Pressure and Expertise

Explaining the Information Supply of Interest Groups in EU Legislative Lobbying

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Abstract. EU politics has long been portrayed as an elite affair in which technocratic deliberation prevails. As a consequence, information supply by interest groups has typically been viewed as part of an expertise-based exchange with policymakers. Less attention has been devoted to whether the supply of information is also used to exert political pressure. In addition to expertise-based exchanges between interest groups and policymakers, can we identify the prevalence of information supply that aims to put pressure on EU policymakers? And under what conditions are different modes of information supply likely to occur? My analysis relies on a set of interviews with 143 lobbyists who were active on a set of 77 legislative proposals submitted by the European Commission between 2008 and 2010. The results demonstrate that expertise-based exchanges are dominant in interactions with civil servants, while political information is predominantly communicated to political officials and often the key substance in outside lobbying tactics.
Introduction

In July 2008 the European Commission proposed a regulation to ban the trade in seal products. The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) was prominently present in the public debate about this issue. They maintained intensive contact with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and argued that “millions of EU citizens say that seal hunting is cruel and favour a complete ban.”¹ The International Fur Trade Federation (IFTF) was also very active on the issue. Although they were not as prominent in the media debates, they intensively lobbied the European Commission (EC). They mainly emphasized the technical feasibility of labelling and tracing seal products, and they informed policymakers about the proposal’s economic consequences and costs.

This example illustrates two different modes of information supply. The first is characterised by the transmission of technical, legal, and economic expertise, and it is the predominant way in which the interaction between lobbyists and policymakers in the EU has been characterized. More specifically, information is often seen as a ‘currency’ in expertise-based exchanges between EU lobbyists and policymakers (Broscheid and Coen, 2007; Chalmers, 2011). Policymakers face complex policy problems and to solve them they need different sorts of expertise and know-how. Usually they lack detailed information on each policy issue they care about and time pressure prevents them from collecting all the relevant information themselves. This leads them to seek information from external sources, such as interest organizations (Dür and De Bièvre, 2007; Van Schendelen, 2010).

The other mode of information supply, as embodied by the IFAW in the example, is characterized by the supply of political information. By signalling the level of public support and opposition, organized interests try to pressure policymakers to take into account the

¹ European Voice 26/02/2009
preferences of their members and supporters. Especially policymakers who depend on public support, such as elected politicians, are likely to be susceptible to such pressure (Kollman, 1998; Schattschneider, 1960). Pressure politics builds on the notion policymakers need to be responsive to societal pressures and demands because they may otherwise be penalized through democratic control mechanisms (such as elections) (Schattschneider, 1960).

These two modes of information supply correspond with two different views on participatory democracy and interest representation in the EU. A prevalence of expertise-based exchanges reflects a technocratic and apolitical EU policymaking sphere, in which discretion and rational deliberation carries the day. In contrast, pressure politics resonates better with the image of the EU as a pluralist and democratic policymaking system, one that is receptive to public pressure and popular demands.

Establishing the prevalence of both these modes of information supply and the conditions under which they are likely to occur is an important ingredient to understanding interest group politics in the EU. EU politics has long been portrayed as an elite dominated affair in which rational deliberation and technical expertise prevail (see for instance Hooghe and Marks, 2009). As a result, information supply by interest groups has typically been viewed as part of an expertise-based exchange between policymakers and interest groups (see for instance Bouwen, 2002; Broscheid and Coen, 2007). But as the example about the trade in seal products shows, it is plausible that interest groups may also frequently seek to exert political pressure through the supply of political information. Thinking about the increased levels of politicization and public scrutiny of EU lobbying processes (Hooghe and Marks, 2009; Kriesi, et al., 2007), information supply aimed at pressuring policymakers with political information might have become a viable strategy to influence EU legislative outcomes. Hence, in this paper, I seek to answer the following questions: Is interest representation in the EU indeed dominated by expertise-based exchanges with bureaucratic elites? Or can we also
identify a prominent mode of information supply that intends to exert political pressure on policymakers through the supply of political information? And under what conditions are the two modes of information supply likely to occur?

This paper is structured as follows. In the next section, I first develop an account of the two modes of information supply in lobbying and discuss how they correspond with the supply of different types of information (legal, technical, economic, political). The second section specifies this further by developing research hypotheses regarding the conditions under which these different types of information are supplied. I then briefly describe the novel dataset used for my analysis. This is followed by a qualitative and quantitative analysis which demonstrates the prevalence of the two modes of information supply and the conditions under which they occur. In the last section, I conclude and offer some further reflections.

