

Following the Money: EU Funding of Civil Society Organizations

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Abstract:

The literature on EU integration has long recognized that the European Commission has promoted a pan-European civil society in order to increase the legitimacy of the supranational institutions. While we know the Commission fosters EU civil society by encouraging their formal and informal participation in the EU policymaking processes and by directly funding them (Mahoney 2004), we have, until now, known very little about just how much money the Commission has been granting EU civil society organizations and to which segments of European civil society. This paper tests whether the Commission's stated goals and the assumptions of EU integration scholars are reflected in the reality of its funding practices.

We present analyses from two original databases: 1. The Commission's own registry of 685 civil society organizations which includes information about the groups and the funding they have received from the Commission; and 2. A database of 1,164 civil society groups that received funding from the Commission from 2003-2007. The findings show that the Commission's funding decisions do indeed reflect its goals of supporting a supranational EU civil society through its support of groups organized at the EU-level (over groups organized at the national and sub-national level) and through its support of EU integration groups; European youth, education and intercultural exchange groups; and citizenship, democracy promotion and education groups. The findings also show however, that when it comes to societal cohesion, the Commission's funding practices are not in line with its rhetoric. Rather than equal funding across member states, or extra support for the civil society groups of the new member states, it is the oldest and wealthiest members that are receiving the largest numbers of grants and the largest amounts of funding.

The analysis, compiled from funding documents recently released through the European Transparency Initiative, is the first systematic study of the types of groups that are receiving funding and the factors that explain those funding patterns.

Introduction

The literature on EU integration has long recognized that the European Commission has promoted a pan-European civil society in order to increase the legitimacy of the supranational institutions and to aid the institutions in EU policymaking (Bouwen 2002, Greenwood 1997, Richardson 2001, Pollack 1997). While we know the Commission fosters European civil society organizations¹ by encouraging their formal and informal participation in the EU policymaking processes and by directly financing them through grants (Mahoney 2004) we have, until now, known very little about the Commission's specific funding practices. We know extraordinarily little about who these groups are that receive financial support, where they come from, what they stand for, how much the Commission supports them, and the balance or bias in that support.

While increasing transparency about the use of EU funds is one of the major pillars of the European Transparency Initiative (ETI), access to information remains limited and the information which is available remains decentralized, scattered across Directorates General (DGs), and inconsistent in its presentation. We attempt to systematize the available information and construct a universal picture of the European Commission's support for European Civil Society.

¹ Just what constitutes European Civil Society is continually debated, some argue the definition should be restricted to public-interest, citizen and/or diffuse interest groups, clearly excluding organized industry, professional and business associations; others, including the Commission, have a much broader conception of the term, including these latter groups. For our purposes we will use the more general meaning of the term civil society organizations, similar to the concept of the "Third Sector" – any organized citizens which do not comprise the government or private industry. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is another term for these organizations but often implies an organization fighting for the common good. See Appendix A for the full list of types of actors which could be included.

We first discuss why governments attempt to support civil society organizations and what the literatures on interest groups and social movements have found regarding this type of government support. A series of over-arching hypotheses are presented about the factors that drive Commission support of groups. Second, we turn to a description of the data collection process followed by a detailed analysis of that data. The analysis first investigates which of the groups in the Commission's 2002 version of the registry of civil society organizations (Consultation, the European Commission and Civil Society - CONECCS) received funding in the 2003-2007 time period, and what factors explain who was funded. The second section of the analysis provides descriptive statistics and qualitative data on the funding patterns of over 1000 European civil society organizations during the 5 year time period. The final section of the data analysis presents a regression analysis predicting funding levels by civil society group characteristics. We conclude with an overall description of the Commission's funding practices and transparency initiatives, and the implications for future policy on reporting and registration.

Government Support of Civil Society

The large literature on interest groups and social movements, both in the US and the EU, has established that it is easier for special interests (often representing business or industry) to mobilize than it is for diffuse, public or citizen interests (Olsen 1965; Pollack 1997). The reason is, of course, that public interests are more likely to suffer from collective action problems. Collective action problems "occur whenever individuals in interdependent situations face choices in which the maximization of short-term self-interest yields outcomes leaving all

participants worse off than feasible alternatives” (Ostrom 1998, 1). Or more simply, every potential constituent of a public interest group has incentive to free ride and let the other constituents do the work; in the end, that shirking individual will receive the benefit at no cost. If everyone behaves that way however, it is possible that the collective benefit will not be achieved or will be significantly weaker or worse than if everyone had done their part. Public interest group leaders need to try to overcome the collective action problem in order to mobilize supporters and resources for their cause (McCarthy and Zald 1977).

Business interests however do not suffer from collective action problems at the same level, the benefits of their organized mobilization are clear and often more substantial to each individual member than the benefits of public interested collective actions are for their individual members. This results in an imbalance when it comes to those groups that present their opinions and positions in the policymaking process (Schattschneider 1960).

Government support of public-interest or civil society groups, which can be manifest in a number of ways, can help correct the imbalance. In the US 501c3 tax status provides a preferential tax code for non-profit organizations (Berry 2003). Government can emphasize and promote the participation of civil society groups in official consultations, hearings and standing committees (Mahoney 2004). And governments can directly support civil society groups through grants to the organizations (Brown & Troutt 2004). In all these ways, governments can help civil society groups form and survive. Governments have an incentive to provide this support to civil society for two reasons: One, for legitimacy, public policy outcomes are more legitimate if there was balanced input into the process; and two, a vibrant civil society is

important in its own right, as it can help build a common identity for a polity, solve problems and produce new ideas.

While government support of civil society groups is seen as largely positive, it can have unintended consequences. First, civil society groups, especially more confrontational groups, may be co-opted by their government funders, toning down their critique of government institutions or altering their positions on issues (McCarthy et al 1991). Second, government support of civil society can favor some segments of civil society over others, either purposefully driven by an agenda, or inadvertently.

Government funding of civil society organizations can also lead to resource dependence. The activity of civil society organizations requires the acquisition of money and labor, which in turn requires a certain level of organization and institutional capacity. This need for resources results in crucial interaction with actors external to the organization. Modeling the acquisition of the necessary resources is constructed in economic terms, such as the supply and demand of an NGO's activity, as well as rational cost-benefit analyses on the part of the organization in its decision to pursue various resources or engage in particular actions, and by the resource provider in its decision to allocate its resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) posit that not only must such social actors mobilize resources, but these actors become dependent on the resources, and transitively, on the source of those resources, be it a body of private donors or the government via grants or contracts (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Anheier, Toepler and Sokolowski 1997).

