

How to Become an European Actor? The Case of Polish Business Interest Associations¹

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Abstract

The European Union law as well as policies have significant influence on the national public policies. It has prompted domestic interest groups including business associations to promote and represent their interest before EU institutions. This article examines how Polish business interests associations (BIAs) have adjusted their strategies of interest representation to the European multi-level governance system. On the basis of a survey among 56 Polish BIAs it is argued that they have had to adapt their pattern of interest representation strategies to the EU context and the new more competitive international environment. The main questions in this analysis regard Polish business organizations capacities to maintain relations with EU institutions, build alliances and coalitions with other national and European associations, use appropriate methods and instruments of lobbying, possess and provide special kind of desired resources and exchange goods. Additionally it will be investigated whether and in what extend Polish BIAs differentiate their strategies towards the national level and the European level. It is assumed that they apply different patterns of interest representations according to the EU or national context.

Keywords: business associations, interest representation, the European Union, lobbying, strategies.

JEL Classification: L31.

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Introduction

Soon 15 years will have passed since Poland's accession to the European Union (EU) and it is a perfect opportunity to evaluate to what extent our country made use of the opportunities and potential arising from the European integration process. Particularly highlighted are the positive changes visible in economic, political and social areas. Also within the scope of representation of social and economic interests in our country there have been significant changes, and Polish stakeholders had to alter their lobbying strategies and adjust to new conditions both, at the domestic and EU levels. Both, old and new EU member states are affected by EU policies and especially business interest associations (BIAs) feel the need to represent their members' interests in EU policy making process.

Interest representation before EU institutions requires adjustment of national strategies to European context. Research conducted in the old EU member states (Kohler-Koch, Quittkat 1999; Richardson 2006; Quittkat 2009; Kohler-Koch, Quittkat 2016) show, that there are various models of adapting national interest advocacy strategies to the requirements of the European arena.

European business associations are a major player in the EU. They entertain intensive contacts to EU institutions, far more than other stakeholders. They enjoy privileged access to EU institutions because they claim to be representative of the European wide economic interests. EU-level federations have to find adequate means of achieving an equitable balance of interests between member associations of different strength and big business. In addition, they face the mushrooming of sector specific European business associations with direct company membership.

The growing importance of European economic governance has activated national business associations, and those with a strong home base have the capacity to act alone at the EU level. However, in order to be heard by EU institutions, associations ought to represent not a purely national but a broad constituency. Thus, strong national associations reach out to Brussels by taking European sector associations under their wings or by sponsoring new specialized associations with direct firm membership. We can observe a new wave of Europeanization of economic interest organization. It demonstrates that distinct sector conditions are conducive to specific strategies of Europeanization and that these are part and parcel of the reorganization of the national system of business interest representation.

Business associations from the new EU member states, including from Poland, are also trying to represent interests at the EU level, even though it proves to be very difficult for them. They have to adjust their hitherto national strategies (including the national logic of influence) to new, as of yet unidentified conditions on the European arena. It may be assumed, that they are less active, less involved, undertake fewer initiatives, for various reasons do not make use of the opportunities offered by the EU institutions, particularly the European Commission (e.g. new European governance). Nevertheless, they might be important partners for other stakeholders and may become important players on the European arena in the future.

Business interest associations have an important role in public policy, industrial relations, and economic governance. There are four types of BIAs: chamber of commerce (trade, industry, crafts), umbrella organisations (enterprises and employers' associations regardless of the sector), sector organisations (represent only one branch), regional associations (units business, enterprises, employers in certain regions), national organisations (represents national business interests). Despite their relevance business interest associations are under-researched both theoretically and empirically (Traxler, Huemer 2007: 31–33).

Hitherto there have been few analyses of the interest intermediation system in Poland. Most research focuses on issues of defining, systematising and introducing to problematic of interest representation (Jasiecki, Mołęda-Zdziech, Kurczewska 2006, Machelski, Rubisz 2003, Kurczewska, Mołęda-Zdziech 2002, Kurczewska 2011, Rybiński 2012, Kurczewska 2016) but there is a lack of comprehensive analyses of the Polish interest representation system. There also appear detailed case analyses (Obradovic, Pleines 2007, Börzel, Buzogány 2010, Einbock, Fuchs, Pleines 2006), which however do not allow to make generalisations. A neglected topic is the issue of organisation and functioning of interests groups themselves, particularly business organisations. There has been no efforts put into conducting quantitative research, which could significantly enrich the results of case analyses and allow for creation of some generalisations. The research project is the first that allows for conducting quantitative research of functioning of Polish business associations, their structures, resources at their disposal, forms of cooperation with partners, relations with institutions on national and the EU levels, lobbying instruments and strategies etc.

The main goal of the paper is to quantitatively analyse interest representation of Polish business associations (BIAs) at the EU level, the process of their Europeanization, and attempt to answer the question, whether they fully utilise the opportunities offered by EU institutions and they are becoming active actors on the European arena. The paper identifies the specific characteristics of the European

and national interest representation strategies of Polish BIAs concerning EU affairs. It is supposed that Polish organizations differ regarding their contacts and relations with EU and national institutions and show specific features with respect to the use of various lobbying instruments. It will be analyzed whether or not this is just due to limited resources or related to their specific task profile. The crucial question is whether Polish BIAs make full use of the possibilities and the opportunities offered by the EU institutions, particularly the European Commission and what are the patterns of their interest representation on the EU and national levels.

The paper presents the results of survey conducted in Poland in the period 2013–2015. A questionnaire (with 35 questions) was addressed to 132 business interest organisations and the response rate was 42.42 percent, so we received 56 answers. We can consider it as a representative sample because we included the total population of Polish business associations into our research. We included Polish umbrella and peak associations as well as specialized branch organisations. Thus the results of our research can be generalized. Questionnaires were in paper form and were mailed to all Polish business associations with information on our research, also delivered in an electronic format via email and an Internet, giving the participants the option to choose which method is preferred. Using a combination of methods of survey we could ensure better sample coverage. In the research the associations were asked about their experiences in interest representation activity: which contacts do they consider to be important and which institutions at national and EU level do they contact to represent their interests in EU decision-making process? What kind of lobbying strategies and instruments do they prefer? Who are partners for them, with whom they cooperate? To be able to explain difference in behavior, we gathered data and information on organizational properties and membership. The research was conducted within project ‘The impact of European business organisations on the formulation process of EU public policies’ that was funded by the National Science Centre of Poland. In the purpose to compare of Polish BIAs lobbying strategies with strategies of business organisations from EU old member states (France, Germany and Great Britain) we partly use data from the research conducted by MZES at Mannheim University within international project ‘Eurolob II’ (Kohler-Koch, Quittkat, Kurczewska 2013; Kohler-Koch, Quittkat 2016).

