Regional influence on EU policymaking: participation, preferences and success

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Preface

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1. Introduction

This study deals with the question whether and under what circumstances sub-national authorities (SNAs) influence EU policymaking. SNAs have politically mobilized in Brussels to represent their interests directly at the EU level. While various aspects of regional mobilization have been studied, the question whether such mobilization generates influence over policy outcomes has been debated extensively but hardly answered empirically. This dissertation highlights the conditions under which SNAs are likely to express preferences about EU policy, discerns patterns of political constellations SNAs are involved in, and identifies the determinants of regional policy success. The premise of this study is that the policy environment in which SNAs operate matters when representing their interests in Brussels. What other stakeholders are politically active and what they want creates opportunities as well as constraints for SNAs to be active and influential key players in EU policymaking. The dissertation has six chapters. In this introduction I sketch the background and puzzle emphasizing why it is relevant to study regional influence in the EU. Next I discuss some key concepts and provide an overview of how the other five chapters will address the research question.

1.1. Background and puzzle

Since the post-war era public policymaking in Europe has been characterized by two fundamental developments. On the one hand, processes of decentralization have in most states led to the formation of sub-national authorities (SNAs) with some substantial policy competencies in their jurisdictions. Because of the transfer of political competences from the national level to the sub-national level, SNAs have gained an increasingly important role in making and implementing public policies (Hooghe, Marks, & Schakel, 2010). On the other hand, European states have simultaneously transferred political competences upwards to the European Union (EU) as well. As EU policies expanded into fields which fall under the competences of SNAs, regional governments and parliaments now frequently need to take care of the implementation of these EU laws. However, while central government are represented in the Council of Ministers (Council) the institutional set-up of the EU severely limits SNAs’ formal participation in supranational policymaking processes. Hence, as a result
of the interplay of decentralization and European integration, SNAs are faced with a challenge: in many policy areas they are left with less decision-making power while increasingly bearing the burden of implementing policies made at the EU-level.

Because the EU’s institutional set-up does not formally guarantee the inclusion of regional policy preferences, it has been argued that it suffers from regional blindness (Tatham, 2014; Weatherill & Bernitz, 2005). Proponents of this claim point to a formal remoteness to the concerns of SNAs and the centrality of member states effectuated by the Treaties. This remoteness could be looked upon as a side-effect of the state-centric bias of the European integration process. Intergovernmentalists, for example, view the entire EU as a bargaining venue in which national governments act as gatekeepers who decide who is to enter and who is to remain outside of European policy-and law-making processes (Moravcsik, 1993). Arguably, two treaty-based mechanisms for regional representation challenge the purely state-centric model of the EU: the establishment of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the potential regional ministerial access to the Council based on article 203 of the Treaty. However, the CoR only has an advisory role and, because of its member diversity, it represents a common denominator of regional concerns. Access to the Council is granted at the discretion of member states and regional ministers (or any ministers for that matter) are legally bound to represent the entire member state (Jeffery, 2000, pp. 4–5). Consequently, both provisions do not necessarily invalidate the claim that the EU suffers from regional blindness.

In the mid-1990s, however, European governance became increasing characterized as multi-level governance (MLG) (Marks, Hooghe, & Blank, 1996). Depicting the EU as a multi-level system suggests that European integration does not primarily deprive SNAs of their competences but enhances governance that transcends and includes multiple levels, including the sub-national level. It was argued that regional actors increasingly participate in EU policymaking through various channels, some of them directly linked to EU institutions, 

\[ \text{1 Member states decide whether a minister of a regional government can participate in Council meetings. Thus far only Germany, Belgium and Austria have allowed for representation by a regional minister. Certainly, these three countries host the – at least in terms of institutional power – most powerful SNAs (Hooghe & Marks, 2001, p. 83).} \]
that is to say without a detour via central governments. The MLG model recognizes the key role of central governments but asserts that these do not monopolize the EU. Instead of seeing an exclusion of regional governments from public policymaking, proponents of MLG argue that governance in the EU is dispersed and provides for various entry points to a large array of interests, including those represented by SNAs.

For instance, scholars of MLG have mainly pointed to the presence of Brussels-based regional representations as the physical utterance of sub-national engagement with the EU, highlighting the determinants of their establishment (Blatter, Kreutzer, Rentl, & Thiele, 2010; Marks, Nielsen, Ray, & Salk, 1996; Nielsen & Salk, 1998) and organizational form (Donas & Beyers, 2013; Tatham & Thau, 2014). According to Hooghe and Marks (2001, p. 87) the main motivation for SNAs to establish offices in Brussels is to gather information about opportunities to represent distinct regional interests (see also Marks, Haesly, & Mbaye, 2002). However, while the literature has mapped out the various channels via which SNAs can express their preferences about EU policy (Hooghe & Marks, 1996; Tatham, 2008), much less is known about the conditions under which SNAs actually use these channels to express their preferences, what their preferences are and, perhaps most importantly, to what extent these are translated into policy outcomes.

