relevant for the Commission. Following Bouwen's (2002) categorization of access goods, it can be stated that the EU is not in need of "International encompassing interests". Nonetheless, the representation of European countries that are candidates to enter the Union (e.g. Turkey), and/or that are part of economic and mobility agreements with the EU (e.g. Norway, Iceland, and Switzerland) is expected to benefit the associations and the information they can offer to the Commission since they are considered part of the European society (EESC, 2002).

Finally, European associations with international members are more prone to have collective action problems (Olson 1965). Following this reasoning, associations with only European members are expected to have fewer collective action problems than those with broader constituencies, whose gains or losses from policy outcomes are more diffused (Dür & Bièvre, 2007; Olson, 1965). Thus, European associations whose members are exclusively from Europe are expected to agree on a set of objectives and go beyond the mere survival of the associations (Dür & Mateo, 2013; Schmitter & Streeck, 1999).

Hypothesis 2c: European associations that only gather members from Europe are more likely to enjoy (a stronger degree of) access to Commission's expert groups than those with international members.

4.3. European associations' characteristics

In order to test the robustness of the hypotheses, this study considers three variables that have been previously taken into account when studying access to EU institutions. These are: age, resources, and nature.⁸ Age is considered to be an important variable specially when analyzed under the prism of organizational theory. Mintzberg (1983) established age as a key contingent element affecting the degree of formalization and the enactment of more elaborate structures in organizations. Thus, age is considered because it can affect the governance structure of the association.

The second variable taken into account in order to test the robustness of the hypotheses is the resources of European associations. Previous empirical investigations present mixed results: while Eising (2007b), Klüver (2010), and Rasmussen and Gross (2014) find a positive relationship between well endowed organizations and the level of access to EU institutions, Baumgartner et al. (2009) do not find the same positive relationship.

However, the common sense suggests that European groups with more resources are more likely to gain (a stronger degree of) access to the Commission because they are better equipped in economic and human terms (Klüver, 2011; Binderkrantz et al., 2014). Resources are expected to affect the capacity of interest groups to 'develop and offer the expertise the decision-makers need' (Rasmussen & Gross 2014, p. 8). Well endowed European associations are more able to engage in more tactics and devote more human resources on gaining access to EU decision-makers (Mahoney, 2007). Additionally, large budgets also allow associations to develop an elaborate governance structure, with division of labor, and with a permanent and specialized staff (Knoke, 1990).

The last control variable is the nature of European associations. There is no consensus on how to categorize the nature of interest groups. While Dür and Mateo (2013) distinguish between businesses, professionals and civil society, Binderkrantz et al. (2014) provide a more exhaustive distinction of the nature of interest groups. In order to gain a deeper insight and control the robustness of the models, this study takes the following exhaustive categorization: businesses; nonprofit organizations; identity, leisure and religious groups (categorized as 'civil society'); professionals; public authorities; and labor unions.

European associations of businesses include private firms either individually or through national associations. European associations of nonprofit organizations gather individual or national associations of NGOs. Civil society groups include different type of groups focused on a particular cause (e.g. smoking, alcohol, autism and HIV) as well as religious and leisure groups. Professionals groups include, among others, organizations of doctors, film directors, publishers

and tax advisors. Public authorities can also be defined as institutional providers of public or semipublic services (Binderkrantz et al., 2014), such as schools, museums and airports. Finally, labor unions (Binderkrantz et al., 2014; Molina & Rhodes, 2002), gather national and regional unions of different types.

European associations' nature is expected to affect the information they can supply and the choice of strategy (Dür & Mateo, 2013). Depending on the type of members, associations are more prone to influence one EU institution or another. According to previous studies, nonprofit organizations and civil society tend to engage in outside lobbying strategies (Binderkrantz, 2008; Dür & Mateo, 2013; Mahoney, 2007). This type of associations 'struggle to maintain and enhance their member and/or supporter base' (Dür & Mateo, 2013, p. 663), they face collective action problems (Olson, 1965), and defend diffuse interests, which implies that their members are less informed about policy debates (Dür & Mateo, 2013).

As noted, the Commission represents an insider venue where 'political decisions are prepared and implemented and important information is exchanged' (Binderkrantz et al., 2014, p. 100). Bureaucrats need technical information and information about the support that core actors will give to specific policies. Thus, business associations, public authorities, trade unions, and professionals might have higher levels of access to the Commission since they 'possess relevant resources and pursue goals related to specific decisions' (Binderkrantz et al 2014, p. 100). These groups are expected to prioritize inside strategies in order to pursue their goals.

5. RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to test the hypotheses, this study draws on a new dataset of 248 European associations based in Brussels.

5.1. Sample

The sample is based on Wonka et al.'s (2010) article about the measure and size of EU interest groups population. This article compiles interest groups from different registers: EP door pass holders (2008), CONNECCS database (2007), and the 2007 commercial Landmarks European Public Affairs Directory.⁹ Filters were implemented on Wonka et al.'s dataset in order to exclusively obtain European associations, discarding other types of interest groups.

This dataset has two main limitations. Firstly, it is somewhat outdated, therefore, it may include interest groups that no longer function and does not consider interest groups established after

2010; secondly, in contrast to Transparency Register, European door pass holders and CONNECS databases are biased towards EU-level interest groups (Rasmussen & Gross, 2014).

Regarding the first limitation, out of 1,081 European associations obtained after implementing the filter, it was checked which ones are still operational and have a functioning website, a prerequisite in order to obtain the information. Those without a website were removed from the universe. In addition, those organizations whose headquarters are not in Brussels were excluded from the universe.¹⁰ Finally, since this population is based on three sources and some of the associations have French and English names, the dataset was checked for duplicated entries. In total, 681 European associations have been identified as the universe of this study. This process of updating and refining the database is expected to overcome the first limitation. As for the second limitation, it cannot be regarded as a problem here because the object of this study is EU-level interest groups, thus, it is an advantage if Wonka et al. dataset is biased in favor of this type of groups.

Transparency Register and other commercial registers such as Dods' European Union and Public Affairs Directory have not been used due to different shortcomings. Although Rasmussen and Gross (2014) state that Wonka et al. (2010) database does not include as many actors as the Transparency Register, the latter has a voluntary nature and various limitations that might hamper its reliability (see Greenwood & Dreger, 2013).¹¹ Moreover, commercial registers' criteria for inclusion are unclear and some interest groups considered may not want to access EU institutions (Greenwood, 2011; Rasmussen & Gross, 2014).

Finally, 248 associations have been randomly sampled (Fowler, 2014). The European associations sampled represent 36.4% of the total population of European associations according to Wonka et al. (2010) dataset.¹²

5.2. Data collection

The process of data collection is based on unobtrusive measures which do not require intruding in the research context. The use of unobtrusive measurements reduces the biases that result from the interference of the researcher or the measurement instrument (Trochim, 2000). However, this method reduces the degree of control over the type of data collected.