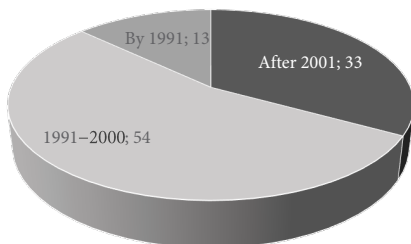
In our research we use a concept of Europeanization as central penetration of national and sub-national systems of governance. Almost all multilevel systems of governance need to work out a balance between unity and diversity, central coordination and local autonomy. In this case Europeanization implies adapting national and sub-national systems of organization and governance to an European political center and European-wide norms (Olsen 2002). In that perspective Europeanisation is treated as

a top-down process, which brings about change at the member-state level. The issue is the central penetration of national systems of governance. With the deepening of the EU, stakeholders and business associations realized that European integration hits home: EU policies produced new regulations transforming the national systems of law. Policy researchers turned to the impact of EU policies; they analysed the divergent patterns of implementation and the conditions for variations in the adaptive behaviour of public and private actors. But Europeanisation does not stop with policy change, it also implies forcing national and sub-national systems of governance to adjust. With the EU, a multi-level system of governance emerged. Multi-level governance calls for a new arrangement in the division of responsibilities and powers between the European, the national, and sometimes the sub-national level of governance. Furthermore, it encourages a multitude of actors to access to decision-making process. Not only governments but also political parties, interest groups, and social movements are under pressure to adapt. With respect to the Europeanisation of interest group strategies we would like to answer how Polish business associations adapt their national interest representation strategies to the new European context, how they develop ‘European lobbying strategy’?

1. What are Polish Business Associations? The Profile of Polish BIAs

In the purpose to characterise and explain the interest representation strategies of Polish BIAs concerning EU affairs we start with describing the profile and activity of Polish associations. Our research findings confirm that most Polish BIAs are young and very young organisations, established in the 90’s and after year 2000, only five had been founded earlier (see figure 1). These are rather small groups, not only representing a small number of members, but also those members employ a small number of employees.

Figure 1. Date of foundation of Polish BIAs (in %)



Source: Own analysis of data from survey ‘Eurolob II’.

A large majority of Polish associations are small groups, representing not only a small number of members, but also the members themselves are small enterprises employing small numbers of employees. Half of those count up to 50 members, one in five association consists of 100 members (see Table 1). The members are usually companies, to a lesser extent individuals and associations. Nearly 70% of organisations represents enterprises employing in total no more than 100 000 employees. Nearly 30% of associations represents companies employing up to 500 000 employees in total, and only one organisation represents over one million employees.

Table 1. Number of Polish BIAs members

Number of members (in %)	1-50	51-100	101-250	251-500	More than 500
Percent of associations	53	21	19	4	2

Source: Own analysis of data from survey 'Eurolob II'.

However the level of representativity thereof is quite high: 39% declares, that they represent 76-100% of potential members, and 36% acts on behalf of 51-75% of potential members (see table 2). Over 80% of Polish BIAs to are sector associations, representing interests of only one branch, or even a part thereof. Only 8 association are supra-branch in character (umbrella organisations).

Table 2. Representativity of Polish BIAs – share of potential members

Number of potential members (in %)	1-25	26-50	51-75	76-100
Percent of associations	14	11	36	39

Source: The same as in Table 1.

But compare to business associations in other EU member states, the representativity of Polish BIAs is not as high as it seems to be. Organisations from the EU level and from Germany stand out with very high levels of representativity. Next come Polish BIAs, whereas a considerable number of British and French BIAs only represent a part of their potential members (Kohler-Koch, Quittkat, Kurczewska 2013: 9) (see Table 3).

Table 3. Representativity of different business associations in the European Union – share of potential members (in %)

In %	British BIAs	French BIAs	German BIAs	Polish BIAs	EU level BIAs
1–25	21	17	8	14	7
26–50	18	23	12	11	9
51–75	20	22	29	36	27
76–100	41	38	51	39	57

Source: The same as in Table 1.

Financial resources of Polish business associations are small in comparison to those of organisations from other countries. Over a half has a budget of not more than 100 thousand euro, in 40% of associations these resources do not exceed 500 thousand euro. Only two associations may have larger resources at their disposal. The main source of revenue are membership subscriptions (70–100% of budget). To a small extent these are revenues for services (19% of budget). Only individual organisations also make use of other sources e.g. national project funding or EU project funding, but the share of these revenues in the overall budget is low (up to 10%). This means that associations are nearly entirely dependent from their members, financing organisation's operation thereby, but also expert support and initiation of contacts.

Taking into consideration the results of comparative research on BIAs in different EU member states (Kohler-Koch, Quittkat 2016: 22) we can observe differences in the size of financial resources of business associations (see table 4). French, German, British and European BIAs are financially well off. All of them have rather big budgets, but Polish BIAs are out of line with strikingly low resources. Indeed, Polish BIAs are the least well equipped financially, which can have also an impact on their EU lobbying strategies.

Table 4. Size of budgets of European BIAs and BIAs in different European Union member states (in %)

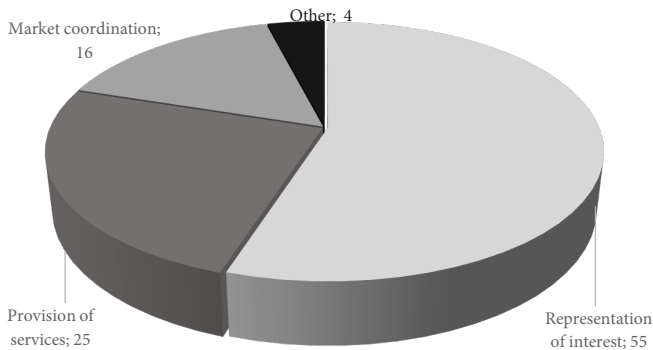
	France	Germany	Poland	UK	EU
Up to 100,000	11	13	55	17	14
Up to 500,000	25	23	40	23	37
Up to 1 million	21	22	5	29	19
Up to 5 million	33	33	0	21	25
More than 5 million	10	9	0		5

Source: The same as in Table 1.

2. Functions of Polish Business Associations. Service Provider or Interest Groups?

Associations of business interests serve different functions and roles before their members and other political actors. We may separate three groups of functions: representation of interests, provision of services and market coordination. In the case of Polish BIAs, nearly all organizations deal primarily in interest representation. Over half of them allocates 70–100% of their resources towards this activity. To a far lesser extent the associations deal in provision of services and market coordination. 80% of associations deal in services, and 60% in market coordination. On average a Polish association allocates 55% of its resources towards interest representation, 25% towards provision of services, 16% towards market coordination and 4% other (see Figure 2). It may thus be assumed, that they primarily serve the role of interest groups representing positions of their members and influencing decisions of political institutions.