What has been missing in the academic debate between intergovernmentalism and MLG, as well as in empirical research on regional interest representation is an assessment of the policy influence of SNAs in the EU and its determinants (but see Tatham, 2015). Although SNAs have the opportunity to become relevant players in the Brussels game, the availability of channels and offices does not guarantee active participation in policy processes, nor does participation automatically lead to policy influence. Moreover, in the event SNAs manage to affect policy outcomes, such influence will be highly contingent. Qualitative case study analyses have been cautious in attributing influence to SNAs, emphasizing the continued gatekeeping role of national governments and the variability of regional influence across different issues at different stages of the policy process (Bache, 1998; Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; Hooghe & Keating, 1994a; Jeffery, 2000; Keating, 1999; Lynch, 2004). As Tatham (2008) has argued:
“If interest representation is not influential, then much regional activity at the European level can be considered as merely background ‘noise’. However, if regions do achieve some influence – diffuse or targeted – independently of their member states, then the whole conception of European affairs as dominated by state governments, must be reconsidered. On issues of interest, regional authorities could then be considered as relevant players in the Brussels public policy game along with national and supranational institutions” (p. 494).

By identifying the conditions under which SNAs influence EU policymaking, this dissertation assesses whether and to what extent SNAs are relevant players in the EU or whether they should be considered as merely background ‘noise’. While earlier studies have focused on the power of and influence of EU institutions, including central governments in the Council (Thomson, 2011), and non-state actors (Bunea, 2013; Dür, Bernhagen, & Marshall, 2015; Dür & De Bièvre, 2007a; Klüver, 2011; Mahoney, 2007a), the role of subnational interests in shaping EU policy outcomes has generally been overlooked (see also Tatham, 2015). I will therefore address the following research questions: (1) what explains the participation of SNAs in EU policymaking, (2) what are SNAs’ policy preferences and (3) what explains the success of SNAs in terms of preference attainment?

1.2. Key concepts: SNAs, regional mobilization and influence

Before presenting the overview of this dissertation, I discuss a number of key concepts which will recur in the various chapters. These concepts are sub-national authorities (SNAs), regional mobilization and influence.

SNAs are the unit of observation of this dissertation. For the purpose of this study the term “sub-national authority” (SNA) should be understood as covering regional or decentralized territorial authorities immediately below the level of central governments. These jurisdictions have a set of policy powers and representative institutions as embodied by an elected assembly.² This excludes local authorities such as cities and municipalities.

² See Statute of the Assembly of European Regions, art. 2(2)
Throughout this study the terms SNAs, regional authorities, regional governments and regions are used interchangeably. The terms capture a diverse set of entities, ranging from constituent units of federations (e.g. Bavaria), large metropolitan entities (e.g. Île de France) or more peripheral regions (e.g. Wales). Within this set, the relationship between regional and central governments and the competences of regions differ substantially (Hooghe et al., 2010). Key for inclusion in this study, however, is not the formal constitutional position of SNAs, but whether or not these entities aim to influence EU policy. The SNAs under scrutiny are selected on an empirical mapping of regions expressing their preferences vis-à-vis EU policymakers, irrespective of the formal constitutional powers they enjoy.

In this sense I conceptualize SNAs as similar to interest groups which lobby the European institutions (see also Donas, 2013; Rowe, 2011). Interest groups promote and protect the interests of their members the same way SNAs are accountable to their regional constituency. Just like interest groups, SNAs have a stake in many European policies, but, also just like interest groups, their formal capabilities are limited. As said, the lack of a Treaty-based role of regions in EU decision-making, beyond the CoR’s advisory status and regions’ limited access to the Council, means that most SNAs need to lobby other policymakers such as central governments, the EC and the EP to effectuate favourable policy outcomes. Because of the similarities between regional and functional interest representation in the EU, I draw on theories and methods developed in the literature on interest group politics to assess and explain the effectiveness of regional mobilization on EU policymaking.

