

# When politics makes strange bedfellows

*Why do NGOs and business interests coalesce in EU legislative politics?*

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**Abstract.** Much interest group literature uses organization types, often the distinction between business and non-business interests, as key categories and often expects these categories to correspond with key policy conflicts. Being an NGO or a business interest then affects mobilization patterns, strategies and influence. This paper takes a somewhat different perspective and analyzes when and why business interests and NGOs are part of the same lobbying coalition. To answer this question we emphasize three explanatory factors: the logic of influence, organizational maintenance and contextual factors. To test our hypotheses we start from a sample of 125 legislative proposals submitted by the European Commission between 2008 and 2010 and a set of 143 semi-structured interviews with EU-level interest organizations. Our findings demonstrate that groups which depend less on members' donations or oppose a legislative proposal tabled by the European Commission are much more prone to engage in business-NGO alliances. Moreover, salient proposals are more likely to stimulate coalition building in general.

## **Introduction**

Much interest group literature uses organization types – often the distinction between business and non-business interests – as key categories and often expects these categories to correspond with key policy conflict. Being an NGO or a business interest then affects mobilization patterns, strategies and influence. The competition between organized interests is often portrayed as a struggle between well-endowed business interests and resource poor citizen interests (see for instance Danielian and Page 1994, Garrett 1998, Baumgartner and Leech 2003, Lowery and Gray 2004). Indeed, often business groups and NGOs stand against each other, but on many occasions these interests do not collide (Smith 2000). Lobbying battles are regularly fought within these respective group types. For instance, where different business interests such as the train and car manufacturers oppose each other, whereby the first get tactical support from environmental NGOs. And on other occasions, the goals of business interests and NGOs overlap, which stimulates networking and cooperation between these so-called strange bedfellows. For example, producers of renewable energy sometimes ally with environmental NGOs in opposition to the carbon energy sector.

This paper specifically analyzes the instances where business interests and NGOs cooperate and establish heterogeneous coalitions to influence legislative outcomes. When and why do business interests and NGOs coalesce? Our starting point is that the composition of lobbying coalitions is a crucial ingredient in the lobbying process. It may contribute to influence seeking purposes and serves goals related to organizational maintenance. To begin with, cooperation between interest groups with a different background may bring about some interesting political advantages. A diverse and heterogeneous alliance of business interests and NGOs is likely to rely on a wider, more encompassing range of constituencies, it can mobilize a more varied set of political resources and expert knowledge, and it might be able to address a politically more diverse set of policymakers. Therefore, policymakers might be more receptive towards business-NGO alliances and see such alliances as a credible source of information compared to alliances relying on very similar constituencies (Nelson and Yackee 2012).

However, banding together with strange bed-fellows also entails some risks and costs. Each organization has its own identity and the identities of business interests and NGOs are not always compatible. An organizational identity is a precarious good and it can be important to preserve this in order to maintain the organization (Browne, 1990; Berry, 1977). Flocking with organizations from another ‘species’ may harm or can be perceived as being incompatible with the unique identity an organization established through the years.

Moreover, heterogeneous coalitions might be based on nuanced compromised positions which may lack a clear and straightforward policy view. And some lobbying battles fought years ago may have left resentments among constituencies and led to distrust towards the other group type. All this implies that heterogeneous coalitions are not so easy to establish.

Our goal is not to evaluate the positive and negative effects of cross-type alliances, but to analyze why – the conditions under which – interest groups engage in such coalitions. Understanding more specifically when and why interest groups lobby in heterogeneous coalitions is also relevant as it broadens our understanding of the structure of conflict in EU legislative politics and lobbying in general. This is important because the composition of a coalition may affect the propensity of policymakers to be receptive towards lobbying alliances or treat them as a credible source (Nelson and Yackee 2012; Klüver 2012). We focus specifically on EU legislative processes. As for lobbying in domestic legislative contexts, coalition building is a crucial lobbying strategy in EU politics. In the EU context interest groups need to deal with complex institutional processes and structures, including multiple access points. Collaborating with others and the sharing of scarce lobbying resources might be helpful in dealing with the complex nature of EU policymaking processes. The crowded nature of the EU setting with its high density and diversity of represented interests also provides ample opportunities to ally with other stakeholders. Although we focus on the EU, our theoretical approach is not tied to the specific nature of the EU, which makes that our insights might travel well into other political systems.