Figure 2. The proportion of resources spent on different activities in average association



Source: The same as in Figure 1.

Within the framework of interest representation, all groups deal in: monitoring of political development (100% of associations), informing the members about political development (100%), representation of the members in political committees and hearings (92%) and representation of interests vis-à-vis other interest organisations (89%). Only 41% of organisations represent interests vis-à-vis trade unions.

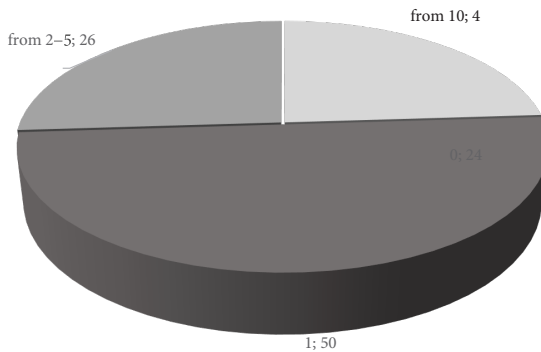
The surveyed associations also offer various services to their members. 89% of them provides statistics and branch information, 89% – access to consultancies, 70% – market research, 76% – individual legal and economic consulting, 80% – advertising and public relations activities, 75% – education of members. To a significantly lesser extent the associations deal in market coordination. It is true that approximately 72% of associations deal in definition of technical norms and standards and 76 in resolution of conflict between members, 70% deal in the coordination of research and development, and only 44–58% deal in regulation of market entrance, issuance of licences and certificates, setting quality and education standards. It is clear, that actions related to regulations of market entrance, training standards and issuance of licences are not part of organisational culture of Polish economic associations.

3. Openness to Cooperation or Competition?

One of the main characteristics of European interest intermediation system is the necessity of cooperation between stakeholders and creating coalitions even with hitherto adversaries (Greenwood 1995). Hitherto strategies aimed at competition are being modified and new forms of cooperation in the form of coalitions, alliances, platforms and forums are being created. At the same time the increase in the number of stakeholders at the EU level and accessibility of EU institutions lead to larger activation of interest groups and growing competition between them, which in practice means that ‘lobbying gives rise to more lobbying’ (Mazey, Richardson 2001). According to E. Kirchner (1980), when one interest group mobilises itself and starts acting, other interests groups immediately activate themselves as well. If they do not, they leave the room to act to other competitive stakeholders. Mobilisation in this case is ‘avoiding risk’ of domination of rival interests. The increase in activation and competition between interest groups is also affected by the increase in regulatory functions of EU. J. Richardson, D. Coen (2009) and S. Hix (2010) point out, that regulation policies cause greater interest, mobilisation of stakeholders and collective actions. Also Polish BIAs perceive these changes. In the opinion of 85% of associations there has been an increase in competition between interest organisations, and approximately 70% believe, that openness and accessibility of the European Parliament and the European Commission has increased. Nearly all of them declare willingness to cooperate with other stakeholders and highly regard usefulness thereof. Regarded to be the most useful is cooperation with EU trade

associations, over 80% of organisations consider such cooperation useful and very useful. It may be assumed, that Polish BIAs treat European partners as potential advocate of their interests and as an important source of information on European affairs. Despite such high regard, not all Polish BIAs belong to EU associations (see Figure 3). In case of $\frac{1}{4}$ of organisations there is a dissonance between opinions and real involvement in collective activity at the EU level. It may be presumed, that one in four organisations regards the costs of accession to a European association to be higher than expected benefits.

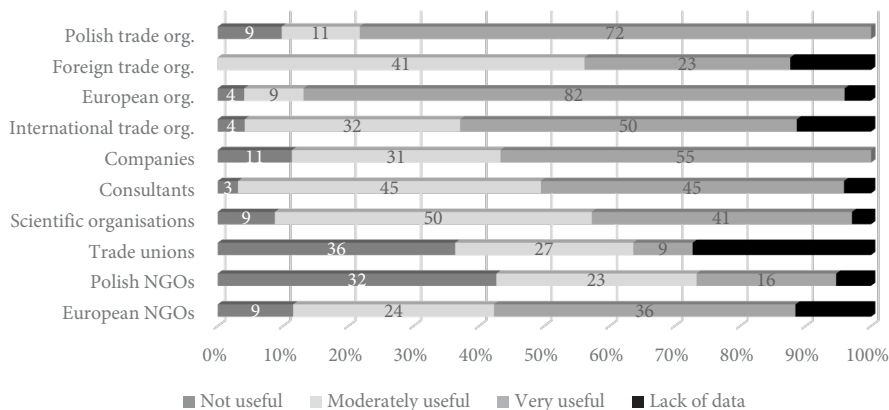
Figure 3. Membership of Polish BIAs in European Union associations



Source: The same as in Figure 1.

Over 70% of associations quite highly regard the cooperation with national trade associations and companies, which may seem obvious due to frequent convergence of interests (see Figure 4). On the other hand, it may be interpreted as openness of various business stakeholders to cooperation and willingness to form coalitions. Contacts with scientific associations are perceived to be useful by less than half of organisations, which may indicate a low involvement in creation of connections between science and economy and limitations in introducing innovative solutions in Polish economy.

The least useful for Polish trade associations is cooperation with trade unions. 26% of organisations have no contacts with trade unions at all, and $\frac{2}{3}$ regard such cooperation to be of little use, or even entirely useless. This aversion towards trade unions probably arises from their overly demanding and confrontational behaviour, facade social dialogue in Poland, lack of tradition of conciliation and group agreements (Gardawski 2009).

Figure 4. Opinions on usefulness of cooperation with other stakeholders (in %)

Source: The same as in Figure 1.

Also the cooperation with NGOs is held in low regard, though contacts with European NGOs are perceived as better than those with national NGOs. These differences in opinions probably arise from experiences of surveyed associations. It may be presumed, that EU NGOs are perceived as more professional than domestic NGOs, less demanding, set upon cooperation rather than confrontation and conflict, creating various kinds of alliances with business, e.g. green alliance (Arts 2002, Covey, Bown 2002). Polish trade associations which belong to European federations and are active at the EU level know numerous examples of effective cooperation of European business with EU NGOs. They also perceive the increase in cooperation between trade associations and NGOs at the EU level. Probably that is the reason for their high regard of contacts therewith. At the domestic level there is no such cooperation. There usually is a confrontation between the business and the NGOs. Moreover, Polish NGOs are often treated by enterprises and public institutions objectively and patronizingly, and not as partners, which leads to decrease in their prestige and role in forming public policies.