Regional mobilization can be understood as the growing engagement of SNAs with the EU institutions and policymaking processes (Hooghe, 1995a). Jeffery (2000) has made the distinction between domestic mobilization and supranational mobilization. Domestic mobilization points at the development of intra-state channels via which SNAs seek to strengthen their role and position in in EU policy-shaping (see Beyers & Bursens, 2006, 2013; Tatham, 2011). Supranational mobilization, on the other hand, refers to direct and unmediated contact with EU institutions (see also Tatham, 2008). Irrespective of what channels are used, I presume for the purpose of this study that regional mobilization is first and foremost targeted at expressing EU-related policy preferences and influencing EU policy.
outcomes. Therefore, I use the terms of regional mobilization and regional lobbying interchangeably. Studies of regional mobilization have emphasized mostly stable regional characteristics such as resources and political autonomy to explain variation (Blatter et al., 2010; Jeffery, 2000; Marks, Nielsen, et al., 1996), while interest group researchers have identified various lobbying tactics and strategies used to exert influence (Bouwen, 2004; Bruycker & Beyers, 2015; Chalmers, 2013b; Coen, 2007; Coen & Richardson, 2009a; Hanegraaff, Beyers, & De Bruycker, 2016; Mahoney, 2007a). Both types of explanatory variables will be explored in this dissertation.

The lack of empirical research on the effectiveness of regional mobilization can be attributed to the difficulties associated with operationalizing the concept of influence (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007b). Recently, however, interest group scholars have developed and tested a number of methods aimed at measuring influence (Dür, 2008b; Dür & Mateo, 2014; Tallberg, Dellmuth, Agné, & Duit, 2015). This dissertation measures regional influence in the EU by assessing the degree to which SNAs attain their preferences. More information on the conceptualization of influence, the method and research design is provided in Chapter II, in which I argue that in order to make a robust assessment of the effectiveness of regional mobilization, three crucial aspects need to be scrutinized: participation, preference alignment and success. The empirical analysis of each aspect is presented in the subsequent three chapters. The results are brought together and discussed in the conclusion.

1.3. Overview of the chapters

Chapter II provides an elaborate methodological discussion on the concept of influence and how my research design addresses the challenges associated with empirically measuring influence. First I present a brief overview of the literature highlighting that despite its centrality to the field, scholars of interest group politics and regional mobilization have for a long time neglected questions of influence. Next, I discuss the advantages and drawbacks of three methodological approaches which have been developed recently: process tracing,

\[3\] Research has highlighted that objectives for mobilization also include enhancing the ‘visibility’ of the region, policy monitoring and creating policy networks (Marks, Haesly, & Mbaye, 2002; Moore, 2008),
measuring attributed influence and assessing the degree of preference attainment. Particular attention is awarded to the possible drawbacks of preference attainment. Most specifically, I focus on how the research can be designed in such a way that regional preference attainment reflects actual influence. To achieve this, I argue that I need a medium-sized amount of information on the participation pattern of SNAs in specific policy-making processes, the preferences of SNAs and other stakeholders regarding controversial issues and the success of SNAs (i.e. the extent to which preferences are attained). Five relevant policy cases were selected based on secondary data (Donas, Fraussen, & Beyers, 2014), the identification of active SNAs was based on participation in open consultations and policy preferences and outcomes were determined during expert interviews with EC officials and Brussels-based regional representatives.

Participation in policymaking is a necessary condition for influence. Therefore, chapter III presents a mapping of SNAs that voiced preferences concerning five salient cases of EU policy. For this purpose the participation pattern of SNAs’ in open consultations is analysed. I argue that varying levels with which SNAs take part in open consultations cannot be adequately explained by regional-level conditions such as resources or autonomy. Instead, I hypothesize that the policy environment in which SNAs operate, creates opportunities as well as constraints for SNAs to become active and therefore potentially influential players of the policymaking community. More specifically, regional pursuits of favourable policy outcomes may be triggered by the support or competition from other (regional) stakeholders that are both public and private by nature. The analysis demonstrates that the probability that SNAs take part in open consultations increases significantly when private interests of the same region and/or other SNAs of the same country participate in the same consultation.

Chapter IV examines the policy preferences SNAs defend at the European level and analyses the extent to which these preferences are aligned with the preferences of other stakeholders, most importantly their central governments and other SNAs. I propose a classification of issues in regional interest representation according to two dimensions: the alignment of preferences with other European regions and the within member-state alignments. Based on a quantitative and qualitative assessment of 114 regional preferences regarding ten salient issues I find evidence for the existence of four patterns of preference
alignment: conflicts with the central government, conflict between SNAs of the same member-state, conflicts between national coalitions of regions and conflicts with a ‘third’ party, such as the EC. The analysis draws on evidence gathered in 44 expert interviews with EC officials and regional representatives. The analysis of regional preference alignment is important because in the next chapter I hypothesize that the extent to which policy preferences align with other SNAs, central governments and the EC significantly affect the prospects of achieving success. What SNAs want – and how this is aligned with what others want – might explain whether they get what they want.