This paper is structured as follows; first we develop a theoretical framework to explain when and why business and NGOs coalesce. Based on this framework we formulate some research hypotheses. In order to test these, we rely on 143 interviews with interest organizations on a set of 72 sampled legislative proposals. Our preliminary findings demonstrate that three logics – namely, the logic of influence, organizational maintenance and context – explain when and why business and NGO's coalesce. In general, media salience is an important contextual factor as high level of media attention is more likely to arouse coalition building among interest groups. More specifically, groups that are for their maintenance less dependent on their members or oppose legislative proposals tabled by the European Commission are more prone to engage in business-NGO coalitions.

### **Supply and demand explanations for coalition formation**

Coalition formation among organized interests can be driven by factors related to the supply of lobbying – namely groups that seek to influence policy outcomes – and factors

situated on the demand side – policymakers seeking input from societal interests. Regarding the former we need to distinguish between on the one hand, a logic of influence, emphasizing influence seeking as the main goal of interest groups, and the importance of membership support for organizational maintenance. When it comes to the demand side we focus on institutional as well as political contextual factors that characterize specific policy debates. Instead of analyzing one explanatory factor, we adopt a more eclectic stance and integrate these three factors – influence, members and context in one analytical endeavor.

To begin with, interest groups have a political mission and aim to defend the interests or policy views of their constituency as best as possible. For this purpose they seek to develop specific lobbying strategies (Beyers, 2008, p. 1192; Michalowitz, 2007; Schmitter & Streeck, 1999, p. 19). Many scholars have identified coalition building as one of the most powerful tactics in this regard. Interest groups give more leverage to their demands by establishing coalitions with other likeminded stakeholders (Hojnacki, 1997; Hula, 1999; Mahoney, 2007). We define a coalition as deliberate patterns of cooperation among organized interests that defend the same political position, i.e. organizations which are on the same side. Therefore, a coalition is more than just adopting the same policy view or position. Coalitions include the exchange of resources and information, a division of labor or the coordination of advocacy efforts (see Hojnacki, 1997; Hula, 1999). Forging alliances can be a decisive lobbying strategy which makes the difference between failure or success (Klüver , 2011).

This also holds for business-NGO coalitions. One might argue that – from an influence seeking perspective – heterogeneous coalitions might, compared to their homogenous counterparts, be more interesting. A collection of groups engaging in such coalitions represents a more diverse constituency. The varying backgrounds of groups in heterogeneous coalitions also makes that they possibly possess a diverse array of political and technical resources, making them interesting interlocutors for policymakers. Heterogeneous coalitions are sometimes also seen as more credible because they were able to create some common understanding among a diverse constituency (Nelson and Yackee 2012). Our aim is not to demonstrate that business-NGO coalitions will be more influential than their counterparts, but rather to demonstrate that, from an influence perspective, groups might have good reasons to engage in a heterogeneous coalition.

Next to a logic of influence, the development of particular political strategies is also driven by concerns about organizational maintenance. Interest groups are, just like any other organization, entities that need to maintain themselves. For this, they seek proper resources, financial resources, members and staff, all needed in order to establish a well-functioning

organization. Doing so, their strategies are tied to these maintenance related goals (Berkhout , 2013; Binderkrantz , 2005; Lowery , 2007; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Schmitter & Streeck, 1999). This logic also affects which types of coalitions are established. Although the advantages of a lobbying coalition are less straightforward from an organizational maintenance logic, establishing a lobbying coalition may affect how the constituency relates to the organizational leadership and how this, in turn, affects the organizational identity. Apart from seeking influence, interest organizations seek to develop a specific identity as being an expert in a particular policy area. In this respect, they aim to distinguish themselves on the basis of some unique selling points (Hula, 1995; Browne, 1990; Berry, 1977). This rationale reverberates in how interest groups establish coalitions. Groups that rely on similar constituencies or have a comparable identity tend to work with similar organizations (Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Salisbury 1990). From a maintenance logic interest groups may tend to avoid heterogeneous coalitions, not because dissimilar organizations will be competitors, but because the organizational constituency may see this as a dilution of the organizational identity.