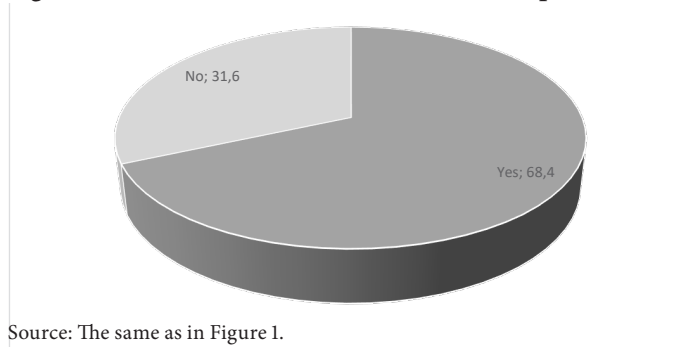
The differentiation of strategies of the surveyed organisations at the domestic and the EU level is clearly visible in this case. On the European arena Polish BIAs see the necessity and benefits of cooperation with NGOs. They notice that contacts with NGOs increase the prestige and reputation of the business side, allow for creation of image of association which is responsible, trustworthy, and which considers the priorities of the EU. Also the increase of strength of influence on EU institutions by forming alliances with NGOs is treated as a significant benefit from such cooperation. It is particularly important in the context of creating by the European Commission

policy that stimulates and encourages interest groups to form coalitions even with hitherto adversaries. Meanwhile lobbying strategies at the domestic level in most cases do not involve contacts with NGOs. Polish BIAs deem the costs of possible cooperation to exceed potential benefits.

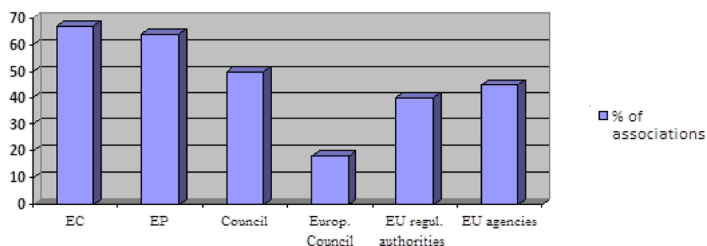
4. Relations of Polish Business Interest Associations with European Union Institutions and National Authority

One of the most important elements of interest representation on every level of authority is maintaining contacts with public institutions. In many cases EU institutions are eager to interact with stakeholders because they need these contacts to acquire resources that are indispensable in order to fulfil their role and functions (Bouwen 2009: 22). Also Polish BIAs representing interests in front of domestic and EU institutions maintain more or less permanent relations therewith. There are, however clear differences in the activity of associations on the domestic and EU levels (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Contacts of Polish BIAs with the European Union institutions



The Polish associations maintain contacts primarily with the executive power authorities and legislative institutions. At the national level, these are the government and parliament, and at the EU level – the European Commission, the European Parliament and the EU Council.

Figure 6. Contacts of Polish BIAs with the European Union institutions (in %)

Source: The same as in Figure 1.

At the EU level regular contacts are primarily maintained with the European Commission, mainly with working level (67% stakeholders) and individual members of the European Parliament (64% organizations) and COREPER within the Council (50% associations) (see Table 5). These are rare (yearly or ½ a year), or of average frequency (1/4 a year or monthly). Only one association maintains weekly relations with working level within the Commission. Contacts with the EU regulatory and standardization authorities and the EU agencies are few and rare. The fewest contacts are with the European Council (only 18% associations). If Polish BIAs have relations with the EU institutions, they prefer maintaining individual contacts and on working level than other.

Table 5. Contacts of Polish BIAs with the European Union institutions (in %)

The EU institutions	Rare contacts (yearly or ½ a year)	Quarterly and monthly contacts	Weekly contacts	Total (in %)
European Commission				
– Top level (Commissioners and cabinets)	32	9	0	41
– Working level (e.g. director-general)	36	27	4	67
European Parliament				
– Committees and rapporteurs	32	18	0	50
– Individual members of the EP	32	32	0	64
– Secretariat of the EP	27	0	0	27
Council				
– Level of Ministers	23	4	0	27
– COREPER, working groups	23	27	0	50
– General Secretariat of the Council	18	0	0	18
European Council (EC)	14	4	0	18
EU regulatory and standardisation authorities (e.g. CEN, CENELEC)	32	9	0	41
EU agencies (e.g. EEA, EFSA)	36	9	0	45

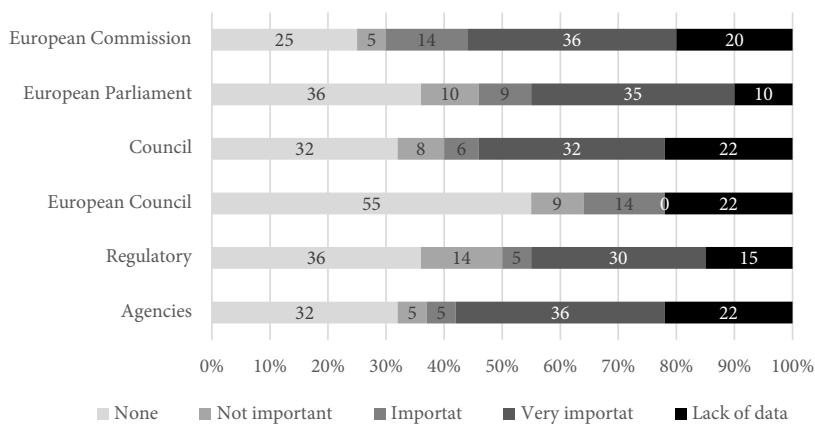
Source: The same as in Table 1.

Contacts with the EU regulatory and standardization authorities and the EU agencies are few and rare. If Polish BIAs have relations with the EU institutions, they prefer maintaining individual contacts and on working level than political level. Frequent contacts with the committees and members of the EP and COREPER may point to the focus of Polish associations on relations with Polish representatives therein and use of ‘national’ path of influence in the EU decision-making process. This data confirms the thesis of lobbying practitioners assuming (Gueguen 2009), that the most effective form of lobbying is the bottom-up lobbying conducted at the stage of substantial (technical) works, i.e. on the working level, and not on the level of political decisions. It may be assumed, that Polish BIAs employ exactly such strategy.

Even though Polish associations have few contacts with EU institutions, many organisations regard them as important or very important (see Figure 7)². It may thus be concluded, that if an association initiates relations with an EU institution, they are a result of a strong need of that organisation, aimed at achieving certain goal, and are neither routine nor superficial. Relations with the European Council are treated as less important.