**Two modes of information supply**

As argued by Mahoney (2008), classifying different types of information is not easy as there is not one agreed upon typology. Yet, based on the literature, we can draw a distinction between technical, economic, legal, and political information. Technical information as supplied by interests organizations refers to substantive expert information about the scientific aspects, the feasibility, or the effectiveness of a certain policy (see for instance Michalowitz, 2004; Mahoney, 2008; Bouwen, 2002). Economic information concerns the economic impact of a certain policy, such as the effect on employment or the financial costs a policy generates for societal stakeholders (Mahoney, 2008; Chalmers 2013). Legal information includes the administrative and legal constraints regarding a certain policy, such as its compatibility with former treaties and existing legislation (Eising, 2007a). This information is often communicated in legal or legislative ‘language’ (Chalmers, 2013). Finally, political information refers to the level of political and societal support for a policy. It is less tied to the
substance of a policy, but more to how the policy is supported by relevant stakeholders (see for instance Dür & De Bièvre, 2007; Michalowitz, 2004). By supplying political information an interest organization signals the level of support it enjoys for its own policy positions (for instance, from the broader public, or from a specific constituency, such as the agricultural or the banking industry). Importantly, I do not claim that these information types are mutually exclusive. Sometimes lobbyists will combine different types of information. Nevertheless, the analytical distinction proposed here allows me to assess more systematically how lobbyists supply information to policymakers.

Based on their properties to either pressure policymakers or serve as a currency in expertise-based exchanges, I categorize the use of the former four information types into two modes of information supply. First, a lobbyist may seek to supply policy-related expertise to a specific policymaker. Lobbying activities serving this purpose can be seen as part of an expertise-based exchange process; interest organizations exchange policy-related expertise with policymakers and hope to gain access or influence in return (Bouwen, 2002; Denzau & Munger, 1986; Greenwood, Grote, & Ronit, 1992; Klüver, 2013). This mode of information supply is characterized by the supply of technical, economic, and legal expertise. Second, a lobbyist may try convey political information, signalling the level of support for their positions to policymakers. The supply of political information may put political pressure on policymakers and seek to persuade them to change an existing policy (or keep it unchanged), so that it corresponds with the prevailing political views among the represented constituents. Not complying with these demands may result in the loss of constituency support or even electoral damage (Kollman, 1998; Schattschneider, 1960). Policymakers might submit to interest group pressure in order to prevent these undesirable consequences, and not so much in return for valuable information (Bentley, 1995; Smith, 2000).
Of course, one might argue that political information can be conveyed as an exchange good or that technical, economic, and legal information can be used for pressure politics as well. But although different information types might be used for both purposes, I assume that generally political information aligns much better with pressure politics, while economic, legal, and technical information serve as the key currencies in expertise-based exchanges. Technical, legal, and economic information is helpful to policymakers when they seek to fine-tune the details of a specific legislative proposal or amendment. Political information, such as the amount or the nature of political support, does not directly impact the content of a legislative text, but indicates the political viability of a specific policy and signals the political leeway policymakers have in drafting new or amending existing legislation.

**Research hypotheses**

My research hypotheses build on a conceptualization of lobbying as a communication process in which a messenger (an interest group) conveys a message to a receiver (policymakers) through a channel within a given context and with a certain effect (Austen-Smith & Wright, 1992; Lasswell, 1948; Milbrath, 1960; Manheim, 2010). In short, I argue that the mode of information supply is reflected in whom lobbyists target, how information is communicated and the specific issue which a lobbyist seeks to influence. Moreover, I submit that information supply is driven by the purpose of a lobbyist to pressure policymakers and/or engage with them in expertise-based exchanges.

As messengers of information, interest organizations are constrained by their own capacities. Simply stated, interest organizations supply technical, economic, legal, or political information because they are capable of supplying it. For instance, a business association has, because of its economic activities, inside information on a particular economic sector which seems to make it more likely that it will use economic or sector-specific technical
information. This perspective is in line with much research on lobbying strategies which argues that the information organized interests supply is primarily a function of the represented constituency and the capabilities contained within the organization (Bouwen, 2002; Coen and Katsaitis, 2013; Dür and De Bièvre, 2007). It implies that interest organizations engage in either expertise-based exchanges or pressure politics, simply because their capabilities or organizational form allows them to. Nevertheless, since recent empirical studies have shown that also the lobbying efforts of NGOs and resource-poor interest groups can be considerably expertise-based (see Chalmers, 2013; Yackee and Yackee, 2006; Baroni 2014), I do not expect organizational characteristics to significantly affect information supply.

I do expect a lobbyist is likely to supply a specific type of information because the targeted political venue is more receptive to either pressure politics or expertise-based exchanges. When an interest organization develops its lobbying strategies and selects the type of information it will supply, it is likely to consider the appropriateness of pressure politics or expertise-based exchanges. The more receptive a political venue is to pressure politics, the higher the chance that political information will be conveyed. Political venues with a higher demand for policy expertise are likely to receive more technical, economic, and legal expertise.