From December 2014 until April 2015, the author collected the data in order to conduct the statistical analyses. After determining the sample, the websites of the 248 associations were visited, looking for information regarding the sector in which they operate, the number members they include, the type and origin of the members they gather, the year of foundation, the number

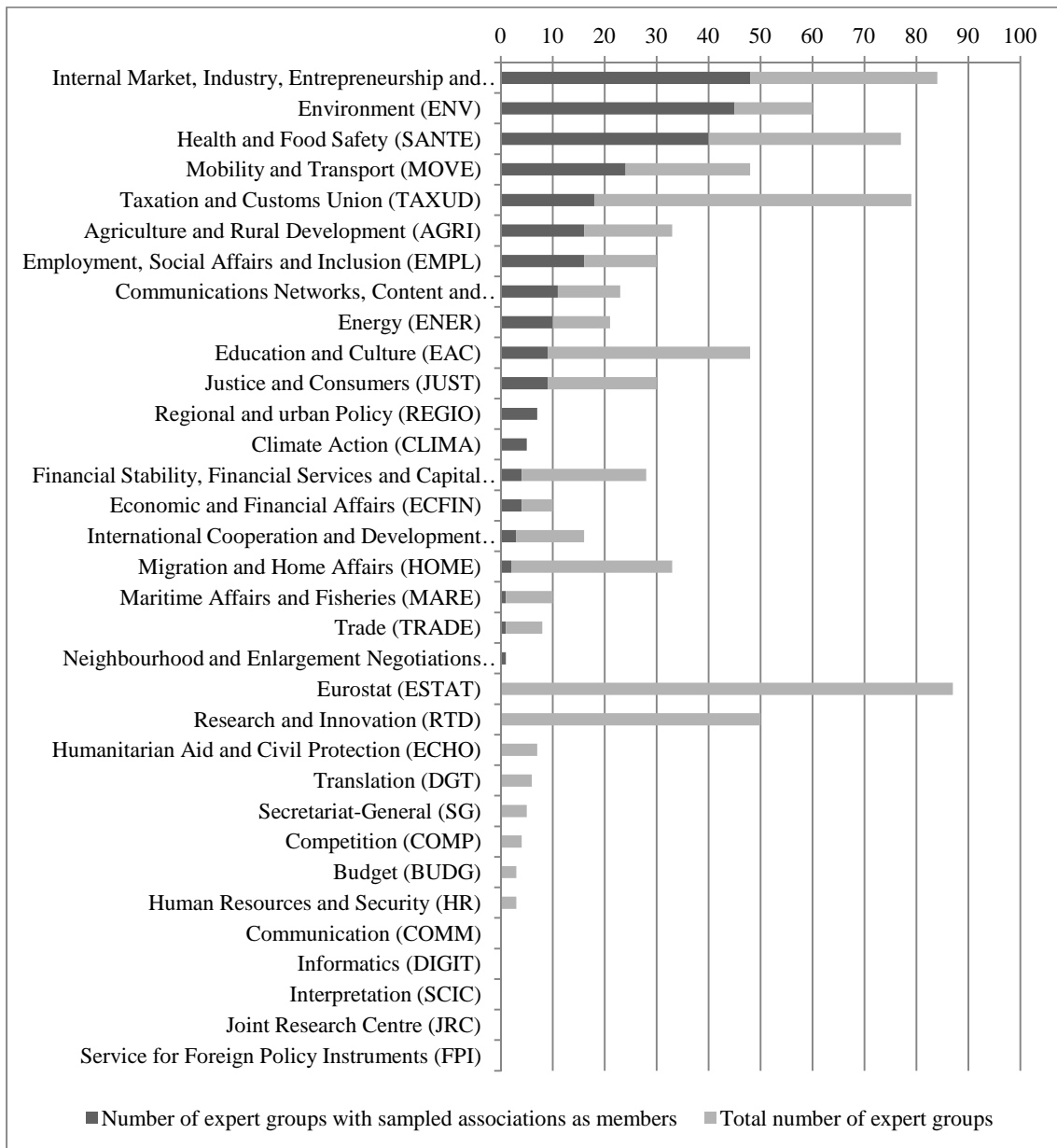
of people working in the association, and the governance structure. When possible, this information was obtained through the website and the statutes of the association. If the statutes were not available in the website, this document was obtained through *Moniteur Belge*.¹³ When the statutes were not in any of the aforementioned sources, the association was contacted by email, asking for this document; a reminder was sent after 2 weeks. The last option was to directly contact by phone those associations whose statutes were not available in any of the previous sources and who did not reply to the emails. In total, 213 statutes out of the 248 sampled associations were obtained. In order to validate the data, the author reviewed, at least twice, the statutes and the websites of every European association sampled.

Regarding the dependent variables (i.e. participation in Commission's expert groups), the information is publicly available in the Register of Commission expert groups.¹⁴ More specifically, the dataset used to conduct the study is an excel sheet named "Groups and members of the register of expert groups and other similar entities" downloaded on the 22nd January of 2015. The Commission updates this information every day, so it must be noted that this study is based on a single shot in time. The dataset used for this study includes 824 expert groups distributed in 28 DGs (see Figure 2).

The Commission distinguishes between members and observers within the expert groups. Since observers do not have voice to shape policy proposals discussed in the group, this category has been coded as non-members. Therefore, data about expert groups were codified with a 1 when associations are full members of an expert group and with a 0 if they are observers or if they are not members. Additionally, it was counted in how many expert groups do European associations participate as full members. This second step allows analyzing what determines the level of access to Commission's expert groups.

It is worth noting here that all groups have been considered, regardless of the DG in which they participate. However, eight DGs with expert groups are not represented in this study because none of the sampled associations were members. In contrast, there are three DGs that are by large the ones with more expert groups included in the sample: Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (GROW); Environment (ENV); and Health and Food Safety (SANTE) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Expert groups in each DG and level of access of associations sampled



Source: Author's own compilation based on a sample of 248 European associations (Wonka et al., 2010) and the Register of expert groups of the European Commission of 22nd January 2015

5.3. Data operationalization and descriptive statistics

Table 1 presents each of the variables, their operationalization, the source, and the descriptive statistics.

Table 1: Overview of dependent, explanatory and control variables, data sources and descriptive statistics

Variables	Variable description	Variable operationalization	Data-source	N	Mean	S.D.	Min–Max
Dependent variables							
DV1: Access to Commission’s expert groups	Indicates whether an association has access to at least one expert groups of the Commission	0 = Do not participate as full member in any expert group of the Commission. 1 = Participates as full member in at least one expert group of the Commission	Register of expert groups – European Commission	248	.54	.499	0 – 1
DV2: Level of access to Commission’s expert groups	Number of Commission’s expert groups in which European associations participate as full members	Count of the number of expert groups in which European associations participate as full members	Register of expert groups – European Commission	248	2.69	5.073	0 – 34
Explanatory variables							
H1a: Decision-making system	Decision-making system in the governance board. Decision-making system in the executive board.	0 = Simple-majority system	Associations’ websites & <i>Moniteur Belge</i>	220	.18	.387	0 – 1
		1 = Qualified majority or consensus system		222	.24	.427	0 – 1
H1b: Executive board size	Number of representatives in the executive board.	1 = From 1 to 5 representatives 2 = From 6 to 10 representatives 3 = From 11 to 15 representatives 4 = From 16 to 20 representatives 5 = From 21 to 25 representatives 6 = 26 representatives or more	Associations’ websites & <i>Moniteur Belge</i>	239	2.82	1.518	1 – 6
H1c: Functional differentiation	Number of units dealing with concrete policies and producing expert knowledge.	0 = 0 divisions 1 = From 1 to 5 divisions 2 = From 6 to 10 divisions 3 = More than 10 divisions	Associations’ websites & <i>Moniteur Belge</i>	248	1.03	.846	0 – 3
H2a: EU encompassingness	Number of EU member states represented by the interest group	Count of EU member states that are represented by one (or more) interest group (either national association or individual organization)	Associations’ websites	245	17.18	7.991	3 – 28