Finally, the overall political context in which an organization operates may trigger specific lobbying strategies, including establishing coalitions. Contextual aspects, such as the institutional setting – for instance, the extent to which elected officials are involved – and issue related characteristics – such as salience and conflict – will shape strategy development (Baumgartner, Berry et al. 2009; Mahoney, 2007; Hojnacki, 1997). Also the decision to join a particular coalition is affected by various contextual constraints, more precisely the type of political that are at stake in the lobbying process. For example, when a policy issue attracts a large set of interest groups and much media attention, interest groups are likely to engage in coalitions (Hula, 1999; Mahoney 2007). The overall attention for a topic will also affect whether NGOs and business interests coalesce. Thus, coalitions do not emerge in a void and the unique context of particular legislative cases affects whether strange bedfellows will align.

### **Hypotheses**

As outlined above, lobbying in a coalition with dissimilar groups generates some advantages for lobbyists, but there are also some uncertainties, risks and costs involved. Interest groups may lose parts of their identity or put the relationship with their constituency in jeopardy. Because lobbying in heterogeneous alliances can be demanding – for instance, because compromise positions need to be established among organizations that are not used to collaborate intensively, interest groups should see considerable advantages to heterogeneous

coalition formation. Important here is the policy position an organization adopted vis-à-vis a concrete legislative case (Baumgartner et al., 2009). For instance, when being supportive towards a specific policy, an interest group is likely to defend this policy in silence. In such conditions, groups are inclined to avoid making much noise and attract political attention to a policy issue as this may awaken stakeholders who might defend other policy views (De Bruycker & Beyers, 2015; Hanegraaff et al. 2014; Baumgartner et al., 2009). Groups that do not support a policy proposal and seek to profoundly change or block it, will make more effort to draw attention to this particular case. In doing this, they aim to convince policymakers to support their cause or to attract other stakeholders into the debate. One strategy is to target the media and the broader public. Another is to join forces with other stakeholders and jointly draw the attention of policymakers or other interests to their arguments. We therefore expect that those who oppose specific policies will be more inclined to lobby in coalitions. Although we expect this to be true for both heterogeneous and homogenous coalitions, we suppose it to be especially important for heterogeneous coalitions. Engagement in such coalitions implies a higher threshold to bridge in terms of potential identity loss. When the constituency a group represents is threatened – which means much is at stake – and the lobbyists gravely opposes a tabled legislative proposal, the lobbyist might take the risk of losing some credit with some part of the organizational constituency, the constituency is prepared to accept this risk and the lobbyists will more likely engage in heterogeneous alliances.

*Hypothesis 1: Interest groups that oppose a legislative proposal will more likely engage in heterogeneous coalitions compared to groups that support it.*

Although there are potential advantages in terms of influence seeking, allying with strange bed-fellows also involves risks. Organizational constituencies and supporters may prefer to see their representatives staying close and loyal to the organizational identity and mission. When alliances are forged with groups that represent highly similar causes or constituencies, the risk for a loss of identity remains minimal. But collaboration with strange bed-fellows may dilute and undermine an organizational identity. As such collaboration may involve a more moderate style – in terms of policy position or strategies – it could compromise what an organization stands for, which may affect the propensity of constituencies to support the organization.

Therefore, it could become difficult to explain to the constituencies that they are coalescing with groups with another mission or that have different policy positions on many other policy issues. However, we expect that the magnitude of this constraint will vary from

interest group to interest group. Some groups are much more dependent on membership or constituency support. They rely entirely on their members for organizational resources and, therefore, need to maintain regular contacts with their constituency in order to report on and legitimize their activities. Because of this strong dependence such groups are less inclined to take the risk of losing face with their members. Engaging in heterogeneous coalitions is therefore less likely to happen. Other groups, namely those that are less reliant on their members for organizational resources, have more leeway in establishing their lobbying strategy and do not have to worry much about risks involved when allying with a strange bed-fellow. Groups that are more dependent on sustained membership support will show a lower probability to engage in heterogeneous coalitions compared to those who are less dependent on members. This rationale results in the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2: Interest groups that depend strongly on members are less likely to engage in heterogeneous coalitions.*