From this dependence on the institutions of governance as the source of the organization's funds other negative consequences emerge. Organizations dependent on

governmental funding have stronger orientations toward the state and its activities than their counterparts that are mainly privately funded; the latter NGOs seem to have a stronger orientation to the fluctuations of the market (Anheier, Toepler and Sokolowski 1997). In addition, government funding can lead to a loss of autonomy, cooptation, mission drift or even complete goal displacement, a reduction in privately-derived income, restructuring and bureaucratization, and diminishing potential for advocacy (Brudney and Gazley 2007; Chaves, Stephens, and Galaskiewicz 2004; Brooks 2000; Froelich 1999). A civil society actor can have its advocacy power diminished through a financial relationship with government institutions in many ways: from fear of punishment, from closer monitoring and more rigorous regulation to the revocation of funds; a reflexive lightening of criticism toward the generous patron; and the organizational and managerial restructuring required to administer government funds, resulting in less organizational capacity directed toward advocacy (Chaves, Stephens, and Galaskiewicz 2004).

Despite the potential negative impacts on civil society actors from receiving government funding, these actors have a strong interest in acquiring public funds and continuing to receive them in order to overcome persistent financial uncertainties, since there is less volatility in government funding than with private donations (Froelich 1999). The government, in turn, has a substantial interest in acquiring the expertise offered by the civil society organization (Brudney and Gazley 2007). Despite the mutuality of interest, the government retains the upper hand in this inherently uneven relationship (Brown and Troutt 2004). As funder, the government preserves its primacy as the resource it holds is more critical to the survival of the NGO than the NGO's information is to the government. Thus, over the duration of the

dependent relationship, the government's ability to press for its preferences is enhanced and the ability of the NGO to resist diminishes (Ibid.). Considering the motivations for governing institutions to financially support civil society and the varied possible consequences of this support, it becomes critical to investigate which groups are receiving funding from the European Union, at what levels and why.

Explaining European Commission support of European Civil Society

The European Commission, as any democratic government, as mentioned above has a two-fold incentive to support European Civil Society: input legitimacy in the policy making process, and the creation of a vibrant polity or social sphere for social cohesion and policy entrepreneurship. In fact, this desire might be even more acute in the Commission which has had to continually fight for legitimacy in the face of member state governments. Many scholars have noted the Commission's outreach to civil society in an effort to enhance its legitimacy, and, like other democratic governments, so too can its efforts be more balanced or more biased.

In January of 2000, the European Commission released a discussion paper entitled "The Commission and Nongovernmental Organizations: Building a Stronger Partnership," outlining the EU's objectives for working with NGOs: fostering participatory democracy, representing the views of groups of citizens to the EU, contributing to policy making and project management, and contributing to European integration (Commission 2000). Apart from the concerns of contributions to policy making and project management, which are common roles assumed by interest groups in most liberal democratic systems, it is quite clear from these objectives that the EU's goals for interaction with the civil society sector are focused on closing the 'democratic

deficit.’ As would-be agents of democratization and integration, the Commission hopes that NGOs can construct a transnational civil society, or European social sphere, and in so doing, enhance the legitimacy and saliency of the EU with the European public, as is evidenced by the following: “by encouraging national NGOs to work together to achieve common goals, the European NGO networks are making a vital contribution to the formation of a ‘European public opinion’ usually seen as a pre-requisite to the establishment of a true European political entity” (Commission 2000). Similarly, the White Paper on European Communication acknowledges that, while the EU has grown and drastically expanded its focus over the past decade and a half, its practices of communication and transparency have not kept pace, leaving the citizenry of Europe behind. Within the document, the Commission notes that “civil society organizations...have a very important role to play in raising public awareness of European issues and policy debates, and in encouraging people to take an active part in those debates” and that role “could be strengthened through targeted cooperation projects” (Commission 2002).

As the Commission strives to bring about this pan-European public space, what segments of European Civil Society are finding support and which are not? What drives who the Commission funds? Based on the Commission’s public positions and scholarly interpretations of the Commission’s motivations, we propose four overarching hypotheses which we will test through a number of different analyses on two datasets:

H1: The Commission will strive for a balanced European Civil Society across member states, so groups from a given member state should be no more likely to receive funding than groups from any other member state.

H2: The Commission, aware of the current imbalance among civil society in the new member states versus the old member states, may be trying to right that imbalance in which case, we

hypothesize, alternatively that the Commission is likely to support the groups from the member states that acceded in 2004 at a higher level.

H3: Since the Commission is invested in the supranational project it should be more likely to support groups that advocate EU-integration, cultural exchange and European citizenship and civic education, with higher levels of funding.

H4: Since the Commission is invested in the supranational project it should support groups organized at the EU-level more than groups at other levels of organization (International, national and sub-national).

We describe the data collection and coding process first and then turn to the three part analysis aimed at testing these hypotheses.

Data Collection

As mentioned, while the aims of the Transparency Initiative are laudable, implementation remains weak. The three key components of Commission's 2006 Green Paper on the European Transparency Initiative all relate directly to civil society, with action to be directed toward the following: a more structured framework for interest representation, receiving outside feedback on minimum standards for consultation, and the disclosure of beneficiaries of EU funds in order to be "accountable to the taxpayer" (Commission 2006). The focus for disclosure was placed on larger budgetary items of "shared management" with the member states, such as the Common Agricultural Policy and structural and cohesion funds. These budgetary items account for 75.7% of the EU budget; leaving a quarter of the EU budget to be explicitly administered by the Commission (Ibid).

Regardless of the focus, the Commission has attempted to provide accessible and consolidated data on the funding of independent civil society actors that occupy the Commission's core of the budget. These attempts are evident on the internet with the

availability of funding data provided through the Europa website, however they remain far from ideal. In the Commission's portion of the website, there is a section devoted to funding opportunities including both grants and contracts. Here a page has been established to provide a listing of the beneficiaries of grants from the European Union. This list is roughly divided by Directorate-General and includes programs of structural and shared management funding (such as CAP) as well as discretionary funds directly administered by Commission DGs or Agencies. Within each DG or subject heading, the funding is broken down further by program. Here further navigation is necessary to arrive at program-year data, where internal, and sometimes preliminary, documents are presented in Adobe's Portable Document Format.

While access to internal documents on grant beneficiaries for each individual program-year is a step toward transparency, much is left to be desired with the current state of data accessibility. Some documents are unclear whether it contains proposals for funding or the list of projects or groups which were actually funded. Frequently along the path from the Commission's section on grant beneficiaries to the individual agency or DG and then to the program and program year, links are broken with the data that was listed higher in the hierarchy no longer available. Other documents could be located through the agencies' online archives, rather than where the Commission's main transparency page listed the document. Beyond difficulties in locating the information, there has been little to no effort at the consolidation of disparate program-year documents into compilations for the program over time or for annual funding across programs. In all, the state of the "transparency" is such that it takes researchers a considerable amount of time to locate relevant data, suggesting it is less-than-accessible for the broader citizenry.