Variables	Variable description	Variable operationalization	Data-source	N	Mean	S.D.	Min–Max
H2b: Type of members	Categorization of the three types of members that can compose European associations.	1 = National associations 2 = Individual organizations 3 = National associations and individual organizations	Associations' websites	248	.387 .343 .270	.488 .476 .445	1 – 3
H2c: Internationalization	Indicates whether associations have international members beyond Europe or not.	0 = Associations with only European members 1 = Associations with international members	Associations' websites	230	.09	.282	0 – 1
Control variables							
Age (log)	Number of years of the European association	Natural log of the age of the association. The age is measured by subtracting the year of foundation to 2015	Associations' websites	236	1.395	.304	.30 – 2.04
Resources	Amount of human resources available for the association.	Number of employees working in the association	Associations' websites	240	8.17	8.133	0 – 50
Nature	Nature or type of members composing European associations.	1 = Businesses	Associations' websites	248	.61	.489	1 - 6
		2 = Nonprofits			.08	.273	
		3 = Civil society			.10	.307	
		4 = Professionals			.12	.327	
		5 = Public authorities			.06	.231	
6 = Labor unions	.03	.166					

It is worth to start mentioning that the variables “executive board size” and “functional differentiation” have been re-coded into ordinal variables in order to facilitate the analysis and correct for the high level of variance and for the outliers of the raw variable. The categorization has taken into account the minimum value of the scale variables, their median, the mean, and the maximum.¹⁵

As shown in Table 1, 18% of the governance boards and 24% of the executive boards require qualified majorities or consensus in order to take decisions. On average, the executive boards have 12.84 representatives (i.e. within category 3). Regarding functional differentiation, European associations have, on average, 4.04 units dealing with specific policies (i.e. within category 1).

As for the representativeness variables, European associations in the sample represent, on average, 17.18 EU member states.¹⁶ 39% of the associations are exclusively composed by national associations, 34% represent individual organizations, and 27% have both national associations and individual members. Regarding internationalization, only 9% of the associations have international members. As presented in Table A1 in the appendix there are not high levels of correlation among the explanatory variables.¹⁷

Regarding the dependent variables, 54% of the associations sampled have access to Commission’s expert groups. Furthermore, on average, associations access 2.69 expert committees. As presented in Figure 2, those DGs with more expert groups are represented by the sample. The only expert groups with significant presence that do not have representation of European associations are Eurostat and Research and Innovation. Additionally, only five DGs (i.e. Communication, Informatics, Interpretation, Joint Research Centers and Service for Foreign Policy Instruments) do not have any expert group. In this vein, it is not expected to find any type of bias due to a lack of expert groups in particular topics of potential interest for European associations.

Finally, as Table 1 shows, five explanatory variables have missing values. A Little’s Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) tests indicate that the variables about the voting system in the governance and the executive boards are not missing completely at random ($X^2 = 162.294$, $p = .038$). Additionally, these two variables have the highest percentage of missing values: governance board decision-making = 11.3%; executive board decision-making system = 10.5%). These two variables have missing values not completely at random because, in most cases, the statutes of the association were required in order to code information about the voting system and, as mentioned before, only 213 statutes could be obtained out of the 248 associations sampled. Due to the significant results of the MCAR test, the analyses presented in the next section have also been conducted without the variable “decision-making in the executive

board”, which is the one that leads to significant MCAR tests results. Importantly, the findings hold when this variable is excluded.

6. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

The first paragraphs of this section are devoted to present the bivariate analyses between the explanatory and the dependent variables. Regarding hypothesis 1a, a chi-square test shows that there is a significant relationship between the voting system in the governance board and the likelihood to gain access to Commission’s expert groups: $X^2(2, N = 220) = 5.459, p < .05$. Additionally, the decision-making system in the governance board affects the level of access: while those associations with simple majority systems have an average level of access of 2.42, the ones with qualified majority or consensus have a mean of 4.52. Nonetheless, hypothesis 1a is not completely satisfied due to the non-significant chi-square test between the decision-making system in the executive board and the probability to gain access, $X^2(2, N = 222) = .561, p > .1$. In a similar vein, data shows very similar means between the voting systems and the average level of access: simple-majority = 2.74; qualified majority and consensus = 2.89 (for more information about the relationship between the explanatory and the dependent variables see Table A2 and Figures A1 and A2 in the Appendix).

Hypothesis 1b is not confirmed by the bivariate analysis. Neither the simple logistic regression analyzing the probability to gain access, nor the bivariate correlation measuring the effects on the level of access lead to significant results. The last variable regarding the governance structure is the functional differentiation. In this case, hypothesis 1c is satisfied with a simple logistic regression measuring the likelihood to gain access: $B = .531, p < .001$. Moreover, higher departmentalization is also significantly related with the level of access, $r(248) = .259, p < .001$.

As for representativeness, hypothesis 2a is confirmed by the logistic regression and the bivariate correlation. On the one hand, the odds of gaining access to the Commission increase 1.056 when there is an increase in the level of EU encompassingness ($p < .001$). On the other hand, the more EU member states the associations represents, the higher the possibility to gain more access, $r(245) = .279, p < .001$.

Hypothesis 2b is analyzed by testing whether there is a significant difference between the means of the three groups. The results of ANOVA confirm this expectation with an F-value of 4.755 significant at $p < .001$. As presented in Figure 2A in the Appendix, hypothesis 2b is only partially confirmed. Whereas European associations composed by national associations gain access, on average, to 3.48 expert groups, those that include both national associations and individual organizations access 3.28 expert groups. However, associations that exclusively

include individual organizations have far less access, with a mean of 1.34. Finally, hypothesis 2c is firstly analyzed with a chi-square test that leads to significant results: $\chi^2(2, N = 230) = 7.844, p < .01$. Additionally, as shown in Figure 2A, European associations with international members gain access to 1.80 expert groups, while those that only have European members have an average access to 2.94 expert groups.

This study also presents a rigorous testing of the hypotheses with multivariate statistics. The statistical analyses used are: binary logistic regression and negative binomial regression. These analyses are most appropriate when considering the type of data available for the dependent variables.

The first analysis (Table 2) is a binary logistic regression in which the dependent variable is dichotomous (i.e. European association either gain or do not gain access to Commission's expert groups). The second analysis (Table 3) is a negative binomial regression. In this case the dependent variable is a count. As presented in Table 1, the level of access to Commission's expert groups ranges from 0 to 34, with a mean of 2.69 and a standard deviation of 5.073. Due to the over-dispersion of the dependent variable, a negative binomial regression, rather than Poisson regression, seems appropriate (Rasmussen and Gross 2014, p. 14).¹⁸ Models 1 and 2 in Tables 2 and 3 test the main hypotheses posed in this study. Models 3 test the robustness of the hypotheses by including the control variables.

Similarly to the bivariate analyses, the multivariate analyses indicate that when the governance board takes decisions based on qualified majority or unanimity, the probabilities to gain (a stronger degree of) access to Commission's expert groups are higher. More specifically, associations taking decisions by qualified majority or consensus are 3.724 times more likely to gain access to the Commission. In addition, as presented in Table 3, decision-making systems based on qualified majority or consensus have significantly more access to Commission's expert groups. Aligned with the theoretical expectations, it can be argued that the Commission prefers to interact with those European associations whose members have reached an agreement and that have strong and consensual positions on the topics under discussion.