Finally, also the context surrounding specific legislative cases may affect the involvement in heterogeneous coalitions. Context refers to all environmental factors exogenous to the organized interest and which potentially affect lobbying practices. In the literature largely two types of contextual factors can be distinguished: institutional and issue context (Mahoney, 2008; Klüver et al. 2015). The institutional context concerns how specific features of the venues in which policies are made – such as procedures, policy views of policymakers and so on – trigger a specific demand for lobbying. For example, a corporatist or a pluralist environment create different demands on societal interest and affect the organizational form of collective action.

The issue context concerns the specific characteristics tied to the policy cases interest organizations aim to influence, such as the degree of conflict, salience or complexity of an issue. For instance, a more complex issue may lead to a greater demand for technical information and expertise. The overall context – institutional and issue context – can have major implications for how interest groups develop their lobbying strategies, more precisely whether interest organization coalesce or not. Mahoney (2007), for example showed that issue context matters for both EU and US-lobbyists. Similarly, Hojnacki (1997) showed the issue-context matters in the decision to establish coalitions and that interest groups are more likely to establish alliances depending on the scope of an issue. More specifically, interest groups are more likely to establish coalitions on more salient legislative case and where the degree of conflict is high. More conflictual and salient pieces of legislation affect larger constituencies,

which makes the preparedness of organized interests to invest in such cases larger and increases the propensity to coalesce. A more dense environment in which some issues gain more attention may also stimulate interest groups to be more creative in their lobbying strategies and one potential pathway is to ally in a broad heterogeneous coalition. For this paper we focus on one key issue contextual variable (but we plan to add additional controls – for instance for complexity and institutional density – in later versions of the paper):

*H3: More salient policy cases results in a higher propensity among interest organizations to engage in heterogeneous coalitions.*

### **Data & research design**

The data used to test these hypotheses are part of a larger project on EU legislative lobbying. The goal of this project is to analyze lobbying strategies and interest group influence for a stratified sample of 125 European legislative proposals (directives and regulations) that were submitted between 2008 and 2010 (Beyers, Braun et al. 2014, Beyers, Dür et al. 2014). The sample procedure is equivalent to the procedure Thomson used in his research on EU legislative politics (2011). For the sampling, all Commission proposals for regulations and directives between 2008 and 2010 were mapped. Afterwards all media coverage in five media outlets (European Voice, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Agence Europe, Le Monde and Financial Times) related to these proposals was mapped with electronic keyword searches and archived. A set of 48 directives and 38 regulations that gained media coverage in more than two media outlets were selected. In addition we included 20 proposals where the Commission organized online consultations with organized interests. By doing this we prioritized legislative proposals that were publicly debated and/or where interest organizations mobilized. To control for this, we added randomly 19 proposals that gained little or no media coverage and where no Commission consultation took place. The sample of 125 proposals is thus stratified in the sense that we overweight cases that gain media attention or where public consultations were held by the Commission.

Our novel dataset draws from 143 interviews conducted with 111 different interest organizations active on 72 of the sampled proposals. Some groups were interviewed twice (13), three (5) or more times if they were identified as crucial actors for several proposals. For instance, EFAMA was interviewed four times and Business Europe seven times. As described in (Beyers, Braun et al. 2014) the main goal of the interview project was to interview EU level interest organization on each side of the conflict dimensions identified for the legislative proposals. From the 111 interviewed interest organizations 86 percent are EU level interest



organizations; in cases where no EU-level organizations were active, we interviewed national or international organizations. For cases where more actors were active more interviews were done and for most of the cases we were able to interview groups on each side of a conflict dimension (see Beyers et al., 2014). Interviews were not conducted for all 125 sampled proposals. Forty proposals were dropped because no lobbying activity was identified in the EU-level media or interviews carried out with the Commission. Another 8 proposals were dropped because no interest groups could be convinced for an interview or nobody within the organization remembered enough about the specific proposal. The largest part (64 percent) of the respondents represents business associations, another 29 percent represent NGOs and the remaining 8 percent are officials from professional organizations, firms or labor unions. These numbers correspond to the overall population of interest groups active on EU politics (Wonka, Baumgartner et al. 2010, De Bruycker and Beyers 2015).