To elaborate this further, I specify the expected variation in receptiveness to pressure politics and expertise-based exchanges for three key EU institutions and connect this to the type of information lobbyists supply. In its role as legislative agenda-setter, the European Commission (EC) often faces complex and technical challenges. In order to develop effective policies, the EC is likely to focus on seeking external expert information (Bouwen, 2002; Chalmers, 2013; Greenwood, 2011; Spence and Stevens, 2006). As most EU policies aim to regulate specific economic practices, the EC needs detailed technical information on existing industrial standards and processes. Moreover, once a piece of legislation is adopted by the
Council and the European Parliament, the EC also monitors and oversees the implementation and transposition in the member states. Hence, the EC is strongly in need of credible information on the technical, legal, and economic implications of the legislation it initiates (Eising, 2007a; Michalowitz, 2004). Commissioners are not elected by the European public, but appointed by the Council of Ministers, so the link between the EC and the European public remains relatively opaque. The EC, thus, depends less on the direct support from European or domestic constituencies and will, therefore, be less sensitive to pressure politics.

This contrasts with the informational receptiveness of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). Due to their legislative role, MEPs are likely to rely less on information of an administrative or technical nature (Michalowitz, 2004), and more likely to rely on political information. Moreover, in order for MEPs to represent their electoral constituencies, they need information on the extent to which a specific policy has the support of their constituents (Chalmers, 2013; Kohler-Koch, 1998; Lehmann, 2009). As they are directly elected politicians, MEPs depend more strongly on public support compared to Commission officials, which makes them more receptive to pressure politics. Not complying with political pressures involves the risk of losing their constituent’s support and electoral damage in the long run.

Finally, the Council represents the member-state governments and its main role is to adopt legislation, mostly as a co-decision maker with the EP (Greenwood, 2011; Hauser, 2011). In order to do so, technical, legal, and economic expertise is needed. Yet, Council officials are primarily connected to the member-state executives and should be able to justify their decisions to their political principals in the national parliaments and national political parties (Michalowitz, 2004). This also makes them subject to political pressure. Overall, Council officials will avoid adopting policies which do not enjoy enough support within their member states, as such policies could result in a loss of public support at home. Hence,
Council officials are also likely to be receptive to information about public support for policy proposals.

To summarize, the different institutional venues in the EU have a varying receptivity for expertise-based exchanges and pressure politics. This is likely to be reflected in the information interest organizations provide to these political venues. When approaching these venues, organised interests will seek to supply information that fits best with each venue in terms of either pressure exertion or expertise-based exchanges. Hence, I propose the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: Political information is most likely to be communicated to the EP, then to the Council, and then to the EC. Technical, economic, and legal information is most likely to be communicated to the EC, then to the Council, and then to the EP.*

Second, organised interests may also adjust the communicated information to the *channels* through which they communicate. Different channels align better with either expertise-based exchanges or pressure politics. Information can be conveyed through various channels, ranging from detailed research reports to position papers and e-mails. Channels that allow for precise detail and scientific scrutiny (for instance, research reports), are better for the transmission of detailed economic, legal, and technical information, than channels that require a more dense and concise message, such as an email or a position paper. In contrast, political information (for instance, on the level of support a specific piece of legislation enjoys) can be conveyed in a dense message, which makes a reference to the policy position of the organization or to relevant opinion polls. Hence, we should expect that channels which allow for detail and elaboration will coincide with the supply of technical, economic, and
legal information, while political information will coincide with channels that require a brief and a concise message.

_Hypothesis 2: Communication channels that allow for detail and elaboration will attract the supply of technical, economic, and legal information, while political information is more likely to be transmitted through channels that require a more concise message._

Related to this is the level of public visibility of a communication channel. Channels that serve to increase public visibility, such as press releases, rely on information that draws the public’s attention and that concedes to the requirements of news value and journalistic routines. This limits the usage of long and detailed statements on the technical, economic, and legal intricacies of a specific policy. Moreover the use of these public channels aligns well with the purpose of pressure politics. By communicating via these channels and reaching out to a wider audience, interest organizations seek political attention and expand the scope of conflict.

Overall, detailed technical, economic, and legal information is difficult to transmit in the public sphere, while expert reports are more easily shared via direct communication channels, not out in the open (Beyers, 2008). Therefore, in order to attract the attention of media gatekeepers (i.e., journalists), public statements ought to be less sophisticated, need to be somewhat confrontational, and should emphasize political rather than technical and legal information. Interest organizations seeking to engage in expertise-based exchanges are also less likely to rely on public channels of communication. Not only because the information conveyed in these exchanges is more easily communicated via direct interactions, but also because publicly exchanging this type of information might arouse undesired contestation or
politicization. This does not mean that expert information cannot be communicated via media-oriented channels, but it needs to be less elaborate, with a lower degree of detail. As political information is more suited for transmission via media oriented channels, I expect that lobbyists who more intensively make use of them are more likely to transmit political information, while they will less likely articulate technical, economic, and legal information.