Intriguingly, Model 1 in the binary logistic regression presents significant results for the second half of hypothesis 1a, but in its reverse mode. That is, executive boards that take decisions using simple majority systems have more probabilities to gain access to Commission's expert groups. However, this result is not confirmed when the control variables are included in Model 3, nor by the negative binomial regression.¹⁹

Table 2: Binary Logistic Regression

Predictor	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B (SE) ¹	OR ²	B (SE)	OR	B (SE)	OR
Governance structure						
Decision-making governance board	1.235 (.439)***	3.440			1.315 (.499)***	3.724
Decision-making executive board	-.630 (.368)*	.532			-.374 (.450)	.688
Executive board size	.009 (.095)	1.009			-.130 (.126)	.878
Functional differentiation	.442 (.170)***	1.555			.353 (.207)*	1.423
Representativeness						
EU Encompassingness			.064 (.019)***	1.066	.046 (.025)*	1.047
Type: National association (NA)			REF		REF	
Type: Individual org. (IO)			-.456 (.330)	.633	-.732 (.413)*	.481
Type: NA & IO			.571 (.359)	1.770	.481 (.440)	1.618
Internationalization			-1.566 (.561)***	.209	-1.602 (.740)**	.201
Control variables						
Age (log)					.053 (.600)	1.055
Resources: Staff					.070 (.030)**	1.073
Nature: Business associations					REF	
Nature: Nonprofit associations					.521 (.685)	1.685
Nature: Civil society groups					-.922 (.543)*	.398
Nature: Professionals					-.560 (.515)	.572
Nature: Public authorities					1.929 (.886)**	6.886
Nature: Labor unions					.248 (1.03)	1.282
Constant	-.291 (.343)		-.794 (.404)**		-.980 (1.124)	
N	219		229		193	
Pseudo R ²	.054		.088		.200	
Goodness of fit (Log likelihood)	-141.903		-143.702		-105.682	

Dependent Variable: Access to Commission expert groups

¹Binary logistic regression coefficients, standard errors in parentheses.

²Odds Ratio

*p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01

Table 3: Negative binomial regression

Predictor	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B (SE) ¹	IRR ²	B (SE)	IRR	B (SE)	IRR
Governance structure						
Decision-making governance board	912 (.336)***	2.489 (.836)***			.658 (.298)**	1.932 (.577)**
Decision-making executive board	-.359 (.313)	.698 (.218)			-.121 (.285)	.885 (.253)
Executive board size	.037 (.073)	1.038 (.076)			-.141 (.076)*	.868 (.066)*
Functional differentiation	.488 (.130)***	1.628 (.212)***			.222 (.130)*	1.249 (.163)*
Representativeness						
EU Encompassingness			.063 (.014)***	1.065 (.014)***	.044 (.015)***	1.045 (.016)***
Type: National association (NA)			REF		REF	
Type: Individual org. (IO)			-.578 (.273)**	.561 (.153)**	-.939 (.271)***	.391 (.106)***
Type: NA & IO			.308 (.267)	1.361 (.364)	.285 (.254)	1.330 (.339)
Internationalization			-.859 (.414)**	.423 (.175)**	-.733 (.417)*	.480 (.200)*
Control variables						
Age (log)					.142 (.316)	1.152 (.364)
Resources: Staff					.067 (.015)***	1.070 (.016)***
Nature: Business associations					REF	
Nature: Nonprofit associations					-.081 (.387)	.922 (.357)
Nature: Civil society groups					-1.106 (.369)***	.331 (.122)***
Nature: Professionals					-.883 (.363)**	.413 (.150)**
Nature: Public authorities					.490 (.450)	1.632 (.736)
Nature: Labor unions					.675 (.540)	1.964 (1.062)
Constant	.192 (.270)	1.211 (.327)	-.106 (.333)	.900 (.300)	-.474 (.560)	.622 (.348)
Apha		2.201 (.301)***		2.183 (.297)***		1.299 (.216)***
N		219		229		193
Pseudo R ²		.025		.033		.103
Goodness of fit (Log likelihood)		-441.218		-456.253		-365.383

Dependent Variable: Level of access to Commission's expert groups

¹Negative binomial regression unstandardized coefficients, standard errors in parentheses.

²Incidence Rate Ratios, standard errors in parentheses.

*p < 0.1; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01

Hypothesis 1b is only significant, in its reverse mode, in Model 3 of the negative binomial regression. Therefore, smaller, and not larger executive boards, facilitate higher levels of access to Commission's expert groups. As discussed below, these results indicate that transaction cost theory, focused on the efficiency of the board, are more appropriate than resource dependence theory when explaining the size and the voting system of the executive board.

Hypothesis 1c is confirmed in every model, indicating that the higher the level of departmentalization, the higher the chances to gain (a stronger degree of) access to the Commission. Establishing divisions allow European associations to produce valuable expert information for the Commission and, as a result, gain more access to expert groups. As noted by Klüver (2012b), by establishing these units interest groups are more able to 'find out early about new policy developments and to develop important expert knowledge that is required by the Commission' (p. 505).

Regarding representativeness, both analyses confirm hypothesis 2a. Hence, the higher the level of EU encompassingness, the more likely are European associations to gain (a stronger degree of) access to Commission's expert groups. More specifically, representing an additional EU member state yields an odds ratio of 1.045 to gain access, while controlling by all the variables. Results in Table 3 also indicate that including members from more EU member states leads to higher levels of access to Commission's expert groups.

Hypothesis 2b is only partially confirmed in the two analyses. European associations composed of national associations have more probabilities to gain (a stronger degree of) access the Commission than those exclusively including individual organizations. This result is aligned with Commission's 2002 position and confirms that this institution favors access to those interest groups that represent aggregated needs and interests of a sector at the national level, and that can speak on behalf of broader constituencies. Although associations composed of individual organizations may claim to have expertise and technical information they do not have the domestic and European encompassing interests that characterize those associations composed of national associations (Bouwen 2004). Furthermore, although it does not reach significance levels, those associations that include both national associations and individual associations, have more probabilities to gain (a stronger degree of) access to Commission's expert groups than the ones that only have national associations.

Finally, as expected in hypothesis 2c, those associations with international members have fewer chances to gain (a stronger degree of) access to the Commission than those that only have European members. Two explanations justify this result. On the one hand, international associations have more diffused interests and their gains and losses from policy outcomes are not as clearly defined as if their members were from the same region (Dür & Bièvre, 2007).

European associations with international members have fewer probabilities to be interested in influencing the Commission since this strategy may not report any benefit for their constituencies. This finding supports Beyers (2008) argument by which encompassingness can lead to collective action problems and hamper the capacity to agree on common positions. On the other hand, the Commission has less interest in these associations because their knowledge and information is not relevant for the development of a policy proposal that will be implemented in Europe.

It is important to note that Models 3 in both analyses are the ones with more explanatory power. More specifically, the Pseudo R^2 for the binary logistic regression is .200 and for the negative binomial regression is .103. These low levels of Pseudo R^2 also indicate that there are other explanatory factors that have not been considered in this study but that could explain the variation of the dependent variables.

The inclusion of control variables in Models 3 also leads to significant results that are worth presenting. The amount of resources of associations is significant and positively related to the probability to gain (a stronger degree of) access to the Commission. In this sense, the findings are aligned with previous investigations such as Eising (2007b), Klüver (2010), and Rasmussen and Gross (2014) and show that the more resources associations have, the higher their level of access to the Commission. In short, well endowed European associations are more able to develop and produce the information needed by the Commission (Rasmussen & Gross, 2014).

The nature of European associations has an effect on their level of access to the Commission (for more information on this variable, see Table A3 in the Appendix). Aligned with previous researches, associations of business are by large the most represented category in Commission's expert groups (Klüver, 2012b). However, being more represented does not automatically lead to higher levels of access. As shown in the binary logistic regression, public authorities have higher probabilities to gain access than business groups. Hence, it can be stated that business groups are not as privileged as it is normally suggested in the literature of lobbies (Rasmussen & Gross, 2014).