We constructed two original datasets which we draw on here to investigate who is being funded and why. First, is a database of nearly 700 civil society organizations active in the EU collected from the European Commission's directory of voluntarily registered European-level civil society groups - Consultation, the European Commission and Civil Society (CONECCS) in 2002. The data set includes information on group type, membership size and spread across the European states, organizational character, creation date, founding state, policy area concentrations, Commission funding, positions on consultation committees, and relations with Commission Directorates-General (DGs). Further, from this information the type of group was coded from self reported organizational objectives, the level at which the group is organized², as well as which organizations maintain a Brussels office. To this was added the variables of if the organization received funding from the EU and the amount of funding each year from 2003-2007, gathered from the documents released by the Commission on civil society group funding.

Second, is a Beneficiaries Database of all organizations found to be funded by the Commission during the 2003-2007 time period, and including information on their annual funding, their level of organization, the type of organization and the member state in which they are based. As described above, the Commission provided an online central listing of DG and Agency programs which distribute grant money to a variety of organizations, businesses and individuals. This base listing was used as the starting point for retrieving funding information for beneficiaries of interest, namely European civil society groups within a five year time frame, 2003-2007. In limiting the search to civil society groups, we removed from the universe of cases individuals receiving grants (whether for cultural programs or through CAP) as

² International – members of multiple countries including those outside the EU, supranational – members of EU member states, National - members within one state, and Sub-national – members with-in a sub-national unit.

well as businesses and corporations under contractual relations with the Commission. Similarly, the five year time frame allows for comparison and integration with the latest CONECCS database, compiled in 2002, and compensates for partial and spotty data from the current year as well as earlier years.

The central list provided by the Commission was not exhaustive and there were some documents that were listed but could not be located. To compensate for this, the web pages for the various DGs and Agencies listed on the central list, or by other already found funding documents, were explored to find documentation on grant beneficiaries. As stated above, the funding documents (all but one found in this search) provided were for a particular program in a given year. Once a document was found for a program-year, the program as well as the DG and Agency's websites were scoured to find complementary documents. The search gathered forty separate funding documents, thirty-nine of which were for individual program-years within 2003-2007 and one compilation of various social actors funded from 2004-2006³.

The incomplete nature of the 2004-2006 report on grant beneficiaries points to a critical concession we must make: the set of data collected likely is incomplete. While we made considerable efforts to find all of the relevant information that has been made publicly available by the European Commission, the instances of broken links and the significant

³ Two separate sets of funding documentation were found for the European Youth Programme, now Youth in Action, from 2004-2006 with a single document for 2003 and 2007. There is a coherent set of environmental group funding from 2003-2007, with a set of supplementary documents for 2004-2007. Two sets of documents cover non-governmental organizations as well as associations and federations funded from 2003-2006. Another set covers union funding from 2003-2006. Only appearing in 2005 and 2006 are a sequence of paired documents: one for groups "operating within the field of civil society", another for democracy promotion and "active European citizenship", and another pair for consumer policy. In 2007 there were two separate program funding documents for groups working in civil society or promoting citizen participation. Finally, the compiled document from 2004-2006 contained over five hundred entries and is a report from the Commission to the Budgetary Authority on the beneficiaries of grants. It states quite clearly that it is not exhaustive, and clearly it is not as none of the data it provides is duplicated by any of the other funding documents identified.

difficulty to locate some of the documents included implies that some may have been missed. This possibility has been minimized by ensuring that documents are paired or placed into sets across years for the same funding program and all instances of each program have been sought, either to be found or conclusively not found. The other possibility remains that there are a number of other programs which fund civil society groups that have not been released by the Commission. Considering that over 1000 unique groups were identified in the forty funding documents, across a variety of programs and themes from the most centrally important DGs and Agencies to the EU's interaction with civil society (DG Environment and DG Education and Culture, and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) it does not seem likely that there is a large amount of missing data. However, were there to be a considerable amount of data that has not yet become available, with the variety of civil society groups and programs already identified, there is no reason to believe the information provided by additional cases would be systematically different from that which can be drawn from the large and diverse sample we have compiled.

Once these forty documents were gathered and it was ensured that there were no further documents available (as of August 2008) for the given programs included within the 2003-2007 period, they were compiled into a single database. Multiple entries of the same beneficiary were combined both across programs and time, as were multiple lines of funding within the same year. Thus, the final database contained over 1000 unique grant beneficiaries, some receiving funding for all five years with multiple sources of funding or multiple funding lines, while others only received a single funding line for a single year. Provided in most of the funding documents, along with the name of the beneficiary and the grant amount for a given

year, was either the address of the beneficiary's headquarters or its home member state, or both. Each beneficiary was coded with a dichotomous variable as to whether or not it appears in 2002 CONECCS database. Google searches were then used to find the websites of each of the groups and from their mission statements and "about us" pages the organizational type and the level of organization was coded⁴. In the coding process, two group types were allowed for each beneficiary in order to best capture the group's self-identified goals and purpose. Forty different group types were identified, as indicated in the appendix (see Appendix A). For the organizational-level variable, a four-point range was established, from sub-national groups, to national groups, to EU-level groups, to international groups of a global scale.

In sum, we have two databases: one of those civil society organizations that registered with the Commission and one of all civil society organizations funded by the Commission.

Analysis

I. To Fund or Not to Fund – Commission support for the groups in its registry

In order to assess the factors behind what leads the Commission to fund some civil society groups over others, a database is required that provides an accepted universe of groups that have some ongoing relationship with the Commission, but in which some groups are funded and others are not. The compiled funding database cannot be used for such an analysis as all groups in it, by definition, have received some amount of funding from the Commission in the

⁴ While a number of groups provided information in English, many did not. Groups with websites in major western and central European languages were translated into English using Google's machine translation matrix. A small number of groups from eastern Europe could not be coded on the group type and organizational level variables due to the inability to acquire the necessary information in English.

2003-2007 period. Thus, an alternative database is necessary to investigate probabilistic claims as to what leads the Commission to fund certain groups and not fund others.

Most scholars investigating the interaction of civil society with the European Union have looked to the CONECCS database as a suitable dataset providing the known universe of cases, specifically civil society (interest) groups that have working relationship with the European Commission (Wessels 2000; Mahoney 2004; Berkhout & Lowery 2007). In addition to the information directly provided by the registration submissions, we also coded group type and level of organization from their web pages, and Consultative Committee participation from another Commission database within the CONECCS framework. Beginning with this enhanced CONECCS database as the assumed universe of cases, we began to merge the information from the database of over 1000 funded civil society actors to the database of 685 CONECCS-registered groups. It became immediately apparent, however, that these two datasets were much less complementary than anticipated.