**Table 1: Frequencies of engagement in heterogeneous and homogenous coalitions**

	Frequencies	Percentages
No coalition	56	40%
Homogenous coalition	68	49%
Heterogeneous coalition	16	11%

During the interviews interest group officials were asked whether their organization participated in a coalition and, if so, with whom (see Appendix I for the exact wording). Afterwards these coalitions were coded as homogenous when they consisted of only business interests or NGOs and as heterogeneous when both group types were part of the identified coalition. One example of a homogenous coalition was the coalition of different train associations (CER, EIM and UNIFE) in the proposal for a directive on road use charges for heavy goods vehicles (Eurovignette). An example of a heterogeneous coalition is the coalition between the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and the European Committee of Domestic Equipment Manufacturers (CECED) in lobbying on the proposal for a directive on waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). Table 1 presents the frequencies respondents engaged in homogenous and heterogeneous coalitions. The majority of groups (60 percent) did engage in a coalition, although most of them in homogenous coalitions. Only 16 or 11 percent of the interviewed groups engaged in heterogeneous coalitions and, interestingly, a large portion (40 percent) of the interviewed groups did not engage in any coalition.

To model why groups engage in a business-NGO coalitions we conduct multinomial logistic regression with the abovementioned categorical variable as the dependent variable. To deal with potential dependencies due to the fact that different respondents are nested in the same proposal we estimated clustered standard errors at the proposal level (n=72) (see also Hojnacki, 1999). As a first explanatory variable we have the position interest groups adopted (H1). In the interviews we asked whether their activities were aimed at ‘ blocking or shaping most of the proposal’, ‘shaping specific parts of the proposal, not blocking it’ or ‘supporting the commission’ (reference). This question was raised for different issues prevalent in a legislative proposal, but we aggregated this at the proposal level by taking the median response (one proposal can include multiple issues). A second explanatory variable, namely dependence on members, is measured by the proportion of the organizational budget for which an organization depends on their members (H2). The expectation is that the higher the dependence on members, the more careful groups need to be with heterogeneous coalitions. The third explanatory variable gauges the salience of policy proposals. Media salience (H3) of the different proposals is measured based on the total numbers of articles (count) that discussed them in six media outlets (Agence Europe, European Voice, Euractiv, Le Monde, The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and The Financial Times).

We also include a number of control variables of which some relate to specific organizational characteristics of an interest group. First we took the natural logarithm of staff as a proxy of interest group resources. To gauge the intensity of lobbying, we also use the resources an interest group invested in this particular case compared to other cases the organization mobilized on. In addition, we control for the extent to which interest groups face competition for resources. We expect that the engagement in a coalition is related to the use of other lobbying tactics (De Bruycker 2014, Hojnacki, 1999) and therefore include the use of media tactics as a control. More detail about all the variables included in the model can be found in the appendix.

## **Results**

From the regression presented in Table 1 it is clear that indeed position significantly explains whether interest groups engage in business-NGO coalitions. As expected, opponents of a legislative proposal are more likely to engage in heterogeneous coalitions while this inclination is less apparent for those who support a policy proposal (H1). Position does not significantly predict participation in coalitions consisting of only NGO or business interests.

**Table 2: Multinomial logistic regression of the type of coalition engaged in**

	No coalition (base outcome)	Homogenous coalitions	Heterogeneous coalitions
Funding by members (%)	-	.00 (.01)	-.02*** (.01)
Media salience	-	.05* (.02)	.08 (.03)
Position	Block or shape most of the proposal	-	.09 (.70)
	Shape parts of the proposal	-	.37 (.78)
	Support the proposal (ref)	-	ref
Resource investment	More than other issues	-	.96* (.54)
	Equal as other issues	-	.22 (.50)
	Less than other issues	-	ref
Ln staff		-	-.29 (.19)
Media strategies (intensity)		-	.20** (.09)
Competition	Absent	-	ref
	Low	-	1.09** (.55)
	Moderate	-	1.63** (.70)
	High	-	2.41 (1.55)
	very high	-	.45 (.98)
Constant		-	-2.47** (1.09)
n	123		
Pseudo R2	.27		
Wald chi2(24)	1099.72		
Prob > chi2	<.001		