The analyses also show that civil society groups are less likely to gain (a stronger degree of) access than business associations. As noted in the theoretical section, this might be due to the diffused interests of civil society groups (Dür & Mateo, 2013) and to the fact that they normally pursue outside strategies such as campaigns or demonstrations (Mahoney, 2007; Binderkrantz, 2008; Berhout, 2010). As previous investigations have shown, civil society groups are not that interested in being part of expert groups and they rather seek influence through politicians and the media (Binderkrantz et al., 2014). Thus, it must be acknowledged that some European associations do not gain access to the Commission because they simply do not intend to do so

(Lowery, 2007). Finally, Table 3 also indicates that associations of professionals, which normally conduct inside lobbying (Binderkrantz et al., 2014), have more access than civil society groups.

7. DISCUSSION

This study attempts to further previous research on how the internal configuration and the representativeness of interest groups affect the information they can supply and, consequently, their level of access to Commission's expert groups (Klüver, 2012b). To do so, it focuses on European associations, a type of interest group whose significance and relevance has grown in the last decades, but that has not been analyzed with a large-N study.

The main argument of this study is that governance structure and representativeness matter when providing relevant and quality information to the Commission. European associations have been characterized as slow and inflexible organizations (Greenwood & Webster 2000; Schmitter & Streeck 1999, p. 76) that, due to their complexity and multiple layers, are not able to supply the information required by the Commission. However, these shortcomings can be more or less severe depending on the governance structure established by the association and the type and degree of representativeness they have.

As shown in the previous section, the decision-making system in the governance board as well as the functional differentiation of associations are important determinants of the governance structure that affect the type of information that can be provided and the level of access to the Commission. When governance boards take decisions by qualified majority or consensus, European associations are more able to represent European encompassing interests. Moreover, this is expected to facilitate an effective legislative process once the proposal is sent for approval to other EU institutions. The Commission aims to legitimize its decisions and secure private and political support for proposals in the legislative process (Bouwen, 2006; Binderkrantz et al., 2014). To do so, the Commission not only needs 'policy-relevant information, citizen support and the backing of policy-powerful economic actors' (Klüver, 2012a, p. 1118); it also requires aligned support among the wide range of actors affected by the policy so as to ensure that those included in the policy-making stage will not advocate against the proposal when it reaches the next stage in the legislative process.

In short, those European associations that present positions based on qualified majorities or consensus have more strength and capacity to access the Commission than those who do not show high levels of internal alignment. The Commission wants to obtain the shared position on a policy issue since this can inform them about the possibilities of success of the legislative

process and of the final policy outcome. Negotiating with associations with strong positions eases the decision-making and implementation processes at the EU and national level. Moreover, this approach fits the consensus oriented preference of the Commission, which deliberately seeks to avoid divisions between member states (Schmidt, 2010). Finally, this finding obliges to reconsider whether the lowest common denominator problem (Greenwood & Webster, 2000; Beyers, 2008) is a real problem for gaining access to the Commission.

Regarding the functional differentiation, the divisions provide European associations with an additional type of information beyond the European encompassing interests. By establishing units, associations also produce factual information demanded by the Commission (Beyers, 2008). Establishing policy departments also allow associations to properly monitor the demands of the Commission and act in a proactive manner, instead of waiting until the demand becomes public (Klüver, 2012b).

It also seems worth discussing the findings about the executive board. Although the results are not consistently significant across models and analyses, it seems that European associations with simple majority systems and small executive bodies are more likely to gain (a stronger degree of) access to Commission's expert groups. On the one hand, simple majority systems in the executive board are expected to facilitate the capacity of the association to rapidly react to new demands of the Commission. As mentioned before, simple majority voting instead of unanimity can enhance the level of autonomy of the executive board (Beyers, 2008; Greenwood 2003). Furthermore, qualified majority and consensus voting is considered as difficult, time-consuming, and increases the risk of stasis (Greenwood & Webster, 2000; Lipton & Lorsh, 1992). The use of simple majority voting systems enables European associations to respond more rapidly to the demands of the Commission overcoming the risk of stasis.

On the other hand, the size of the board is negatively related with the probabilities of gaining access to the Commission. According to transaction cost theory, larger boards are less effective due to communication, coordination, and decision-making problems (Eisenberg, Sundgren & Wells, 1998). Additionally, large boards are less efficient at carrying out their monitoring role because they tend to foster free-riding (Lipton & Lorsch, 1992). Hackman (1990) also shows how the costs of shared decision-making increase as the group size also increases. Such boards are less likely to foster discussion since there is greater potential for dissension (Lipton & Lorsh, 1992). In short, although resource dependence theory signals that large boards have a comparative advantage in terms of knowledge and expertise (Eisenberg et al., 1998), these benefits may be 'outweighed by the incremental cost of poorer communication and decision-making associated to larger groups' (John & Senbet, 1998, p. 385). Therefore, those

associations with small executive boards are expected to be more efficient, fostering their capacity to be demanded by the Commission (Hértier & Rhodes, 2011).

These two findings related to the executive board introduce an under-researched dimension when studying the determinants of access to the Commission: the efficiency of the process of supplying information. As signaled by Chalmers (2013), EU decision-makers are pressed-for-time. In this vein, not everything is about the information that interest groups supply to the Commission, the capacity to offer this information in a timely manner seems to matter too.

The level and type of representativeness of European associations is an important determinant to provide European encompassing interests and, therefore, affects the probability to gain (a stronger degree of) access to Commission's expert groups. European associations representing more EU countries and including national associations as members are more able to present themselves as appropriate groups to build consensus and boost legitimacy.

According to the findings, the more EU countries associations represent, the more demanded they are by the Commission. As noted by Timotijevic (2011, p. 493), representativeness can be regarded as a source of legitimacy for the Commission since it 'ensures that political decisions are to some degree based on the (mediated) will of those who will be affected by them.' Although the Commission also interacts with other type of interest groups (e.g. individual firms or national associations), this finding presents a Commission with neo-functionalist preferences (Haas, 1958). Thus, it rather contacts with interest groups that indirectly represent as many EU citizens as possible.

Representing more EU member states also facilitates offering European encompassing interests (Bouwen, 2002, 2004). By promoting the interaction with those associations that represent more EU member states, the Commission reduces the risk of just taking into account the position of interest groups based in the bigger or more powerful EU states. Hence, the Commission is complying with one principle of the 2002 communicate: 'reduce the risk of the policymakers to just listen to one side of the argument or of particular groups getting privileged access' (Commission, 2002).

Associations composed of national associations have a comparative advantage over those that only have individual organizations when it comes to representing European encompassing interests. Before presenting their position in the European association, national associations have to follow a process where individual members have to reach an agreement. This extensive consultation mechanisms that goes from individual organizations at the national level to discussion at the European level, allows European association to present an 'encompassing

European perspective on their sector and provide good quality information about the European encompassing interest' (Bouwen, 2004, p. 344).

The preference of the Commission for favoring access to European associations that include national associations can also be explained with transaction cost theory (Williamson, 1979). By interacting with these European associations, the Commission does not have to spend time negotiating separately with domestic interest groups and narrow claims (Eising, 2007a). As stated by the Commission (2001), European governance promotes 'rational consultation process through a substantial reduction of the number of participants' (Coen & Richardson, 2009, p. 28). One more time, is not only about the type of information that interest groups can offer, it is also about the efficiency that they can provide to the EU legislative process. Those European associations that represent many EU member states and that ensure encompassingness are better suited to grant legitimacy, effectiveness and efficiency of the legislative process.