As shown in Table 1, of the 685 groups from the CONECCS database, only sixty-nine of them had funding information from the newly gathered funding data, or ten percent.

[Table 1 about here]

Within the CONECCS registry, an entry allowed groups to indicate relative percentages of the sources of their funds. One of the possible sources indicated was the European Commission. Of the 685 groups in the database, sixty-four claim that at least a portion of their funds come from the Commission. Of the sixty-nine groups for which funding data was found, only twenty-six also claimed this funding in the database, leaving forty-three groups receiving funding without indicating it in the CONECCS database. Similarly, for thirty-eight groups which claimed

funding in the registry, no funding data was found. This demonstrates again the inherent difficulties in working with this type of data: not all data is available and there are inconsistencies in group self-identification in registry programs such as CONECCS. Despite the small number of groups within the CONECCS database that received funding, much can be learned through an analysis of the factors behind whether the a group was funded within the five year period. To this end we run a Logit model below testing our four core hypotheses, while also controlling for additional factors that likely play a role in whether or not a group receives Commission funding.

The Commission could, if honest in its rhetoric of wanting to promote civil society participation to ameliorate the democratic deficit, act to change the incentives facing diffuse groups promoting European civic interests by offering them funding. From this reasoning we can posit a hypothesis analogous to hypothesis H3 above: *civil society groups, specific EU integration groups, and youth, student and culture groups should be more likely to be funded than groups that do not have these characteristic foci*. This can be tested by utilizing the participant type coded in our CONECCS database and creating a dichotomous variable where a group is within the “target type” if it is a citizen group promoting European civic-mindedness or civic engagement, a specific EU integration group, or a youth/student/culture group. Other groups, such as unions, think tanks, religious groups, professional or trade organizations, partisan groups, et cetera, are then coded as not being of the target type.

[Table 2 about here]

Taking a look at those organizations which did receive funding, broken down by actor type in Table 2, we see cursory support for hypothesis H3 – while business interests by far

dominate the database, it was citizen interests that dominate the sub-group which received Commission support. The findings also show the Commission's funding pattern does demonstrate, at least in frequency, an effort to address the need to support diffuse interests as opposed to providing additional funding to business, institutional or governmental interests. We test this hypothesis more rigorously below, controlling for other factors in the multivariate Logit.

Another set of hypotheses emerge if we consider other possible routes by which the Commission could promote a more balanced European civil society. There are large differences between older member states and those added in the most recent rounds of accession in 2004-2007, the Commission could seek two alternative courses of action in engaging civil society across the whole of the EU. First, as stated above in hypothesis H1, the Commission could seek parity across the member states, in which case *groups representing members of the EU before 2004 and those after should have no difference in the likelihood of being funded*. Alternatively, the Commission could seek to rectify inequalities between "old" and "new" Europe by offering more funding to the groups representing newly acceded member states (H2): *groups representing countries acceded in 2004-2007 will be more likely to be funded*. To most appropriately gauge who these civil society groups represent, two variables were created: the number of "old" pre-2004 accession countries that were included in the group's membership, and the number of "new" post-2004 accession countries that were included in the group's membership.

From a more material resource-based perspective, one must take into account the organizational capacity necessary for interaction with European supranational institutions,

preparation of grant applications and management of funding from a governmental source. Thus, it can be hypothesized that *civil society organizations with more capacity are also more likely to have the ability to propose projects and manage governmental funding, resulting in a greater likelihood of being funded.* Groups require some level of capacity to remain in existence for an extended period of time, so a proxy measure for organizational capacity is the age of the group; older organizations will have set practices, established activities, and connections allowing them the capacity to seek out Commission funding. Additionally, groups with resources may also be better positioned to seek and gain Commission financing. Well-resourced interests are more likely to maintain an office in Brussels since it is a costly endeavor to rent space in the European capital and hire a full-time staff to represent interests at the supranational level; the presence or absence of a Brussels office will be used as a proxy for resources.

Bouwen's (2002) transaction model suggests access is provided to those groups possessing critical access goods including expert information and citizen preferences. Extending this further, the Commission, requiring such information from these groups, seeks to provide incentives to the groups in order to encourage their participation. One such incentive is access itself and the other is funding. Positing access as a corollary of the possession of access goods, groups with higher levels of access possess a greater supply of critically-desired access goods. In order to retain these goods, the Commission may further offer incentives to the actor through funding. *The higher the number of Consultative Committees on which the group has served, the more likely it is to be funded.*

[Table 3 about here]

The above hypotheses are tested through a logistical regression, presented in Table 3, examining the likelihood of whether or not a group received funding from 2003-2007. Two models were estimated: Model A isolates the groups hypothesized as more likely to receive funding as part of the “Target Group Type”, including civil society groups, groups concerned with EU integration, as well as youth, student and culture groups. Model B breaks the groups into six categories (five direct categories and an ‘other’ grouping), delineated above in Table 3 with these hypothesized groups falling between two of the more specific categories.

Model A accounts for about a quarter of the variation in the dependent variable, whether or not a group received funding in the five year period 2003-2007, and demonstrates a few clear patterns in funding behavior. First, a group is significantly more likely to receive funding if they are within the target group – those groups promoting engagement in the supranational project and promoting integration in a variety of ways. The coefficient on the variable of “target group” is the largest in Model A and remains second largest when compared to Model B, marking its substantive significance. Also demonstrated, in support of hypothesis H2 posited above, the higher the number of new CEE member states involved in a group, the more likely that group is to receive funding. Such is not the case for countries that were members before the 2004 round of accession. This could be indicative of Commission efforts to equalize civil society across Europe as a whole and bring Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe to parity with the West and North. Surprisingly, maintaining a Brussels office, a measure of resources, is not statistically significant.

The indicator of “access goods,” the number of Consultative Committees in which a group participates, significantly increased the likelihood of receiving funding; as the number of

committees in which a group is active increases, so too does the likelihood of receiving funding. Since we have only cross-sectional data it is difficult to parse out the causation here. It may be that groups more familiar with working with the Commission are more predisposed to seek funding and are better equipped to do so and be successful. However, Commission funding may allow them to increase their capacity, research, and access goods, thus finding better access to the Commission through the Consultative Committee system. There is likely a positive feedback process at play. The measure of organizational capacity, the age of the organization, is significant as well, demonstrating that long-standing groups are more likely to be funded than newly started groups.