These opinions are not different from those of business associations from other EU countries, according to which the most important are relations with the European Commission working level, the EP committees and members (Kohler-Koch, Quittkat, Kurczewska 2013: 11).

Figure 7. The importance of contacts with the European Union institutions (in %)



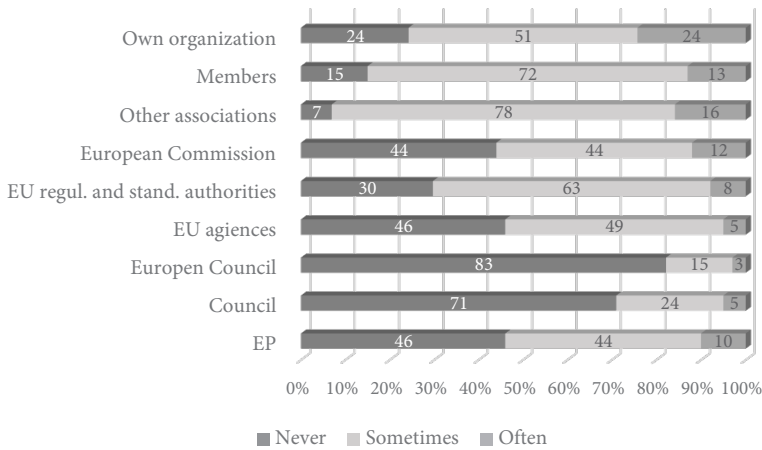
Source: The same as in Figure 1.

² Tough in comparison to evaluation of significance of contacts with national institutions these relations are regarded as important and as very important twice less frequently.

According to the majority of Polish associations contacting EU institutions, obtaining information from them is rather easy and unproblematic. More than 50% of them say that it is not difficult at all or average difficult. In this respect, particularly positively regarded are: the Commission, the Parliament and EU regulatory and standardisation authorities.

In the opinion of Polish BIAs the most active in initiating contacts with various political actors at the EU level are associations themselves and the members thereof (see Figure 8). One in four BIAs initiates such contacts frequently, and over a half from time to time. Whereas their members and other associations initiate relations sometimes (72–78%) and frequently (13–16%). EU institutions and the agencies thereof are more passive in this regard and rarely initiate such relations. It thus turns out, that the organisations do not wait for invitation from EU administration, but initiate contacts themselves, which may indicate that these are rather bottom-up than top-down relations (Eising 2009: 116).

Figure 8. Contact initiatives at the European Union level (in %)

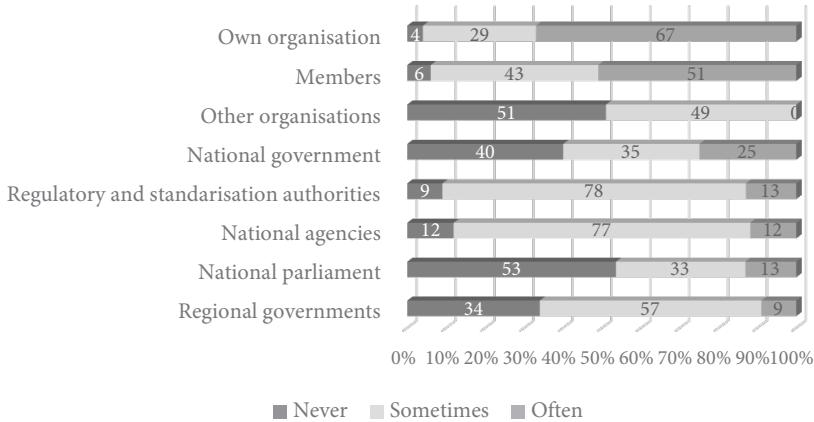


Source: The same as in Figure 1.

Activity of Polish associations at the EU level may be considered as moderate, but their activity at the domestic level is significantly more visible. Organisations are particularly active in regard to initiating contacts with political actors. Over 2/3 of Polish BIAs initiates such relations often, and 1/3 from time to time (see Figure 9). Only 4% of BIAs have never had such contacts. Also their members and other associations are very active. Half of them initiates contacts often, and the remaining half sometimes. Also Polish institutions are considered to be more

active in comparison to the EU institutions. Here state-business relations are exactly bottom-up processes.

Figure 9. Contact initiatives at the domestic level (in %)



Source: The same as in Figure 1.

5. Opinions on Changes of Conditions for European Union Interest Representation and Timing of Interest Representation vis-à-vis European Union Institutions and National Authority

For a number of years EU institutions has opted for a more participatory mode of governance. Particularly the European Commission introduced new norms, rules, and consultation procedures to make policymaking more accessible and to give voice to stakeholders. Citizens, associations, institutions, etc. are invited to participate in consultations and to provide feedback at different stages throughout the law-making process. The Commission maintains a transparency register of interest groups that aim to influence in the EU institutions.

The analysis allows us to determine whether and how Polish BIAs have responded to changes in context conditions as they perceive them: a shift in decision making

power among EU institutions and between the European and national levels, changing access opportunities, increased competition between interest organizations, and a stronger emphasize on political considerations in EU policy decisions. The study gives account of the adjustment of EU interest representation by drawing attention to the general characteristics and to distinct differences in EU lobbying. It turns out that no uniform European model of interest representation has evolved but distinct context-specific strategies co-exist.

Many Polish BIAs (36%–67%) perceive the increase in access for organised interests to the European Commission and the European Parliament (see Table 6). The lowest accessible institutions for Polish BIAs are the European Council and the Council. Polish associations also see other changes: the increase of competition between interest organisations and political (rather than technical) considerations by EU institutions (67%–72%).

Table 6. Opinions on changes of conditions for European Union interest representation (in %)

The changes	Decreased	Remained on the same level	Increased	Lack of data
Competition between interest organisations	0	32	64	4
Access opportunities to the European Commission	0	27	67	6
Access opportunities to the European Parliament	9	45	40	6
Access opportunities to the Council	9	50	36	5
Access opportunities to the European Council (EC)	0	32	67	1
Political (rather than technical) considerations by EU institutions	0	18	72	10

Source: The same as in Table 1.

A majority of BIAs perceives changes in significance and role of EU institutions and national institutions over the last decade (see Table 7). By more than half of them, the scope of competence and significance of the Commission, the Parliament and EU regulatory and standardisation authorities have increased. Particularly the changes of the European Commission role are perceived (86% associations).