Finally, collective action problems do not seem to negatively affect European associations that exclusively have European members since, as confirmed by hypothesis 2a, the more EU member states represented, the higher the access to the Commission. However, as shown in hypothesis 2c, having international members does lead to collective action problems and reduces the probabilities of gaining access to the Commission. The inclusion of international members might be a sign of having diffused interests. It seems reasonable to argue that the main goal of these groups is not gaining access to the Commission, but to raise awareness through outside lobbying (Binderkrantz et al., 2014). In any case, findings confirm that the Commission is mainly interested in the 'European society' (EESC, 2002), which is weakly represented by interest groups with international members.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Since the beginning of the 2000s, EU institutions have tried to promote "good governance" by stressing the importance of participative and effective legislation (Commission, 2001 and 2002). Participation and effectiveness are also related to the idea of input and output legitimacy. On the one hand, input legitimacy is related to representativeness and accessibility to decision-makers. On the other hand, output legitimacy implies quality and effectiveness of the political decisions, ensuring their benefits for the citizens (Broscheid & Coen, 2007; Coen & Richardson, 2009). According to the results presented, those European associations that can facilitate both components (input and output legitimacy) are the ones with higher chances of gaining (a stronger degree of) access to Commission's expert groups. Those associations that are able to

accommodate these two different types of legitimacy, which might be in tension (Skogstad, 2011), are more demanded by the Commission.

On the one hand, associations with higher levels of EU representativeness and encompassingness are the ones with higher degree of access. As noted by Bouwen (2002), encompassing access goods foster input legitimacy, which has become crucial for the Commission in order to diminish the democratic deficit (Klüver, 2013; Schmidt, 2010). On the other hand, European associations that ensure the effectiveness of the legislative process and of the policy outcome are expected to strengthen output legitimacy. More specifically, in order to guarantee an effective legislative process, the Commission prefers to interact with those associations that have clear and strong positions beforehand, facilitating the legislative process and the implementation of the policy. Favoring the interaction with European associations that take decisions by qualified majority or consensus ensures that the final policy will be acceptable to and accepted by the members of the associations in the different EU members states (Schmidt, 2010).

When European associations present encompassing and representative interests using qualified majority or consensus, they promote output legitimacy, effectiveness and compliance. In addition, the clear relationship between the level of functional differentiation and access also seems to indicate that the Commission values the expert knowledge produced by units within associations. This knowledge is expected to contribute to solving complex problems, easing the implementation of the policy and fostering output legitimacy by ensuring the benefits for the people (Bouwen, 2002).

In sum, thanks to their capacity to contribute to an effective and legitimate EU legislation (Hértier & Rhodes, 2011), certain European associations can be used as a tool to promote what the Commission labeled as good governance in the EU (Commission, 2001). The interaction with European associations that boost legitimacy, effectiveness and compliance reduces the inter-institutional uncertainty at the EU level and is expected to facilitate the implementation process at the national level.

This study is considered as a first step to improve our understanding of European associations, a type of interest group that is significantly growing vis-à-vis the Europeanization process. However, further research is needed in order to better capture how the internal configuration and other factors affect the level of access to the Commission. Firstly, this study has opted for breadth instead of depth; however, a qualitative analysis based on interviews could be an interesting approach to gain in-depth knowledge on how and why European associations chose one governance structure over another.

Secondly, by exclusively focusing on supply side factors, the investigation misses important explanatory factors related to the demand and the policy-issue under debate (Berkhout et al., 2015). Recent publications in the field of interest groups address the contextual nature of the policy in which the activities of interest groups unfold (Beyers, Dür, Marshall & Wonka, 2014; Klüver, Braun & Beyers, 2015). Instead of conducting an actor-based sample (which is the case in this study), the new trends are to sample based on policies (Beyers et al., 2014). Although this might hamper the generalizability of the findings, taking into account the contextual nature of the issue under research contributes to the generation of midrange theories that characterize this field of study (Klüver et al., 2015).

Therefore, another topic for further research would be to focus on different policy issues and analyze how these affect the establishment of European associations. In order to better explain variation of the dependent variables, it is important to consider the following explanatory variables: salience, complexity, and the degree of conflict of the issue in which European association work (Dür & Bièvre, 2007; Klüver, 2011). It also seems worth analyzing whether European associations have different characteristics and governance structures depending on the policy-issue in which they operate. As noted, the level of access of European associations to Commission's expert groups is clearly biased towards three policies: environment, health and food safety, and internal market, industry, entrepreneurship and SMEs. Future research can also tackle this topic and explain why there is such biased representation in favor of these three policy issues.

Finally, a comparative research across the three main EU institutions would produce important knowledge on how the governance structure and representativeness affect the goods that facilitate access to the EP and the Council of Ministers. Additionally, this study only considers one of the different mechanisms that the Commission has to produce legislative proposals (i.e. expert groups). It could be valuable to analyze whether the findings presented here are valid for the open consultation processes of the Commission.

9. NOTES

¹ Wide consultation is one of the Commission's duties according to the Treaties and helps to ensure that proposals put to the legislature are sound. This is fully in line with the European Union's legal framework, which states that 'the Commission should [...] consult widely before proposing legislation and, wherever appropriate, publish consultation documents' (Commission 2002, p. 4). In addition, the Commission's White Paper on European Governance of 2001 not only defends wide consultation and the inclusion of civil society groups in the European governance, it also promotes a more rational consultation process through a substantial reduction of the number of participations. This rationalization can also be read as way to prioritize the interaction with European associations.

² Although Schmitter and Streeck (1999) refer to Business associations, these same assumptions are valid for any type of associations that gather autonomous organizations.

³ See: <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=faq.faq&aide=2>

⁴ Corporate governance identifies three relevant levels in organizations: shareholders (i.e. the governance board), corporate directors (i.e. the executive board) and the daily management, which is headed by a director or a secretary general (Martinez-Diaz, 2009).

⁵ Based on the sample of this study, 82.3% of the associations have annual meetings. 7.1% have biennial, triennial or quadrennial meetings. The remaining 10.6% have more than one meeting every year.

⁶ Based on the sample of this study, 81.9% of the associations have two or more meetings every year, with an average of 2.5 annual meetings. Only 18.1% have annual meetings.

⁷ There are other variables that can inform us on whether European associations are autonomous or not. Using the statutes of 213 European associations, it has been checked if their internal regulations allow members to act contrary to decisions taken by the governance board. It has also been coded whether not complying with the decisions passed in the governance board has any consequence for the offender. In addition, the tenure of the representatives in the executive board has been analyzed since it is expected that those boards whose members cannot be renewed and have longer tenures will have more autonomy than those with shorter tenures and who do not have the possibility to be renewed by the governance board (Truman, 2006). Although theoretically relevant, these variables do not contribute to the overall model and negatively affected their explanatory power due to the missing cases. Because of this, the variables have excluded from the analyses.

⁸ The number of members of European associations was also considered as a control variable. However, the variable has been excluded from the model due to collinearity problems with "EU encompassingness" variable.

⁹ Wonka et al. (2010) data is publically available in <http://www.bigsss-bremen.de/user/awonka/awonka-data.html>

¹⁰ The choice for only sampling associations whose headquarters are in Brussels is aimed at making the sample more homogeneous. However, it is worth noting that, out of the 1,081 associations, only three do not have their headquarters in Brussels. More specifically, they have it in London (2) and Paris (1).

¹¹ Greenwood and Dreger (2013) highlight the voluntary nature of the Transparency Register and the quality of the data in it (including faults of design and nomenclature), as critical aspects that hamper the reliability of the register.

¹² If we take into account the 1,081 associations firstly identified in Wonka's et al. dataset, the sample would represent 22.9%. However, some of these associations are repeated and others do not have a website, which indicates low levels of activity or even dissolution. Therefore, it seems appropriate to claim that the total population is 681 European associations, which represents 36.4% of the total EU-level groups. If we consider the total number of interest groups registered in the Transparency Register (i.e. 8,073), the sample only represents 3.07%.