Coefficients are presented with robust standard errors between brackets and significance level indicated by \*

\*  $\alpha < 0.10$

\*\*  $\alpha < 0.05$

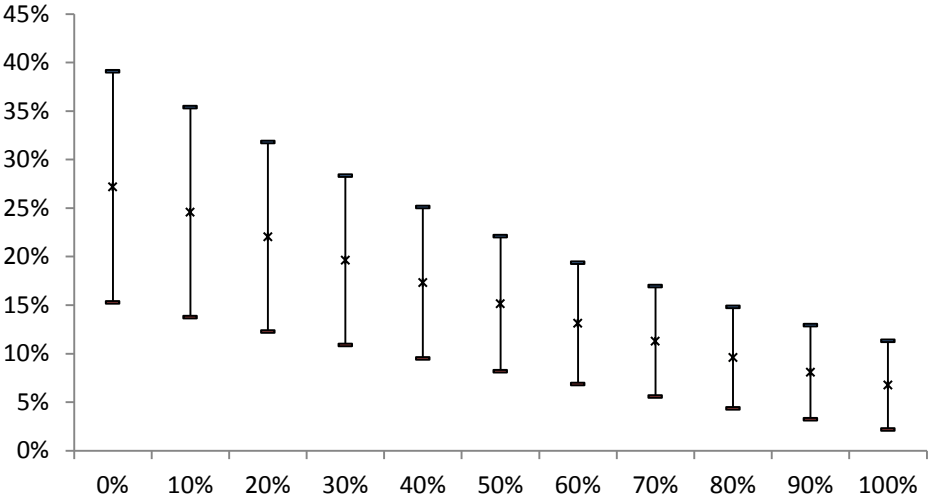
\*\*\*  $\alpha < 0.01$

Next, being dependent on membership donations produces different results for homogeneous and heterogeneous coalitions. Confirming hypothesis 2, groups that rely more on membership donations are less likely to engage in heterogeneous coalitions. Again, this dependence does not hold for homogenous coalitions, where the dependence on membership donations has no effect on the likelihood of engaging in such coalitions. Figure 1 illustrates the predicted probabilities and confidence intervals of groups engaging in heterogeneous coalitions for different levels of membership dependence. Groups that do not rely on membership donations as an important source of income have a mean predicted probability of 28 percent to engage in a heterogeneous coalition, while for those that rely completely on membership donations as their source of income, this probability is only 7 percent.

The salience of policy proposals, measured in terms of media attention, stimulates the participation in homogenous coalitions. For the propensity to engage in heterogeneous coalitions, the salience of legislative cases has no significant effect. We find no confirmation for our third hypothesis, namely that more media attention proposals result in a higher propensity to engage in heterogeneous coalitions. This effect only holds true for the engagement in homogenous coalitions. We have not clear explanation for this non-finding, but one of the possible reasons is that we largely rely on public or media salience. This

implies that the activities of many groups will be highly visible and it could be precisely this visibility towards the organizational constituency which might constrain (and not stimulate) group leaders to openly engage in heterogeneous coalitions.

**Figure 1. Predicted probabilities of engaging in a heterogeneous coalition (y) for different levels of dependence on membership donations (x)**



Some control variables proved to generate a significant effect. Particularly the results of the competition variable are puzzling. Roughly put, groups that face a stronger competition have a lower probability to engage in heterogeneous coalitions while having a higher chance to engage in homogeneous coalitions. These results speak to the work of Hojnacki (1997), who found that much competition for resources results in a lower chance to lobby in coalitions. Our observations somewhat nuance these results and show that the competition for resources has a different impact for different types of coalitions. We do not have significant results for staff size, although the resources invested in an issue do have a significant positive effect on the propensity to lobby in a coalition, both for homogenous and heterogeneous coalitions. The higher the relative importance of a case for one particular organization, the higher the chance to engage in a coalition. Also the use of media strategies is positively related to the likelihood of lobbying in coalition and the effect of this variable is significant for both coalition types, but slightly stronger for heterogeneous alliances. The positive relation between coalition-based lobbying and the use of media strategies possibly corresponds with the fact that a larger set of organizations will attract more media attention because more organizations need to inform a wider and more encompassing constituency. Also, the wider support a coalition enjoys makes them more prone to seek out the public debate, confident that they will enjoy adequate public support.