Table 7. Opinions on changes of importance of the various political institutions (in %)

EU institutions	Decrease of importance	Remained on the same level	Increase of importance	Lack of data
European Commission	0	14	86	0
European Parliament	4	27	67	1
Council	5	54	41	0
European Council (EC)	4	45	45	6
EU regulatory and standardisation authorities	0	32	67	1
EU agencies	0	45	55	10
National government	23	45	23	9
National Parliament	41	50	4	5
National regulatory and standardisation authorities	23	67	4	6
National agencies	27	59	4	10
Regional governments	23	59	18	0

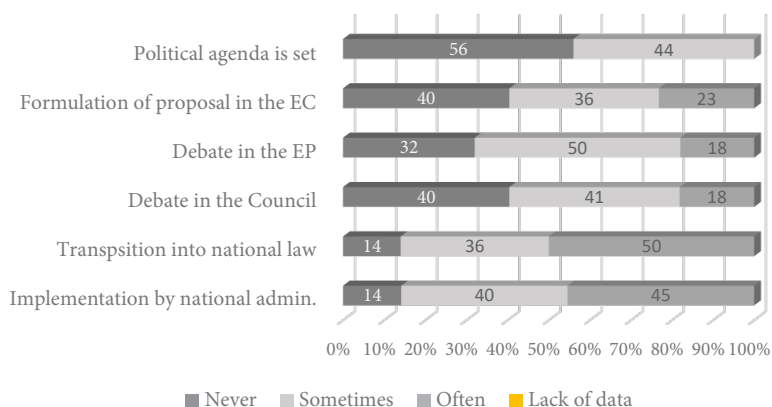
Source: The same as in Table 1.

In case of other EU institutions opinions are nearly equally divided. Half of the organisations perceive the increase of their significance, whereas the other half perceive no changes whatsoever. At the same time 23%–41% BIAs think that the importance of almost all national institutions, particularly the national parliament, concerning EU law making has decreased.

Even though Polish associations perceive the increasing role of the primary EU institutions, increase of their accessibility and openness, they still maintain only infrequent contacts with them. On the basis of gathered data it is difficult to identify the reasons for such behaviour. Only thorough analysis of different additional variables as well as data obtained through interviews could help explain this phenomenon. It may be assumed, that for Polish associations, the primary recipients of interest representation within the scope of EU legislation are still national institutions, and particularly the government administration, that play a role of advocate and defender of interests of Polish business at the EU level.

This assumption is also supported by data on the stage of political process at which the associations represent their interests towards EU institutions. A large majority of associations (85%–86%) becomes active at the final stage of the legislation process i.e. when EU law is incorporated into national law or during the implementation by the national administration (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Timing of interest representation of Polish BIAs vis-à-vis the European Union institutions (in %)

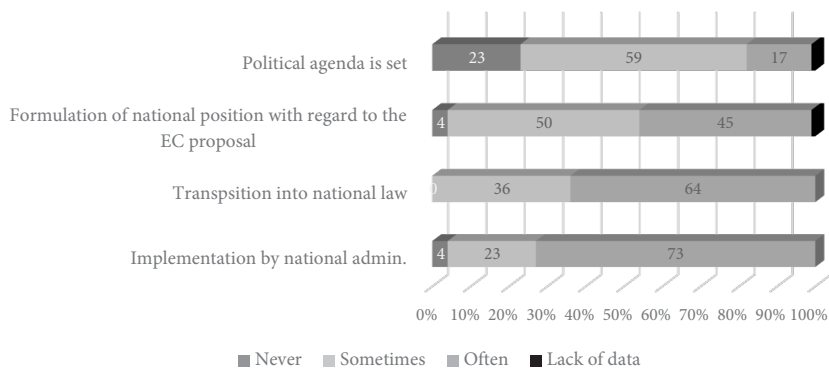


Source: The same as in Figure 1.

By comparing the data on the right timing of representing interests, we clearly see the differences in the strategies of Polish organisations. In regard to EU institutions, the interest groups choose the last stage of the legislation process i.e. when EU law making is incorporated into national law or during the implementation by the national administration. Never, or hardly ever, the Polish associations represent their interests at the initial stage of political process i.e. when the political agenda is set or when the Commission formulates its proposal. Only half of associations declare their activity at the stage of the debate in the Council. But also here their attention is probably focussed on the Polish representatives at COREPER or Polish ministers in the Council. It may thus be assumed, that at the EU level their strategies of interest representation are reactive, they omit the initial stages of political process, focussing on the final stages and national institutions.

During the interest representation before national authority the associations are active at all stages of political process, even though a large majority usually intervenes at the stage of implementation European law into national system and during the implementation by the national administration (see Figure 11). If the associations attempt to influence the decision process at the earlier stages they do it more often during the formulating of the national position with regard to the Commission proposal than when the proposal agenda is set. It may be assumed, that at the national level the associations are active entities nearly throughout the entirety of political process, that is different from their activity at the EU level.

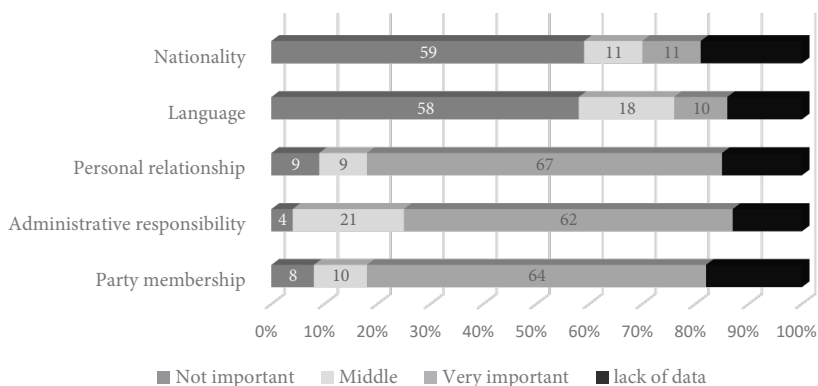
Figure 11. Timing of interest representation of Polish BIAs vis-à-vis national institutions (in %)



Source: The same as in Figure 1.

The associations apply different criteria when choosing contact partners in relations with political institutions. Both at the national and EU levels, the most important criteria considered for Polish BIAs when choosing partners, are: administrative responsibility, personal relationships and party membership (see Figure 12). Considered the least important, are: language and nationality in relations with the EU institutions and regional origin in contacts with national institutions.

Figure 12. Opinions on criteria of selecting contact partners in contacts with the European Union institutions (in %)



Source: The same as in Figure 1.

High regard of personal relationships arises probably from the prevalent in Poland trend of personalising politics as well as preference of rather informal instruments of influence. The research conducted in Poland on lobbying and interest representation of various groups show, that the greatest significance in relations with public institutions at various levels of power is attributed to private contacts and informal relations (Kopinska 2008).