Turning to the Model B, the findings of the first model are corroborated while making a more precise distinction among group types. Again, groups with members from many new member states are shown to be more likely to receive funding than groups with a high number of participation by old member states. The number of Consultative Committees in which a group participates, as well as the group's age, remain significant positive predictors of receiving Commission funding. Considering both Models A and B, support for hypothesis H2 is demonstrated, that the Commission is attempting to right an imbalance and supporting new member states' civil society over that of the established members; these models also indicate that those groups with greater organizational capacity (older groups) and those shown to possess access goods desirable to the Commission (participation in many consultative committees) are more likely to receive funding, corroborating those hypotheses.

Turning to group type, while less direct than in Model A, a disposition away from specific interests is demonstrated. Most definitively, with the largest coefficient in the models,

the Commission is *less* likely to fund business interests as opposed to other group types. Other specific interests, such as governmental or institutional, also have negative coefficients though the strength of this relationship fails tests of statistical significance. The sets of diffuse interests of citizen and political groups both have positive coefficients while failing tests of significance. Despite these problems of statistical insignificance, looking at Models A and B simultaneously demonstrates the overall the relationship between group type and funding. The hypothesized target groups (citizen, EU integration, youth and culture) which represent diffuse interests promoting a European civil society and advancing the supranational project are more likely to be supported by the Commission. These groups are more likely to be funded than business interests. This marks a deliberate distinction by the Commission and clearly demonstrates its funding priorities for the advancement of the EU by way of civil society.

In sum, this analysis then shows support for the core hypothesis H3 – the Commission’s funding practices do reflect its stated support for groups that advocate EU-integration, cultural exchange and citizenship and civic education. We also see support for hypothesis H2 – the Commission is more likely to fund groups that are representing Central and Eastern European interests as well as Western European interests. The other significant take away from this analysis is that being a Brussels insider, knowing how to navigate the complex institutional landscape, and having the capacity to do so are strong predictors of receiving financial support from the European Commission.

We must take these findings however as a first step in understanding the Commission’s funding decisions since they are based on the funding of only 69 groups out of the 685 groups in the CONECCS database. If so few of the groups we as interest group scholars think of as the

core of EU civil society are being funded – who *is* being funded? It is this question that we turn to next.

II. If Not Brussels-Insiders than Who? – The beneficiaries of the Commission’s civil society support

From the previous analysis we know that the sampling frames we have been using fail to cover a large number of the groups that the Commission sees as critical aspects of European civil society. The groups that are included in the common sampling frames are not the organizations that are receiving financial support. As discussed in the theory section, we expect from previous literature and the Commission’s stated goals that we will see more support for: groups from newer member states with weak civil society (H2); groups that promote EU integration, democracy promotion, civic education, youth, education and cultural exchange, all of which foster a stronger European civil society (H3); and groups organized at the EU-level (H4).

As described in the data collection section we compiled all the civil society group funding documents available from the European Commission site. Since our focus is on the Commission’s support of European Civil Society we do not include information on EU funding of groups outside of Europe (for example through the European Neighborhood Policy or the Euro-Med Partnership). The resulting database includes information on the European Union’s financial support of 1,146 European civil society organizations over a five year period from 2003 to 2007. We have data on the grant amounts these groups received, what years they received them, the member state in which they are based, and from internet searches of the organizational web pages, information on their organizational level and their area of activity or

group type⁵. Finally, through cross-referencing with the database described in the first section of this paper, we know if these groups appeared in the Commission's voluntary civil society CONECCS database in 2002.

In addition to the yearly grant amounts per group, we constructed an average funding variable representing the average funding the group received annually⁶, a variable noting how many years during the 2003-07 period they received funding, and a total funding variable registering the total amount of Euros received by the group over the entire 5 year period.

The mean average funding was €79,245 with a standard deviation of €213,960, with a minimum of €612 and a maximum of €5,007,667. The total funding variable has a mean of €172,176 and a standard deviation of €625,489 registering a maximum of €15,023,000 – to the European University Institute, the next largest recipient was the European Youth Forum at just over 5 million Euros. The majority, 61.3%, of the groups received funding just one year during the 5 year time period, while 18.6% received funding twice, 12% for 3 years, 5% for 4 years and only 37 groups out of 1,146 (or 3%) received grants every year.

In this database of 1,146 European civil society organizations which received funding from the European Commission only 68 of them registered in the Commission's voluntary civil society registry CONECCS or 5.93 percent. That is, 94% of these organizations either did not feel they were part of the EU civil society the Commission was trying to track with their voluntary registry, or they did not know about the registry. Of those 68 organizations that did register, their demographics do not look terribly different from the general population of

⁵ We were unable to find web pages for 88 organization in the sample of 1,146 groups.

⁶ Calculated as the average of the amounts for the years they did receive a grant, so if they received grants in three of the five years it is the total amount received divided by three.

groups receiving funding – i.e. it was not just the pro-EU groups or few professional associations registering with the Commission. However, this is evidence that the sampling frames traditionally used for interest group research are substantially constrained. In short, looking at just the CONECCS database or other Brussels-based registries severely restricts our view of the European Civil Society universe. Taking the database presented here of EU civil society groups receiving funding as a broader sampling frame, we see a greater number of youth groups (26.73% compared to 4% in CONECCS), a greater number of religious groups (10.34% compared to the 2.2% in CONECCS), more think tanks, more pro-EU-integration groups and a much wider array of civil society groups representing a range of interests including women, consumers, human rights, sport, voluntary organizations and many others⁷. A detailed discussion of just what types of groups are receiving funding will be discussed next, but it is important to note here what was suspected before – that previous sampling frames were dominated by professional and industry aspects of European Civil Society, which many scholars argue do not even constitute civil society (see Kohler-Koch and Quittkat 2008), and did not cover well the more ‘civil’ side of European Civil Society.

[Table 4 about Here]

Table 4 presents the breakdown of groups receiving support from the EU by group type. Many groups, 59.26% in fact, had complex identities that involved not just one type of activity or interest but two, such as Youth and Environment Europe (YEE). Therefore we coded both a primary type and a secondary type of each group. Youth groups make up the largest category with 20.42% of the groups receiving support from the EU being youth or student based. Cultural

⁷ The CONECCS comparisons come from Mahoney 2004, Table 3, p. 451

organizations including music, art, and language, comprise the second largest category at 16.3% and civic organizations promoting citizenship, democracy and civic education register at 8% of the groups receiving support. Institutions including educational institutions, universities and hospitals also receive a substantial segment of support at 11%. Various advocacy groups or cause groups comprise nearly a quarter of the groups receiving support (22%) including women's groups, consumer groups, human rights groups, environmental groups, EU-integration groups and other types of advocacy groups fighting for small specific causes.