Hypothesis 3: Interest organizations that rely intensively on media oriented communication channels will be more likely to transmit political information and will be less likely to voice technical, economic, and legal information.

Finally, information is not supplied in some vacuum, but instead it is strongly affected by the specific policy issue at stake. More specifically, each issue embodies different contextual features such as how many stakeholders are seeking influence and how conflictual or salient an issue is. Interest group scholars increasingly emphasize the contextualized nature of policy issues in their analyses of lobbying practices (see for instance Baumgartner et al. 2009; Lowery and Gray, 2004; Klüver et al., 2015). Some have looked at how the issue-context affects the arguments raised by interest organizations (Baumgartner, et al., 2009; Mahoney, 2008), but there has not been much systematic and large-N empirical research on how contextual features related to specific policy issues affect information supply in EU legislative lobbying. Basically, I argue that the relevance of a certain piece of information needs to be assessed as an ingredient of the specific context that surrounds concrete policy issues. Usually lobbying processes are focused on specific policy issues. Importantly, the issue at stake thus is expected to affect the mode of information supply a lobbyist adopts, but the use of particular information types or communication channels is not presumed to affect the selection of issues.
One of the key features of an issue is its public salience. Public issue salience is understood as the visibility of a certain policy issue among policymakers, stakeholders, and the broader public (Baumgartner et al., 2009; Mahoney, 2008; Klüver et al., 2015). Baumgartner and his colleagues (2009) have analysed how argumentation varies depending on the public salience of policy issues in American politics, and they observed a small, but significant result, indicating that some argument types are less likely to be used for publicly salient issues. Mahoney (2008) has demonstrated that argumentation co-varies with the salience and complexity of issues, more specifically that interest organizations in both the US and the EU are more likely to use technical arguments for issues of low salience. I expect a similar result for the supply of information in EU legislative lobbying processes, namely that legislative proposals of low salience stimulate technical debates in which expertise-based exchanges of legal, economic, and technical information prevail. Legislation that is more salient to the broader public, on the other hand, I expect to trigger interest groups to engage in pressure politics and to make symbolic, politicizing claims about the consequences of a policy to their constituency or the broader public.

*Hypothesis 4: The public salience of policy issues increases the chance that a lobbyist will communicate political information, while it decreases the chance that technical, economic, and legal information is voiced by interest organizations.*

Alternatively, the salience of policy issues can also be understood from an actor-centred perspective. While public salience pertains to the visibility of policy issues to the broader public, organizational salience concerns the importance one particular actor attributes to an issue (Leuffen, et al., 2014; Warntjen, 2012). When issues enter the EU legislative realm, some will be seen as important by interest organizations, while others will be
considered trivial. The degree of importance an organization attributes to an issue does not necessarily always coincide with the public salience of that issue. On the contrary, issues that are conceived of as important by one or a small set of stakeholders, may purposefully be kept behind the scenes because any public attention may backfire (De Bruycker and Beyers, 2015; Danielian and Page, 1994). While public salience may stimulate pressure politics instead of expertise-based exchanges, organizational salience is expected to raise overall lobbying expenditures and, therefore, to stimulate both pressure politics and expertise-based exchanges (Beyers, 2004). When issues show a low level of organizational salience, organized interests will likely decrease their overall political activities, and refrain from or only sparsely invest in active information supply. This leads me to expect that interest organizations which attribute much salience to an issue, will more intensively supply all types of information, while when an issue is considered less important lobbyists will less actively engage in information supply.

*Hypothesis 5: The more important an interest organization considers an issue, the more likely it will communicate technical, legal, economic and political information.*

**Data and Research Design**

The data used to test the foregoing hypotheses are part of a larger project on EU legislative lobbying which aims to analyse lobbying practices and the influence of interest groups for a sample of 125 European legislative proposals (directives and regulations) the EC submitted between 2008 and 2010. The sampling procedure for constructing this data set was inspired by the approach of Thomson (2011; for details see Beyers et al., 2014b). The dataset contains 143 interviews conducted with representatives of 111 different EU-level interest
organisations. From the interviewed interest organisations, 86 percent were EU level interest organisations. The largest part (64 percent) of the respondents represented business associations, while 29 percent represented NGOs and 8 percent represented professional organisations, specific firms, or labour unions. These numbers correspond well with the overall population of interest organisations active in EU policymaking (Wonka et al., 2010).