The party membership is also an important criterion in choosing a partner, which confirms the above thesis on significance of network of informal connections in politics, but it may also arise from the growing role of political parties in Poland. As shown by the public opinion surveys in Poland, identification with political parties and party membership are becoming some of the most important criteria of social divisions. Clearly visible is progressing party polarisation and conflicting nature of political scene.

It is puzzling, that more than half of associations claims, that nationality and language are not important criteria at all, since numerous studies of cases show, that the main recipients of interest representation of Polish business associations and enterprises are national representatives in the UE institutions: Polish members of the European Parliament, Polish commissioners and heads of the DGs in the European Commission, Polish ministers in the Council etc. This discrepancy between declarations and practices requires further explanation.

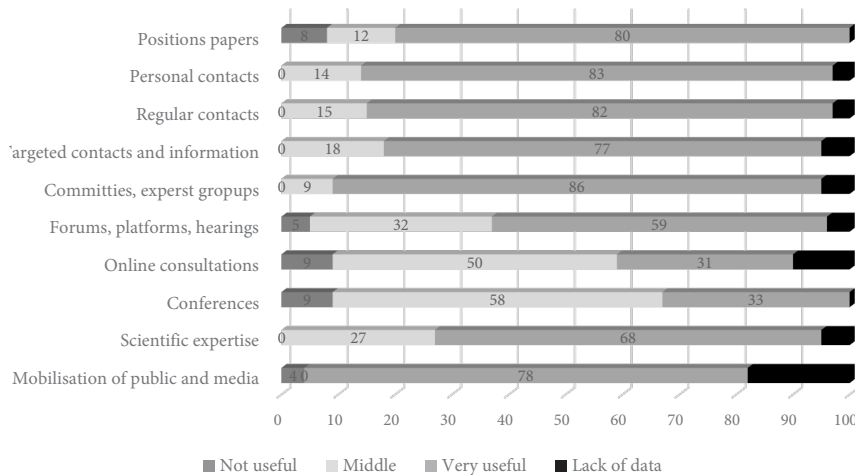
6. Methods and Instruments of Lobbying and Interest Representation

Nearly all Polish business associations highly regard the usefulness of classic methods and instruments of interest representation in the EU. Considered the most useful are, among others, participation in committees and expert groups, position papers, personal contacts etc. (see Figure 13). Also considered helpful, are presentation of scientific expertise and mobilisation of the public and the media, participation in online consultations and conferences, but to a lesser extent than other ways.

It is clear, that higher regarded are direct forms of influence, creating a network of direct contacts and also referring to public opinion, rather than making use of new forms offered by the European Commission, including e.g. online consultation or policy forum, platforms and hearings. A large majority of associations perceive the usefulness of all forms of interest representation, however in practice they not always

make use of them. Only 2 organisations are registered in the joint Transparency Register of the European Parliament and the European Commission, that means that only these two associations participate in public consultations.

Figure 13. Opinions on different ways of interest representation in the European Union (in %)



Source: The same as in Figure 1.

Generally opinions of Polish BIAs on usefulness of methods and instrument of lobbying and interest representation are almost the same as opinion of BIAs from other EU member states (see Table 8). Almost all business associations in 'Eurolob II' research agreed that traditional lobbying instruments such as personal, targeted and regular contacts as well as position papers are the most useful lobbying instruments (Kohler-Koch, Quittkat, Kurczewska 2013: 22–23).

The relative usefulness of traditional lobbying instruments is similarly assessed by all national BIAs and EU associations. They consider targeted contacts, personal relations and regular contacts as the most useful lobbying instruments in the EU context. The participation in different committees and expert groups is more appreciated by the EU level actors than by the national BIAs and also the scientific expertise is slightly more appreciated by the EU level BIAs. The mobilization of the public and the media is the traditional lobbying instrument the least appreciated by the BIAs, with the EU level BIAs being even more reluctant than the Polish BIAs to use this instrument.

Table 8. Opinions on usefulness of interest representation instruments

Instruments of interest representation	British BIAAs	French BIAAs	German BIAAs	Polish BIAAs	EU BIAAs
Position papers	5,0	5.4	4.7	5,0	5,0
Personal contacts	4.8	5.2	5.3	5.5	5.5
Regular contacts	4.6	4.8	4.9	5.3	5.2
Targeted contacts	4.8	4.8	5.0	5.5	5.5
Participation in committees, expert groups	4.5	4.7	4.3	5.4	5.0
Participation in forums and platforms	3.9	3.2	3.5	4.8	4.4
Participation in on-line consultations	3.2	3.9	3.5	4.3	4.2
Participation in conferences	3,0	3.4	3.6	4.3	4.1
Presentation of scientific expertise	3.4	4.5	4.0	4.8	4.4
Mobilisation of the public and the media	3.4	3.6	3.7	5.1	3.5

Note: mean; 1=not useful at all; 6=very useful.

Source: The same as in Table 1.

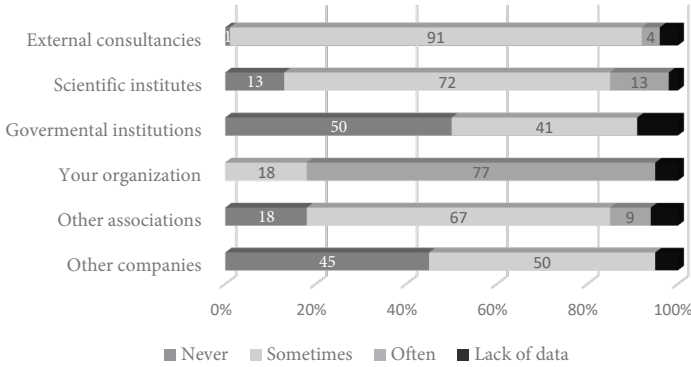
National BIAAs consider position papers more useful than participation in committees and expert groups. This can be explained by the fact that participation in expert groups and committees is usually delegated by EU BIAAs to their members. National BIAAs have to represent in such committees and expert groups rather an aggregated view than their specific national perspective. A specific national perspective would clearly be the content of a position paper written by a national BIAAs. For both, EU BIAAs and national BIAAs, the presentation of scientific expertise ranks second-last and the mobilization of the public and the media closes the list of instruments.

7. What Kind of Resources and Exchange Goods Can Polish BIAAs offer?

The primary resources that associations might possess and offer to other political actors include: expert knowledge and social support. They may either acquire expert knowledge on their own or make use of consultancy of other entities e.g. scientific institutes or external consultants. The surveyed Polish BIAAs are self-sufficient in this respect. Nearly all provide expert knowledge (including their members), only sometimes do they make use of external sources, e.g. external consultancies,

other associations, scientific institutes, other companies (see Figure 14). The expert knowledge is rarely acquired from governmental institutions. It may point to difficulties in contacts between associations and governmental institutions e.g. limited access to information or uselessness of information offered thereby.