Within the environmental domain the biggest beneficiary by far, and not surprisingly, was the European Environmental Bureau receiving €831,008 annually on average, and receiving funding every year for all 5 years. The next biggest beneficiaries were World Wildlife Fund European Policy Office and Friends of the Earth Europe, who also received annual support.

When we look at the percentage of groups receiving grants at each level of organization, reported in Table 5, the Commission clearly seems to be promoting civil society development below the supranational level and not favoring EU-level organizations as hypothesized and as found in the first analysis of the CONECCS database. While 26% of the groups receiving support are organized at the EU level and 67%, of groups receiving funding are at the national or sub-national level.

[Table 5 about Here]

However, when we look at actual levels of funding aggregated by organization level, whether we use the average annual funding variable or the total funding variable, we see massive support for EU-level organizations. Organizations organized at the EU-level received aggregated annual average funding of €40,997,000 and €119,000,000 aggregated total funding. National

and sub-national organization on the other hand combined only received an aggregated annual funding amount of €39,256,468 and an aggregated total funding of €58,300,000 over the 5 year period. EU-level organizations therefore are receiving the large majority of the Commission's support.

While the Commission is making an effort to support European civil society at the national level, that support does not appear to be well balanced equally across all EU member states nor slightly unbalanced favoring the Central and Eastern European member states which many scholars would argue are in greater need of support in building up a healthy civil society.

[Table 6 about Here]

Whether we look at the percentage of groups hailing from the different member states or the amount of average or total funding they are receiving, as seen in Table 6, it is 'old member states' that are receiving the most Commission support. Despite the Commission's focus on societal cohesion and the need to bring the CEE up to the level of the older 15 member states, five old member states command more than half of the grants received (59%) and the preponderance of total funds (73%). Looking at the member states that received the largest numbers of grants (regardless of amount) we find it is Germany, Belgium, France, Italy and Spain. If we look at total funding levels it is Belgium registering as the biggest recipient of funds (€55,600,000) followed by Italy, Germany, France and the Netherlands.

Two facts must be taken into consideration before one draws the conclusion that the Commission's rhetorical support for social cohesion is not exhibited in its funding patterns. First, Belgium registers as a major beneficiary in every measure but EU-level organizations, which we know from Table 5 are receiving considerable support, are often headquartered in Belgium. We

could correct for this fact by dropping Belgium-based organizations or EU-level organized groups from the analysis, however this would mask the fact that Belgium-based civil society groups are receiving a great deal of support from the Commission. Second, the Commission can only fund the proposals submitted to it; if civil society is so weak in some countries that the organizations do not have the resources to even develop a proposal, or a proposal that is competitive enough against older, better-resourced, Western-based organizations this could account for the substantial bias we see. The fact remains however that the bulk of the Commission's support, in numbers of grants and amount of financial support continue to go to the 'old 15.'

[Figure 1A and 1B here]

Figure 1 shows this in stark clarity with bar charts reporting the aggregate number of grants and amount of grants by member states in Central and Eastern Europe and those in the West.

Thus, from this series of bivariate analyses, we see support for hypothesis H3 as we did in the analysis of the CONECCS database – the Commission's rhetoric is supporting pan-European civil society, exchange, education, and civic engagement is reflected in its funding practices. We also see strong support for hypothesis H4 – the Commission is indeed favoring the pan-EU groups to national and sub-national groups. We do not see support however for H1 or H2, the Commission is neither funding groups from all member states equally nor is it preferentially funding the CEE countries, instead, somewhat surprisingly, it is favoring groups from the older member states. This finding differs from that in the first analysis which found a statistically significant and positive result for organizations with greater numbers of CEE members in their organization. The difference is perhaps in the slightly different variables. In

the first analysis, the organization could be based anywhere, including the West, and have membership from the CEE. Thus, it might have had the capacity and connections to apply, and received an additional boost if it was broadly representative by having membership from the new member states. In this second analysis, we do not have information on the membership diversity of the funded groups, but we do have information on their head quarters, and we find those groups to be based in Central and Eastern Europe to be at a disadvantage when it comes to receiving funds from the Commission.

III. Explaining the level of civil society group funding

We see clear relationships between organizational type, nationality, and organizational level and the levels of funding European civil society groups receive, but which is more important in understanding the Commission's support of a group when we control for all other factors? We ran a multivariate OLS regression predicting the level of funding on the total funding variable across the five years, by a series of dichotomous categories noting: organizational level, whether the group was based in one of the old 15 member states or the new 12, whether the group was in the CONECCS database as an indicator of Commission access, and group type through a series of dichotomous variables collapsing the wider range of groups types found in Appendix A down to 14 categories, the results are reported in Table 7.

[Table 7 about Here]

As suggested in the bivariate analyses, the Commission shows stronger support for groups organized at the EU-level and the international level compared to sub-national groups which were left as the baseline. The Commission is also likely to provide more funding to groups that

registered in the CONECCS database, an indicator that these organizations are “insiders” and are adept at navigating the figurative corridors of the supranational institutions. Two organizational types register as statistically significant, institutions, which are dominated by educational institutions, and cultural groups, but the coefficient is negative suggesting that groups promoting cultural activities like music, dance, and art, are less likely to receive large amounts of funding than other types of organizations. This is a surprising result since, as a category, cultural groups receive a larger percentage of grants, but it seems that they are for smaller amounts of money.

[Table 8 about Here]

Lastly, the dichotomous variable indicating whether the group was a Western-based or CEE-based group is not significant, and including dichotomous variables for each member state also produces no statistically significant findings. The multivariate analysis suggests that while there are clear disparities in funding levels between Western-based and CEE-based groups, the effect washes out when controlling for other factors. Specifically, organizational level appears to be a major determinant of the Commission’s decision making. The previous bivariate analysis suggested this and the statistically significant findings on the EU-level variable in this regression provide further substantiation. Considering the cross-tabulation of whether the group was CEE or Western-based by the level of organization, reported in Table 8, we see a statistically significant relationship with a Chi-square statistics of 89.2104 (Prob = 0.000). Of the CEE-based groups the majority are national, which the Commission does not prioritize, of the Western-based groups the majority are EU-level, which the Commission has committed to supporting.

Conclusion

Combined, the three analyses paint a fairly coherent picture: The Commission's funding practices, when it comes to the level of organization and the type of group, is on message. It favors EU-level groups and groups that promote a European identity through pro-EU activities, EU integration promotion, democracy and civic engagement promotion and intercultural exchange and youth education and engagement.