During the semi-structured interviews, lobbyists were asked whether they varied their messages based on the political venue they targeted, and, if so, how they varied their messages. In the next section, I first qualitatively explore the interview data. Then, I present a quantitative analysis for which I use a multivariate probit analysis in which the dependent variables specify whether or not a lobbyist supplied a particular type of information (technical, economic, legal, or political). I rely on the different types of information as dependent variables and not the modes of information supply, so I can evaluate whether information types within one mode (technical, economic and legal information) are predicted by similar explanatory variables. The multivariate probit regression is a generalization of the probit model and estimates several correlated binary dependent variables simultaneously. In the multivariate probit regression error terms across the equations may be correlated and the strength of these correlations are estimated and controlled for (Cappellari and Jenkins, 2003). The model thus accounts for the fact that the use of a certain type of information may stimulate or inhibit the use of another type of information, and that some types of information

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2 The interviews were not carried out for all 125 sampled proposals; 40 proposals were dropped because no lobbying activity could be identified for these cases. Another 8 proposals were dropped because no interest organisations could be convinced to cooperate in an interview or nobody within one of the identified interest organisation had enough memory on the specific proposal they were selected for. This resulted in 77 proposals for which one or more lobbyists were interviewed.

3 Interview evidence has some clear advantages. For instance, it allowed me to capture both informal and formal channels of interest representation and it gives some valuable additional qualitative information. There are also some risks with interviewing experts as they could behave strategically and respond in a social-desirable manner (Beyers et al., 2014a). Alternatively, I might have used content analysis instead of interview data. One of the drawbacks for textual sources is that many lobbying activities are not textually recorded and that much relevant written material is simply not publicly available and difficult to come by. Indeed, content-analysis might provide me with a useful robustness check (see below), but it is limited in sketching a similar comprehensive overview of the information groups provided and the strategies they employed in a large number of legislative processes.
are content-wise related to each other or even to some extent overlap. I used a dichotomous measure of information use, which is admittedly rather crude; however, this has some important advantages in terms of validity and reliability. Generally, respondents had no problem with identifying which type of information they provided to whom, but they faced more difficulties in expressing this in terms of an intensity. So although a continuous measure might have resulted in a more fine-grained understanding of information supply, the difficulties with scaling intensity, plus the propensity of respondents to use different subjective standards to estimate intensity, means a continuous measure might have resulted in a measure that looks precise, but is actually a bit artificial and could distort to the overall validity and reliability of my analysis.

To deal with potential clustering caused by the inclusion of repeated measures at the level of legislative proposals and the level of interest organisations active on proposals, I used robust standard errors clustered at the proposal and interest group level. The data was stacked based on the institutional venue the information was provided to (European Commission, European Parliament, and Council) which results in three entries per interview; because of non-responses in six interviews the dataset consists of 411 data-points.

The political venues targeted were modelled as independent variables to test whether lobbyists supply different types of information depending on whom they target (Hypothesis 1). To test Hypothesis 2, I included two variables that refer to the usage of two types of channels that vary in terms of the degree of elaboration allowed. A first dichotomous variable indicates whether an interest organization has published position papers on a specific proposal and a second dichotomous variable whether an interest organization has published research reports. The underlying assumption is that research reports allow more elaboration than position papers, which require a concise clarification of the organization’s position. The use of research reports is then expected to coincide with the supply of technical, legal, and
economic information while communication though position papers should correspond with a higher propensity to use political information. To assess how the use of media oriented channels affects information supply (Hypothesis 3), I established an index based on three strongly correlated Likert-type items that assess the extent to which lobbyists used different media oriented channels (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.84; see Online Appendix).

To measure the public salience of an issue (Hypothesis 4) I took a similar approach as Baumgartner and colleagues (2009) and Mahoney (2008) by counting the number of articles that discussed the legislative proposals in six different media outlets (Financial Times, Euractiv, Agence Europe, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, European Voice and Le Monde; for more details see De Bruycker and Beyers, 2015). The salience attributed to an issue by interest organizations (Hypothesis 5) was measured as a categorical variable identifying whether the lobbyists perceived the issue (1) as more important, (2) as important, or (3) as less important compared to other issues she had worked on.

Apart from these explanatory variables also some key control variables were taken into account in the model. As mentioned earlier, much of the literature has focused on the organizational characteristics of interest organizations to explain the types of information they supply. Business interests are often seen as more capable in supplying technical, legal, and economic information, while civil society interests are often thought to rely more on political information (see for instance Beyers, 2008; Dür and De Bièvre, 2007; Klüver, 2012). To control for this, all organisations were coded as either civil society groups, encompassing business interests, or specialized business interests. Specialized business interests include interest organisations active in one particular sector or industry (for instance, the European Fruit Juice Association), individual firms, and professional organisations. Encompassing business interests are cross-sectoral business organisations, such as BusinessEurope. Some research shows that the positions groups take vis-à-vis policy issues affects their
argumentation patterns (Baumgartner, et al., 2009; Mahoney, 2008). To control for this, I included the policy position of an interest group in the model. This was measured as a categorical variable identifying whether the lobbyists (1) supported the EC’s proposal, (2) sought to shape some parts, or (3) sought to change most or block the legislative proposal. Finally, also the resources available to an interest organization have been mentioned as an important factor affecting information supply (see for instance Klüver, 2012). To control for this, I included the overall staff (logged) an interest organization employs in its Brussels office as a control variable.