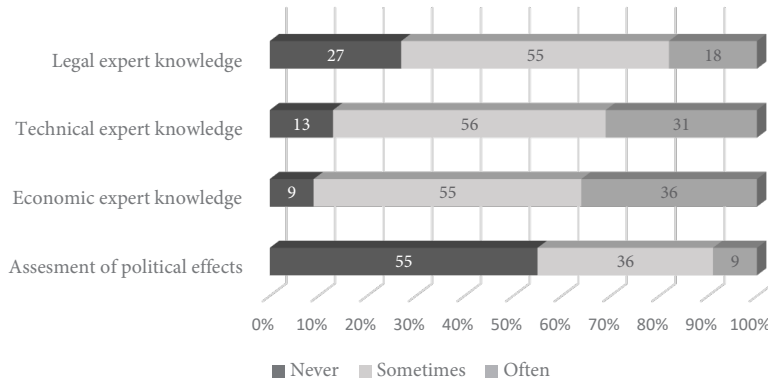
Figure 14. Resources and exchange goods of Polish BIAs (1)



Source: The same as in Figure 1.

The expert knowledge offered by the stakeholders may concern various issues e.g. technical, economic or legal. In the surveyed group of associations the most desired by political institutions is economic expert knowledge, technical expert knowledge and legal expert knowledge (see Figure 15). Hardly ever, do political institutions ask associations for assessment of political effects.

Figure 15. Resources and exchange goods of Polish BIAs (2)



Source: The same as in Figure 1.

The second resource that may be offered by associations is social support and legitimisation. The higher the status and prestige of an association, the more precious the support offered thereby. Position and status of a given organisation is determined, among others, by the number of its members and the level of its representation in a given sector (measured by the number of potential members). In a given group, half of Polish BIAs are small groups, comprised of small number of members (1–50), and half are medium-sized organisations (51–250 members) (see Table 9).

Table 9. The number of the members of Polish BIAs

Number of members	1–10	11–25	26–30	31–50	51–100	101–250	More than 250
% of BIAs	5	30	5	14	21	19	6

Source: The same as in Table 1.

However, the medium-sized ones are not very powerful, because most of their members are small and medium-sized enterprises. However a large majority of associations represents a considerably high percent of potential members: 61% groups represent 51–75% of potential members and 39% organisations acts on behalf of 76–100% of potential members(see Table 10).

Table 10. The number of the potential members of Polish BIAs

Number of members (in %)	1–25	26–50	51–75	76–100
Percent of BIAs	14	11	36	39

Source: The same as in Table 1.

Conclusions

The conditionings of the complex EU interest intermediation system, growing politicisation of EU legislation process and larger competition between stakeholders force national BIAs to create lobbying strategies different from the domestic ones. They strive to adjust them to the requirements of the European arena and expectations of the EU institutions. We may thus speak of progressing process of Europeanization of those associations and socialisation to EU context which is new to them.

Even though all business associations face these new context conditions, we should not expect convergence in the way they adapt. The reason is that national BIAs are still firmly tight to the domestic system of interest intermediation. National associations have, over many years, found equilibrium in adjusting their strategies to meet the demands of their members and to have relations with decision-making institutions. The readiness and capacity to adapt to the logic of the EU system is constrained by the fact that the national system of interest intermediation may differ considerably from the EU system. This divergence may put the associations under great stress and may impede an optimal adjustment to EU conditions. An additional constraining factor for the Europeanization of associations is that they have to be equally active in EU lobbying and in domestic politics and that EU politics takes place in a system of multi-level governance. Even a shift of decision making competence to the EU does not strip national public actors of all their political power.

Most of the Polish BIAs (68%) employ two strategies of interest representation: at the domestic level and at the EU level, whereas 1/3 does not initiate any activity towards EU institutions. Nearly all perceive the growing role of the primary EU institutions, as well as the increase in openness and accessibility thereof, but for various reasons they do not make use of the possibilities of influencing the EU decision-making process.

Polish BIAs strategies of interest representation at the EU level differ from the domestic ones: they are less developed, less intense and rooted in domestic context. If contacts with the EU institutions are maintained, they are infrequent, initiated in later stages of political process, regarded as less important than domestic relations.

Polish business associations do not make use of formal possibilities of influencing the EU legislation process directly. A large majority (88%) does not participate in consultations conducted by the European Commission because they are not registered in Transparency Register, which is obligatory for stakeholders in consultation procedures. Lack of sufficient financial resources results in associations not establishing their agencies in Brussels. Only a few organisations have such offices. This may explain to some extent why Polish BIAs highly regard the possibility of cooperation with European business federations, perceiving them to be an important channel of influencing EU policies.

Initiating and frequency of contacts of Polish BIAs with EU institutions depends neither on the role thereof in the political process, nor their accessibility, nor the character of those relations. To some extent they are influenced by factors such as growing competition between interest organisations and process of politicization.

The thesis formed herein states that one of important motives behind maintaining such contacts is the high cost of the lack of relations with the EU institutions, which seems to outweigh the benefits. It may be presumed, that total lack of access to EU decision-making processes, high uncertainty as to the progress of political process, lack of access to current information, loss of reputation and prestige, risk of the initiative being taken by other stakeholders are costs that are perceived by Polish BIAs as being too high to accept. Maintaining even sporadic contacts with the EU institutions reduces uncertainty and gives at least minimal guarantee of being present on the European arena.

The position and strength of an interest group is defined by its size, level of representation and financial resources. Nearly all Polish associations are small organisations which are quite young, have few members and small budgets. Despite that, they are characterised by a high level of interest representation in a given branch. Polish associations primarily serve a role of interest representative, to a smaller extent they deal with provision of services and market coordination, which may indicate the domination of logic of influence in their strategies. However financial dependence of associations from their members leads to escalation of the conflict between the logic of influence and the logic of members. It is an example of conflict between the 'membership logic' and 'influence logic' occurring in many business federations, described by Philippe Schmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (1999). The necessity of constant balancing between satisfying the demands of the members and possibilities of exerting pressure hinders the functioning of such groups.

Summing up, we may assume that Polish BIAs are undergoing a rapid process of Europeanization and adjustment to conditions of a complex political system of EU. However, it is a high-cost and difficult process, requiring having significant organisational, expert and financial resources, as well as the ability to balance the 'influence logic' and the 'membership logic'.

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