Where the Commission strays from its message, and from expectations that follow from the literature, is in the area of social cohesion. The Commission is not funding civil society groups from all member states at the same rate or level, nor is it preferentially funding groups from the newer member states that suffer from weak civil society after decades of communism. Part of this is explained by the Commission's preference for pan-EU organized groups, which tend to base their operations in the West. However, the first analysis also clearly demonstrates the importance of organizational capacity, resources and insider know-how. The weak civil society groups of the CEE states may not know of the Commission's funding opportunities, and likely do not have the capacity yet to even develop proposals, let alone proposals that can be competitive against organizations that have been organized and applying for funding for years, possibly decades. If the Commission truly seeks to achieve its stated goal of social cohesion and a comparable quality of life, including the quality of political and participatory life, of all European citizens then it must consider alternative funding mechanisms for the groups from the new member states, or a seed funding program to build the capacity of those organizations so that they can compete on a level playing field and ultimately round out the voices contributing to European civil society.

Table 1. Percentage of Groups in CONECCS receiving Commission Funding

According to CONECCS Self-Reporting				
		<i>Funded</i>	<i>Not Funded</i>	
According to Commission Documents	<i>Funded</i>	3.8%	6.3%	10.1%
	<i>Not Funded</i>	5.5%	84.4%	89.9%
		9.3%	90.7%	100%

Table 2. Frequency of Funding by Group Type

	<i>Number in CONECCS</i>	<i>Number Funded</i>
Citizen	138	45
Business	463	7
Government	15	2
Institutions	26	3
Political	25	8
Other	18	4
	685	69

Table 3. Logistical Regression predicting whether or not a group received funding⁸

	<i>Model</i>	
	A	B
Number of "Old" (pre-2004) members	0.0060 (0.0327)	0.0433 (0.0346)
Number of "New" (post-2004) members	0.1572*** (0.0442)	0.0920* (0.0459)
Number of Consultative Committees	0.0588* (0.0248)	0.0648* (0.0293)
Brussels Office	-0.0199 (0.3170)	-0.0747 (0.3344)
Organizational Age	0.0164* (0.0066)	0.0219** (0.0071)
Target Group Type	2.2109*** (0.2952)	---
Business	---	-3.080*** (0.7151)
Citizen	---	0.4270 (0.6291)
Government	---	-0.5817 (1.0072)
Institution	---	-1.0590 (0.8904)
Political	---	0.3850 (0.7471)
<i>Constant</i>	<i>-4.0794***</i> <i>(0.4514)</i>	<i>-2.4669***</i> <i>(0.6921)</i>
N	669	669
Pseudo R-squared	0.2316	0.3381
Standard error in parentheses		
* Significant at 0.05; ** Significant at 0.01; *** Significant at 0.001		

⁸ Business interests include professional, trade and business associations, as well as corporations; Citizen groups include civic, ideological, religious, youth, student, and cultural groups as well as foundations and unions; Government groups include associations of governing bodies or specific governmental units; Institutions include hospitals, universities, think tanks and research institutes; Political groups include EU Integration Groups and Party affiliates

Table 4. Groups receiving funding by Organizational Type

Group Type	No.	Percent
Consumer	7	0.66
Women	16	1.71
Sport	16	1.77
Peace	20	2.35
Human Rights	33	3.96
Intercultural	32	4.26
Voluntary organizations	59	7.27
Pro-EU and EU integration groups	73	7.87
Humanitarian (aid, poverty, ..)	67	7.96
Environmental	86	8.32
Civic (citizenship, democracy promotion and education)	88	11.38
Cultural (music, arts, language)	187	19.82
Youth/ Student groups	234	26.73
General Social advocacy or other advocacy group not mentioned	96	10.19
Political party affiliated groups	10	1.4
Government (National gov. or associations of national or sub-national governments)	37	3.82
Union	51	5.15
Foundations, Trusts	59	8.5
Think Tank, Research Institute, or Research Network	77	9.04
Religious group affiliated group or denomination	77	10.34
Business (Professional, trade, lobbying firm, corporations, media and training and service providers)	109	13.88
Institution (Hospitals, Universities) or Association of institutions	129	14.33

*Note – Numbers do not add up to 1,058 (the total number of groups for which we have group type information) and percents do not add up to 100, since groups could register as more than one type of group (i.e. an Environmental youth group)

Table 5. Number of groups funded, average funding level and total funding over 5 year period by Organizational Level

	No.	Percent	Average Fund	Total Funding
International	66	6.24	6,786,294	15,900,000
EU-level	279	26.4	40,997,967	119,000,000
National	373	35.29	21,260,094	31,600,000
Sub-national	339	32.07	17,996,374	26,700,000
Total	1,057	100		

Table 6. By Member State the number and percent of groups funded and the average and total amounts of funding received.

Member State	Number of Groups	Percent of Groups	Member State	Aggregate Average Funding	Aggregate Total Funding
Luxembourg	6	0.52	Malta	306,638	317,384
Cyprus	7	0.61	Cyprus	297,238	322,727
Slovakia	8	0.7	Estonia	270,572	340,926
Romania	9	0.79	Luxembourg	386,895	398,478
Ireland	10	0.87	Lithuania	439,404	567,856
Lithuania	10	0.87	Finland	436,517	587,730
Malta	10	0.87	Slovenia	507,216	651,842
Estonia	11	0.96	Slovakia	658,776	658,776
Finland	13	1.14	Romania	649,454	664,021
Slovenia	13	1.14	Latvia	643,688	955,675
Latvia	14	1.22	Bulgaria	790,194	1,220,770
Bulgaria	15	1.31	Ireland	644,462	1,308,520
Sweden	19	1.66	Portugal	896,383	1,405,661
Denmark	22	1.92	Hungary	1,428,503	2,320,906
Greece	23	2.01	Greece	1,168,360	2,470,607
Portugal	25	2.19	Sweden	1,245,183	2,826,219
Czech Rep.	29	2.54	Spain	2,792,764	3,812,048
Austria	32	2.8	Czech Rep.	2,245,424	4,207,131
Hungary	34	2.97	Poland	2,506,210	4,834,561
Poland	41	3.59	Denmark	2,119,097	5,110,499
UK	55	4.81	Austria	2,551,775	5,598,110
Netherlands	61	5.34	UK	6,601,527	11,400,000
Spain	71	6.21	* Netherlands	5,552,670	13,400,000
Italy	134	11.72	* France	10,346,262	22,300,000
France	139	12.16	* Germany	13,612,220	24,700,000
Belgium	154	13.47	* Italy	12,786,548	29,100,000
Germany	178	15.57	* Belgium	18,685,729	55,600,000
Total	1,143	100	Total	90,569,708	197,080,447

Figure 1. Differential levels of support for groups based in the Western 15 member states and the newer 12 member states of Central and Eastern Europe.