**Results**

For each of the 77 legislative proposals, respondents were asked what their main lobbying message was and whether they changed their message depending on which institutional venue they addressed. Of the respondents, 30 percent claimed to have tailored their message to the institutional venue. For instance, with regard to messages directed at the EC, various respondents indicated that these contained more detailed and technical information on particular policy proposals. Or, as one NGO representative put it: ‘MEPs have less time and less knowledge, so you have to get straight to the point. In approaching the Commission, you can be more detailed and provide more background. When talking to the Member States, you have to take into account the national context.’ [id 73500].

Respondents also indicated that their messages towards MEPs are technically less detailed and sophisticated, and that they contained more political information, especially in comparison to the messages directed at the Commission. As a business lobbyist put it, ‘We have a general position, but we have to speak a different language depending on who we speak to. For some MEPs we have to take a few steps back and explain the whole issue to them in simple terms.’ [id 70274]. Messages aimed at the Council were generally indicated to
be more tailored to the national context. A car industry lobbyist, for instance, noted the following: ‘When contacting a member state delegate we would emphasize the interest of her or his particular member state.’ [id 10971].

Some respondents spontaneously mentioned that they had also adapted their messages depending on how they communicated information, and more specifically on whether they contacted policymakers directly or via the media oriented channels. For instance, an industry representative [id 60090] lobbying on the 2008 Commission proposal concerning falsified medicinal products stated that when he contacted journalists he would emphasize public health issues, while with policymakers he would focus on the technical aspects of the proposals, such as their workability and implementation.

The former discussion gave a qualitative account of how interest organisations vary their information supply. Next, I statistically tested whether the different modes of information supply were reflected in the data. Technical information clearly dominates lobbying processes as 77 percent of the 143 respondents indicated that they provided technical information, while 46 percent supplied political information, 39 percent legal information, and 50 percent economic information. One might object here that respondents would have hesitated to report on the use of political information, because pressure politics might be seen as inappropriate. However, there are good reasons to consider the measures I have used as robust. Recently, Baroni (2014) analysed the same set of legislative proposals as the one I analysed for this paper. She coded a large set of position papers that interest groups had published; her results also show that interest organizations more intensively supply technical information than political information (see also Chalmers 2011).

Table 1 presents the multivariate probit regression model with as dependent variables whether or not technical, political, economic, or legal information was supplied to policymakers. The model offers a significant improvement in explanatory value compared to
the null model. The error terms of all equations are significantly correlated, except between the equations for economic and technical information (r2) and between technical and political information (r1).

**INSERT TABLE 1 HERE**

Clearly, different information types tend to be combined. The statistical model also demonstrates, however, that distinct information types are used in significantly different ways. As anticipated (Hypothesis 1), interest organizations vary the information they supply depending on the political venue they contact. The specific ranking that was expected is also observed in the results (see Figure 1). The EC is most likely to be supplied with technical, economic, and legal information, then the Council and, finally, the EP, and vice versa for political information. However, the hypothesis could only be confirmed in full for technical and legal information. While indeed technical, legal, and economic information is significantly more likely to be supplied to the EC than the EP, the difference in the supply of economic information between the Council and the EC is not significant. Additionally, the difference with the Council is not significant. The finding that information supplied to the Council does not yield significant results is in line with the observations by Michalowitz (2004) who argues that information exchange with the Council is less predictable than for other institutions. One possible reason for this finding is that Council-officials are systematically receptive to political information from domestic constituencies (see also Bouwen, 2002; 2004), while other information types are not provided to the Council in a systematic fashion.

[Figure 2 about here]
Figure 1 presents the mean predicted probabilities for the supply of technical and political information. Interest organisations that target the EC have a mean probability of 0.75 (S.E.=0.01) that they will convey technical information, while when targeting the EP this probability drops to 0.51 (S.E.=0.02). Similar patterns are observed for legal and economic information, but these are less pronounced. When the EP is targeted, the mean probability of supplying political information is 0.51 (S.E. =0.01), while for the EC this is 0.33 (S.E.=0.01). These observations reveal that the types of information interest groups supply vary depending on the political venues they target. Especially the differences between the EC and the EP are pronounced.

With regard to the second explanatory factor, the effect of communication channels on information supply, Hypothesis 2 is rebutted in full. Neither the use of research reports nor the use of position papers is significantly related to the supply of any of the information types. To get further confirmation of this null-finding, studying the use of channels other than research reports and position papers (such as face-to-face contacts, email, and social media) and their relationship with the supply of different information types may be a suitable research strategy to pursue. Unfortunately this goes beyond the scope of this article.