## **Conclusion**

This paper takes a first step in identifying the conditions that explain why business interests and NGOs coalesce. Although the interest group literature tends to emphasize the differences between business interests and NGOs, our study demonstrates that under specific conditions, these organization types cooperate and form lobbying coalitions. This paper takes a first step in explaining the occurrence of heterogeneous coalitions and collaboration among strange bed-fellows. We demonstrated that both a logic of organizational maintenance and a logic of influence are applicable in explaining why groups engage in heterogeneous coalitions. Groups that are more dependent on their members for organizational resources are less inclined to lobby in business-NGO alliances. Such groups will be less inclined to take the risk of alienating their membership and supporters by allying with strange bed-fellows.

We also demonstrate that the policy position is important in understanding why groups engage in heterogeneous alliances. Groups who seek to block or change most of a proposal are more inclined to lobby in business-NGO coalitions. It is as if desperate and hazardous times call for desperate measures and makes actors less risk averse. Groups whose interests are more threatened or who seek to avoid some major policy change are more likely to take the risk of alienating the support of their members or their members may more easily accept coalitions with strange bed-fellows. In contrast to other studies, we do not find an effect of media salience of policy proposals on the propensity to lobby alone or in a coalition, not for homogenous nor heterogeneous coalitions. One explanation for these findings is the specific nature of the EU, lacking a genuine public sphere.

## Annex I

Function	Name	Description
Dependent variable	Coalition engagement	<p>We understand coalitions as explicit agreements between you and other actors, aimed at coordinating efforts to influence EU legislation. If you were involved in this type of activity can you indicate with whom you formed a coalition to influence the legislative outcome of this proposal?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes, with organizations from another group type</li> <li>- Yes, with organizations from the same group type</li> <li>- No (reference)</li> </ul>
Explanatory variables	Funding by members (%)	Can you indicate the percentage of the overall budget your organization gathers from membership subscriptions?
	Position	<p>For each issue, were the activities you and your supporters used aimed at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shaping most of the proposal, and/or blocking it</li> <li>- Shaping specific parts of the proposal, not blocking it</li> <li>- Supporting the Commission (reference)</li> </ul> <p>* Question was asked at the issue level but aggregated at the proposal level by taking the median response (one proposal can include multiple issues)</p>
	Media salience	The amount of articles (count) that discussed a legislative proposal in six media outlets (Agence Europe, European Voice, Euractiv, Le Monde, The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and The Financial Times).
Control variables	Staff (ln)	<p>How many (count) full-time staff does your organization employ in its Brussels' office?</p> <p>*to cope with overdispersion I took the natural log of the staff variable</p>
	Competition	<p>How much competition does your organization face in getting its resources?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no competition from other actors (reference)</li> <li>- little competition from other actors</li> <li>- moderate competition from other actors</li> <li>- strong competition from other actors</li> <li>- very strong competition from other actors</li> </ul>

	Resource investment	<p>On each issue characterizing this proposal, did your organization invest more or fewer resources in shaping the legislative outcome compared to other issues that you are familiar with?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- more</li> <li>- about equal</li> <li>- fewer</li> </ul> <p>* Question was asked at the issue level but aggregated at the proposal level by taking the median response (one proposal can include multiple issues)</p>
	Media strategies	<p>How frequently did you undertake the following activities to try to affect legislative outcomes? never (0), rarely (1), sometimes (2), frequently (3) or very frequently (4).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Organize press conferences or distributed press releases</li> <li>2. Active involvement in media debates such as giving interviews, editorials, opinion letters...</li> <li>3. Contact reporters and journalists to increase media attention</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Media scale (0-12) was established based on the sum of the three former variables (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.84).</li> </ul>

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