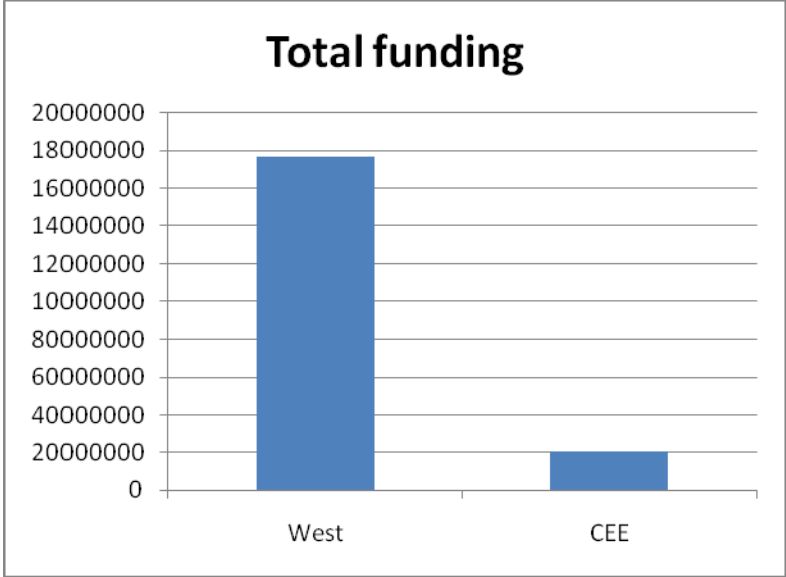
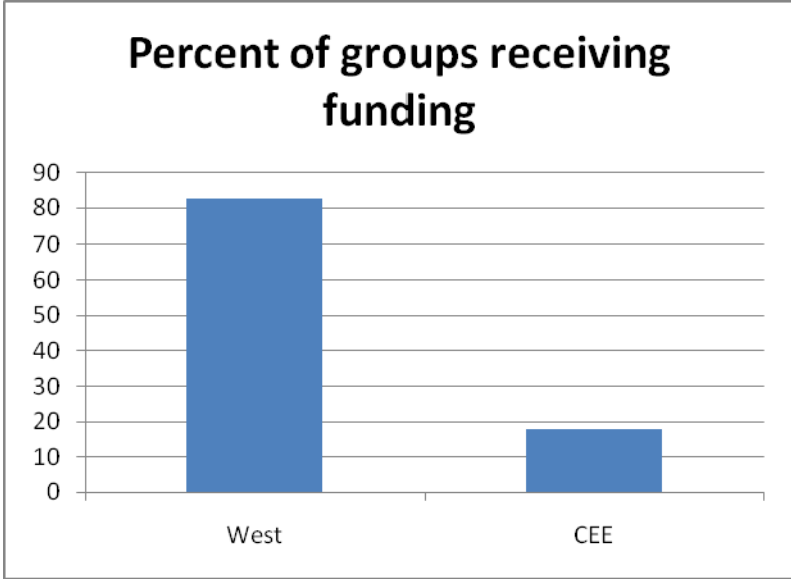


Table 7. OLS Regression predicting level of funding of civil society organizations

	Coef.	Std. Err.	P>t	
International	181333	85809	0.035	**
EU-level	308301	51763	0.000	***
National	32856	46908	0.484	
Western	42550	49385	0.389	
CONCCS	307898	81583	0.000	***
Types				
Pro-EU	41096	72923	0.573	
Civic	-58885	70720	0.405	
Cultural	-88109	52885	0.096	*
Youth	-64765	50542	0.200	
Institution	155062	50454	0.002	**
Intercultural	-21941	111917	0.845	
Advocacy	55572	56698	0.327	
Humanitarian	-79119	80824	0.328	
Voluntary	-17510	86075	0.839	
Sport	-35754	154931	0.818	
Religious	-95796	74639	0.200	
Union	-13852	96803	0.886	
Business	-43270	65434	0.509	
Government	-34602	106046	0.744	
Constant	28729	58626	0.624	
N= 1146		F(19, 1126) = 5.86		
Adj-R-squ=.0749		Prob > F = .0000		

*Note: sub-national organizations are left as the baseline; * Significant at 0.1; ** Significant at 0.05; *** Significant at 0.001

Table 8. Cross-tabulation of base of operations by level of organization (percents).

	CEE	West	Total
International	1.73	7.13	6.24
EU-level	8.09	29.98	26.4
National	65.32	29.41	35.29
Sub-National	24.86	33.48	32.07
Total	173	884	1,057

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Appendix A – Group Types

1. Environmental
2. Women
3. Human Rights, civil rights, minority rights – advocacy
4. Cultural (music, arts, language, heritage, history)
5. Humanitarian (aid, poverty, development, minorities)
6. Voluntary
7. Sport
8. General Social advocacy
9. Pro-EU group
10. Other specific advocacy (mainly specific diseases or disabilities)
11. Civic (citizenship, democracy promotion and education, civil society promotion)
12. Consumer
13. Media
14. Training providers
15. Service provider
16. Peace (conflict resolution, world peace, etc)
17. Intercultural (exchanges, discussions)
18. Foundations, Trusts
19. Religious group affiliated group or denomination
20. Union
21. Professional Association (members individual professionals)
22. Trade Association (members corporations or businesses)
23. Business Association (such as the Eurochambres; business groups)
24. Consultancy Association
25. Specific EU Integration groups

26. Political party affiliated groups
27. Youth/ Student groups
28. Corporation
29. Multinational Corporation
30. Think Tank, Research Institute, or Research Network
31. Institution (Hospitals, Universities)
32. Association of institutions (Hospitals, Universities)
33. Association of Associations
34. National member state government
35. Association of member state governments
36. Association of member state regions or other governmental units
37. National member and/or non-member state government
38. Association of member and/or non-member state governments
39. Association of member and/or non-member state regions or other
40. Subnational government (region or city)

Appendix B - Data Sources (Broader websites from which funding .PDFs were obtained)

Consumer Affairs - Tenders and Grants - Approved Projects

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/tenders/information/grants/approved_en.htm

EACEA - Citizenship – Compendia - Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/compendia/index_en.htm

Environment – Funding – Funding Opportunities - Grants

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/funding/grants_en.htm

Environment - Funding - Financial support for European environmental organizations

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/funding/finansup_arch.htm

European Commission - Grants of the European Union - Beneficiaries of the Grants

http://ec.europa.eu/grants/beneficiaries_en.htm

EUROPA - Europe for citizens programme 2007-2013 – Archives

http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/archive/citizen_en.html

Citizenship - Current EU Programme – Program Active European Citizenship

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/programmes2004_2006.htm

YOUTH - Past Projects - Programme 2000-2006

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/projects/list/2000_2006_en.htm

Youth - Call for Proposals - Action 4.1

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/youth/calls2008/action41/index_en.htm