Hypothesis 3 gets some support as the use of media oriented channels results in a more intensive usage of political information. The effect of media oriented channels is illustrated in Figure 2, which shows that actors who never used media oriented channels have a mean predicted probability of 0.26 (S.E.=0.01) of voicing political information, while those who relied very strongly on media oriented channels have a mean predicted probability of 0.65 (S.E.=0.03). The supply of political information is thus clearly connected to a more intensive usage of public lobbying channels. I could not find a significant effect for the other information types. The null findings for the supply of technical, legal, and economic information and outside lobbying might be due to the fact that some lobbyists do supply
technical information via public lobbying channels. Probably, this expertise can be portrayed in a more condensed language, which makes it suitable for public arenas. Yet, the degree of elaboration cannot be grasped with the measures I use for this paper, which might explain my results. Generally, interest organisations that seek media attention show a higher propensity to voice political concerns, which feeds the public image of interest groups as agents of politicization. Nonetheless, the same organised interests will operate differently when they come in touch with the EC, which will then mostly be supplied with technical expertise.

[Hypothesis 4 is rebutted in full. Interestingly, legislative proposals that show a higher level of public visibility do not generate substantial differences in the type of information supplied. However, this does not mean that the specific issue-context is entirely irrelevant. The analysis of organizational salience (Hypothesis 5) shows that interest groups which perceive some issue as relatively more important are indeed inclined to increase their overall lobbying activities and are more likely to supply policymakers with technical, legal, and political information. Also for economic information a positive effect is observed, although it is not significant. These results show that when the stakes are high, interest organizations seem to put several irons in the fire to try and increase the supply of all types of information in seeking to realize their policy objectives (see also Beyers, 2004). Interestingly, the informational strategy of an individual interest organisation seems less constrained by the public salience of the issue, but more affected by the importance they themselves attribute to a policy issue.

The type of organised interest does not systematically predict why lobbyists supply different types of information. Civil society groups, encompassing business associations, and specialized business interests do not significantly differ in terms of supplying technical, legal, and political information. For economic information, there is, however, a significant effect of
group type. Also the overall number of staff employed by an interest organization had no effect on the propensity to communicate different information types. These findings contradict claims sometimes made in the literature that business interests and resourceful organizations generally have some information advantage because they are more capable to provide substantive technical information. It also rejects the notion that civil society groups specialize predominantly in supplying political information (see for instance Coen and Katsaitis, 2013; Dür and De Bièvre, 2007). In short, lobbying initiated by civil society groups or less resourceful groups is not significantly less expertise-based. Or to put it differently, also resourceful groups and business interests are involved in pressure politics.

The control for policy position shows interesting and puzzling results. Groups that seek to block/change most of a proposal, or amend some parts of it, are more likely to supply policymakers with technical information (when compared to those who fully support an EC proposal). The position interest organisations take towards policy proposals is not or only marginally related to the other information types. The analysis suggests that technical information is used extensively by those who seek to change or even block the EC’s legislative proposals. Yet, here I should remain careful with drawing far-reaching conclusions. It is certainly possible that those who oppose some policy are more intensively supplying their allies (and not their opponents) with technical information as compared to those who support some EC proposal. To arrive at a more fine-grained understanding of how an organised interest’s position affects its informational strategy, it is thus warranted to consider how its position aligns with the positions of the targeted political venues. Such an endeavour, however, goes beyond the scope of this paper and remains to be explored in future research.
Conclusions

This paper set out to identify the prevalence of different modes of information supply and under which conditions they are likely to occur. For this purpose I conceived of lobbying as a communication process in which a messenger (the interest group) communicates information (the message) to a receiver (the political venue) via a communication channel in a specific context (Austen-Smith and Wright, 1992; Manheim, 2010; Milbrath, 1960). I conceptually distinguished between two modes of information supply, namely pressure politics in which interest groups provide policymakers with political information and expertise-based exchanges in which groups provide policymakers with policy expertise.