¹³ *Moniteur Belge* is the the official journal of the Kingdom of Belgium. The establishment of non-profit association (ASBL) and international non-profit association (AISBL), which is how European associations are registered, can be tracked down in the following website: <http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv/tsvf.htm>

¹⁴ For more information see <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert>

¹⁵ On the one hand, the descriptive statistics for the raw variable "executive board size" are: minimum = 1; maximum = 64, mean = 12.84; standard deviation = 10.49. On the other hand, the descriptive statistics for the raw variables "functional differentiation" are: minimum = 0; maximum = 50; mean = 4.04; standard deviation = 4.72.

¹⁶ The intention is to capture EU encompassingness by looking at how many EU countries are represented through their members. However, following previous studies (Rasmussen & Gross, 2014), different types of categorization have been established and analyzed taking into account the size in terms of territory, and the year of access into the EU. Although results show that founding members as well as big EU countries are more represented in European associations, this categorizations have not been included in the analyses because they do not produce significant results, nor do they improve the models. More importantly, these categorizations do not seem to capture the degree of EU encompassingness as defined in section 4.2.1.

¹⁷ The highest level of correlations (-.439**) corresponds to two different categories of the same categorical variables: Type of members. This does not represent a problem for the analysis (Field 2009). The remaining explanatory variables are not highly correlated, indicating that there are not multicollinearity problems among the explanatory variables.

¹⁸ As noted by Rasmussen and Gross (2014, p. 14), negative binomial regression can be used for over-dispersed count data; that is, 'when the conditional variance exceeds the conditional mean'. Thus, when the distribution of the dependent variables is over-dispersed, the confidence intervals are likely to be narrower with negative binomial regression than with Poisson regression model. As shown in Table 3, the alpha levels for the three models are significant; therefore, data are over-dispersed and are better estimated using a negative binomial model than a poisson model. Another option would have been zero-inflated regression model, which attempts to account for excess zeros. Following Rasmussen and Gross (2014, p. 14), 'it is not theoretically clear which substantive factor/s predict whether

a group always (or only sometimes) has the value of zero'; thus negative binomial model makes more sense as it is not an attempt to fit the data (Long & Freese, 2001). Finally, OLS regression would also be possible if the dependent variable would have been log-transformed. However, this transformation leads to many issues such as loss of data and lack of capacity to model the dispersion (Field, 2009).

¹⁹ Due to the uneven distribution of voting systems (see Table 1), random sub-samples from the main sample of 248 associations have been produced. In these sub-samples the voting systems were evenly distributed (50% simple majority -50% qualified majority or consensus). After the analyses, the findings presented in section 6 hold. This test has also been done for the variable "internationalization" since only 9% of the sampled associations have international members. Again, the tests confirm the findings presented in section 6.

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11. APPENDIX

Table A1: Correlation matrix of explanatory and control variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. D-M governance board																
2. D-M executive board	.376**															
3. Executive board size	-.023	.017														
4. Functional differentiation	.025	.051	.077													
5. EU encompassingness	.020	-.102	.249**	.272**												
6. Type: Nat'l assns (NA)	.130	-.022	.025	.042	.164*											
7. Type: Individual orgs (IO)	-.082	.013	-.098	-.115	-.178**	-.574**										
8. Type: NA & IO	-.055	.010	.077	.076	.010	-.484**	-.439**									
9. Internationalization	.065	.034	-.079	.052	.016	-.040	-.042	.087								
10. Age (log)	.027	.054	.229**	.147*	.167*	.165*	-.073	-.104	.027							
11. Resources: staff	.041	-.032	.199**	.168**	.230**	-.104	-.017	.131*	.043	.058						
12. Nature: Businesses	.113	.154*	.022	.086	-.228**	-.092	.022	.078	-.060	-.006	-.034					
13. Nature: Nonprofits	-.019	-.058	-.095	-.027	.103	-.053	.067	-.013	.025	-.056	.278**	-.370**				
14. Nature: Civil society	-.057	-.066	.094	-.027	.071	.025	.002	-.030	.085	.101	-.004	-.427**	-.101			
15. Nature: Professionals	-.069	-.022	-.114	-.115	.054	.137*	-.138*	-.003	.027	.010	-.159*	-.463**	-.110	-.127*		
16. Nature: Public authorities	-.075	-.145*	-.042	-.029	.065	.021	.044	-.070	-.014	-.078	-.083	-.305**	-.072	-.084	-.091	
17. Nature: Labor unions	.049	.020	.200**	.110	.177**	.015	.031	-.049	-.055	.011	.070	-.213**	-.050	-.058	-.063	-.042

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

Table A2: Probability to access of explanatory variables

Explanatory variables	Categories / Values	Access			
		Yes	No	Yes (%)	No (%)
Governance structure					
Decision-making system in the governance board	Simple majority	94	86	52.22	47.78
	Qualified majority or consensus	29	11	72.50	27.50
Decision-making system in the executive board	Simple majority	96	73	56.80	43.20
	Qualified majority or consensus	27	26	50.94	49.06
Executive board size	1-5	20	19	51.28	48.72
	6-10	48	44	52.17	47.83
	11-15	29	17	63.04	36.96
	16-20	11	9	55.00	45.00
	21-25	11	7	61.11	38.89
	>25	12	12	50.00	50.00
Functional differentiation	0	23	49	31.94	68.06
	1-5	70	40	63.64	36.36
	6-10	33	20	62.26	37.74
	>10	8	5	61.54	38.46
Representativeness					
EU encompassingness	3	2	6	25.00	75.00
	4	2	1	66.67	33.33
	5	2	7	22.22	77.78
	6	3	3	50.00	50.00
	7	3	5	37.50	62.50
	8	5	4	55.56	44.44
	9	3	9	25.00	75.00
	10	3	2	60.00	40.00
	11	8	7	53.33	46.67
	12	2	5	28.57	71.43
	13	6	4	60.00	40.00
	14	2	5	28.57	71.43
	15	6	1	85.71	14.29
	16	6	3	66.67	33.33
	17	9	4	69.23	30.77
	18	8	4	66.67	33.33
	19	1	7	12.50	87.50
	20	3	4	42.86	57.14
	21	1	2	33.33	66.67
	22	3	1	75.00	25.00
23	4	3	57.14	42.86	
24	5	3	62.50	37.50	
25	5	2	71.43	28.57	
26	6	6	50.00	50.00	
27	9	4	69.23	30.77	
28	26	10	72.22	27.78	
Type of membership	National associations	55	41	57.29	42.71
	Individual organizations	36	49	42.35	57.65
	Nat'l assns & ind'l organizations	43	24	64.18	35.82
Internationalization	EU and European members	121	89	57.62	42.38
	International members	5	15	25.00	75.00