In line with some recent research (see for instance Chalmers, 2011; Michalowitz, 2004), my empirical analysis suggests that, in general, interest organisations prioritize the supply of technical information above other information types in EU legislative lobbying. Importantly, however, my results suggest that interest group type has little impact on which type of information is supplied to policymakers (see Chalmers, 2013; Yackee and Yackee, 2006). Instead of interest group type, the political venues as well as the communication channels used appear as much more powerful explanatory factors. The two modes of information supply, thus, seem to be reflected in the communication channels a lobbyist relies on and the targeted political venues. For instance, irrespective of the group type, supplying political information is much more likely to happen when interest groups approach the EP and when there is a strong reliance on public lobbying channels. In addition, expertise-based exchanges—characterized by the supply of technical, economic, and legal information—are much more prominent when lobbyists seek to influence the EC and are not significantly related to their activities in the public realm. Finally, the more important an organised interest deems an issue, the higher its efforts to combine the two modes of information supply.
These findings have implications that go beyond the interest group literature as they provide a more nuanced insight into the functioning of the EU political system and how political representation works in the EU. Although EU interest representation has long been portrayed as an elite affair in which apolitical and technical information prevails (see for instance Hooghe and Marks, 2009), my findings point at the politicizing potential of EU interest representation. Admittedly, technical information is used more intensively, but interest organizations also rely substantially on political information to represent their views. When transmitting political information, interest groups tend to prioritize parliamentarians and use media oriented channels. In this respect, my insights add to some other recent accounts that point at how lobbying could contribute to the politicization of EU public policymaking (Beyers, 2004; Chalmers, 2013; De Bruycker and Beyers, 2015). This study also illustrates that the multiple venues the EU consists of show a significantly distinct sensitiveness to different types of information, which implies that information that is not or cannot be transmitted to one particular venue can still be conveyed to another. Of course, although this does not guarantee a perfectly balanced transmission of information, it demonstrates that the EU political system is clearly able to appeal to multiple types of information.
Acknowledgements

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Table 1. Multivariate Probit Regression Type of Information Supplied to Policymakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Technical info</th>
<th>Economic info</th>
<th>Legal info</th>
<th>Political info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>-0.27 (0.35)</td>
<td>-0.48 (0.42)</td>
<td>-0.43 (0.39)</td>
<td>-1.56*** (0.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explanatory variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>-0.69*** (0.11)</td>
<td>-0.12 (0.08)</td>
<td>-0.29*** (0.09)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Parliament</td>
<td>-0.71*** (0.13)</td>
<td>-0.16* (0.09)</td>
<td>-0.25*** (0.08)</td>
<td>0.53*** (0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission (ref)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of position papers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-0.33 (0.28)</td>
<td>0.08 (0.31)</td>
<td>0.20 (0.32)</td>
<td>-0.14 (0.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (ref)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of research reports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0.24 (0.22)</td>
<td>-0.04 (0.23)</td>
<td>-0.02 (0.22)</td>
<td>0.09 (0.23)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No (ref)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of media oriented channels (intensity)</td>
<td>0.04 (0.04)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.04)</td>
<td>0.00 (0.04)</td>
<td>0.08*** (0.04)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media salience (ln)</td>
<td>0.10 (0.10)</td>
<td>0.08 (0.12)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.11)</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.11)</td>
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<td>Organizational salience</td>
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<tr>
<td>More than other issues</td>
<td>0.50** (0.24)</td>
<td>0.40 (0.29)</td>
<td>0.49* (0.28)</td>
<td>0.59** (0.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal as other issues</td>
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<td>0.31 (0.28)</td>
<td>0.29 (0.28)</td>
<td>0.36 (0.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than other issues</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Control variables</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Group type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil society</td>
<td>0.00 (0.23)</td>
<td>-0.52** (0.24)</td>
<td>-0.22 (0.24)</td>
<td>0.27 (0.24)</td>
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<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encompassing business interest</td>
<td>-0.05 (0.29)</td>
<td>0.43 (0.32)</td>
<td>-0.22 (0.32)</td>
<td>0.41 (0.35)</td>
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<td>Specialized business interest (ref)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff (ln)</td>
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<td>0.01 (0.08)</td>
<td>0.10 (0.08)</td>
<td>-0.05 (0.08)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Block or shape most of the proposal</td>
<td>0.58** (0.26)</td>
<td>0.40 (0.28)</td>
<td>-0.10 (0.29)</td>
<td>0.33 (0.29)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shape parts of the proposal</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Support the proposal (ref)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Estimated correlations</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic info</td>
<td>0.08 (0.11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal info</td>
<td>0.39*** (0.12)</td>
<td>0.31** (0.12)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political info</td>
<td>0.11 (0.11)</td>
<td>0.28** (0.12)</td>
<td>0.23** (0.11)</td>
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<td><strong>Model fit statistics</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>n</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wald Chi (52)</td>
<td>225.76</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prob &gt; chi2</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Coefficients are presented with robust standard errors between brackets and significance level indicated by:
*α<0.1
**α<0.05
***α<0.01
Figure 1. Mean predicted probabilities that technical and political information is supplied (95% confidence intervals)

![Graph](image1)

Figure 2: Mean predicted probabilities that political information is supplied (95% confidence intervals)

![Graph](image2)

Literature


Beyers, J. (2008) 'Policy issues, organisational format and the political strategies of interest organisations'. West European Politics, Vol. 31, No. 6, pp. 1188-211.