Figure A1: Level of access of governance structure variables

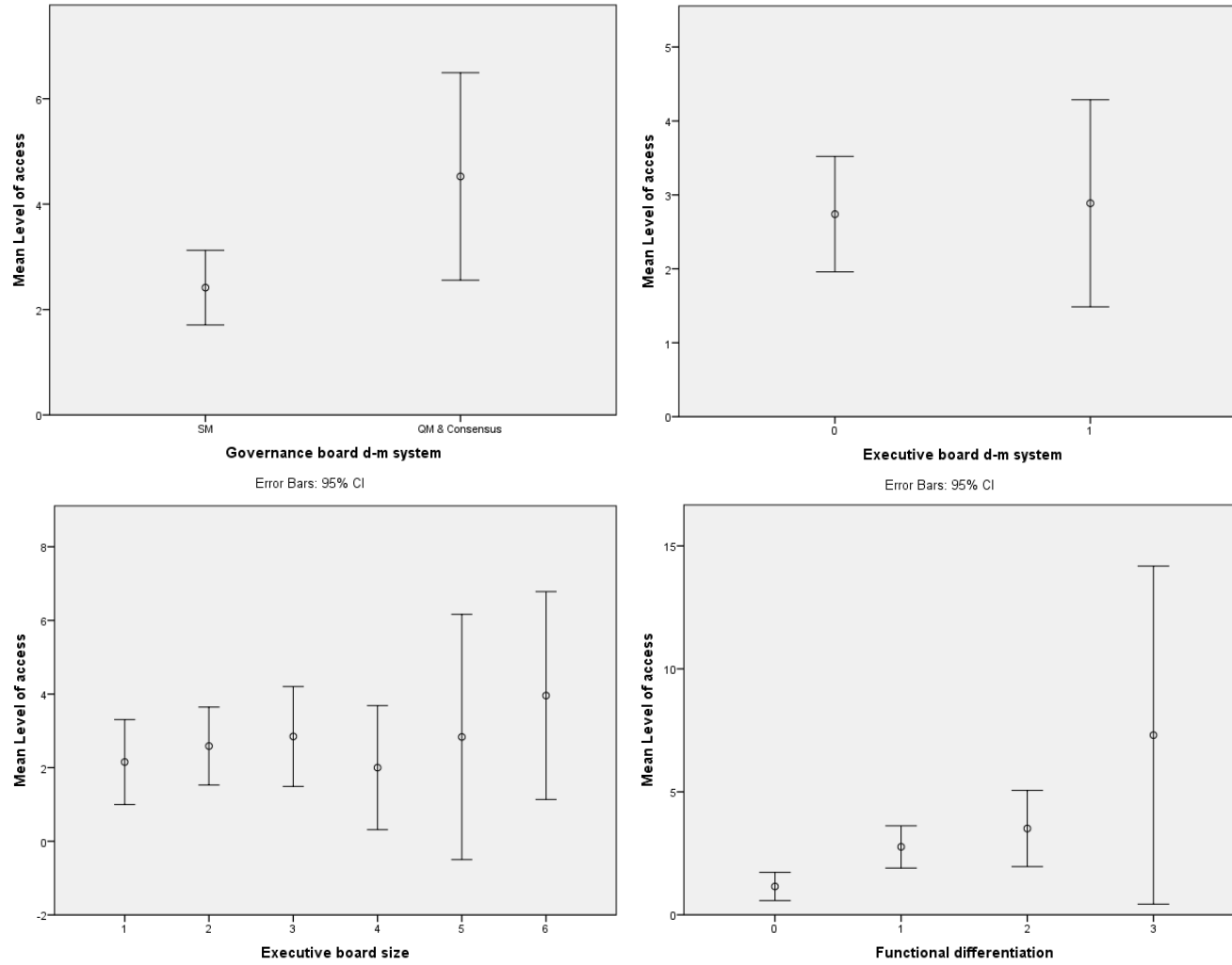


Figure A2: Level of Access of representativeness variables

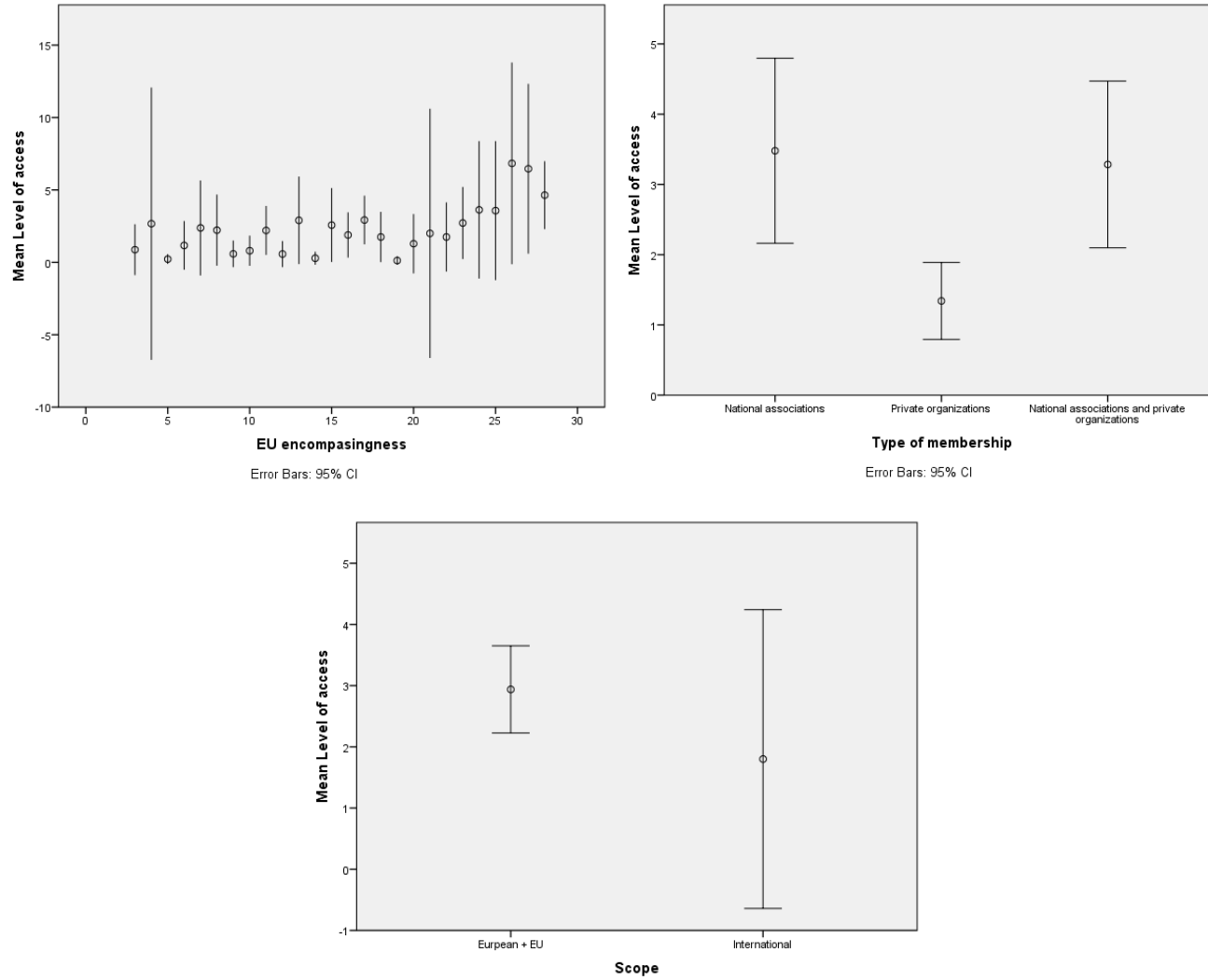


Table A3: Descriptive statistics of the control variable “Nature of associations” and relationship with dependent variables

Nature	N.	% of total	Access		Mean	Level of access	St. Dev.
			% of access	% of access / total		Min / Max	
Businesses	151	60.88	55	33.5	3	0 / 34	6
Nonprofits	20	8.06	75	6	3	0 / 10	3
Civil society	26	10.48	34	3.6	1	0 / 10	2
Professionals	30	12.09	33.3	4	1	0 / 13	2
Public authorities	14	5.64	85.7	4.8	3	0 / 13	3
Labor unions	7	2.82	71.4	2.1	8	0 / 26	10
TOTAL	248	100	-	54	-	0 / 34	-