Chapter V measures and explains the preference attainment - or success - of SNAs on controversial issues in EU policymaking. Being successful and influential are not synonymous. To make the distinction I test hypotheses concerning SNAs’ capacities and strategies that are associated with being influential while simultaneously controlling for explanations concerning the preference alignment of SNAs. In a multiple regression analysis I find that sticky characteristics such as size and institutional power do not significantly affect success. Instead, the size and diversity of the lobbying coalition they are part of seems to affect their ability to translate preferences into policy output. This effect is robust when controlled for various preference alignments. When having policy preferences in disagreement with the EC, central governments and the ‘average regional preference’, SNAs are significantly less successful in attaining their preferences.

The concluding chapter discusses the results of the three empirical chapters and puts them in a broader perspective. I elaborate on how the policy-centred approach of this study contributes to the literature, I further discuss the collective nature of regional lobbying and why it is important to unpack regional policy preferences. Next I develop some policy implications for practitioners and briefly touch upon normative implications for the legitimacy of the EU political system. I end the dissertation by emphasizing the limits of the study and sketching avenues for future research.
2. Measuring regional influence: concepts, methods and research design

2.1. State of the Art

Some political scientists have compared the conceptual position of influence in their field with what the Higgs boson represented to the field of physics: the concept is crucial for the discipline, everyone agrees on its existence; but we lack a common agreed upon method on how to detect or measure it (Lowery, 2013, p. 1). Indeed, few would disagree that influence lies at the heart of political science. According to Laswell, “the study of politics is the study of influence and the influential” (1936, p. 295). Especially when studying advocacy or lobbying, defined here as the act of attempting to influence decisions made by policymakers, the centrality of the influence concept becomes even more crucial.4

The societal relevance of studying lobbying in the EU, be it by business groups, civil society organizations or regional authorities, is motivated on two main grounds. First, an analysis that tries to explain the emergence of policy outcomes should naturally take into account the pressure exerted by actors without formal decision making power, as one of major aims of the latter is to influence policymaking. Second, how influence is distributed among societal interests has normative implications: if public policy is systematically biased in favour of some interests while others are constantly losing, the democratic legitimacy of policy outcomes is undermined (Klüver, 2013b). In short, research into variations in influence across and among interest types is important for a series of reasons. Hence, the study of regional lobbying in the EU is arguably pointless when the influence factor is entirely left out of the equation.

Despite its centrality to the field, questions of influence have for a long time been largely neglected in the empirical literature on interest group politics, as well as in the

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4 Note that policy advocates do not exclusively engage in lobbying for objectives directly related to influence. Other objectives are, for example attracting new members or satisfying existing members.
literature on regional mobilization in the EU. As argued by Dür & De Bièvre, this demise of research can be seen as “a result of the notorious difficulty to operationalize an intangible concept such as influence, to construct reliable indicators, and to measure these empirically” (2007b, p. 2). To put it simply, researchers struggle to agree on what influence is, let alone how to operationalize it.

For a long time, the research community has side-stepped the problem of measuring influence altogether, either by assuming its presence or by focussing on a whole host of lobbying-related phenomena. For instance, interest group scholars have mainly focussed on access as a proxy for explaining variation (Beyers & Braun, 2014; Bouwen, 2004; Chalmers, 2011, 2013; Halpin, 2011; Halpin & Binderkrantz, 2011; Klüver, 2012b). Scholars of regional mobilization mainly focussed on the opening of regional offices in Brussels, assuming that regions with larger representations would be more influential (Blatter et al., 2010; Marks et al., 2002; Marks, Nielsen, et al., 1996; Tatham & Thau, 2014). Be that as it may, considering these variables as proxies for influence is problematic. True, mobilization and access may be necessary conditions for achieving influence, but it is not a sufficient one: on the one hand, influence might be difficult to realize without being mobilized or gaining access to policymakers, while on the other hand, mobilization or access alone is by no means a guarantee for an actual effect on public policy.

More recently, however, researchers have developed a variety of methods to assess and analyse influence on public policy (Dür, 2008a, 2008b). Use of these methods has resulted in a new empirical interest in interest group influence on public policy and its determinants (Dür, Bernhagen, & Marshall, 2015; Klüver, 2011, 2012a; Mahoney, 2007a). Remarkably, such reinvigorated academic focus has not carried through with the same level of enthusiasm with regard to the influence exerted by regional authorities in the EU (but see Tatham, 2015).

This study aims to contribute to the literature by measuring and explaining the

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5 Instead, a large part of the field of interest group studies in Europe has been preoccupied with finding out why interest group use access or voice strategies (Beyers, 2004a; Dür & Mateo, 2013), why they form coalitions (Mahoney, 2007b), and whether a specific system of interest representation could be classified as being pluralist, corporatist, or network like (Eising, 2004, 2007).
influence of SNA in EU policymaking. In this chapter I provide a discussion on how regional influence in EU policymaking is conceptualized and how this conceptualization corresponds to the different methods for measuring influence. Thereby I mainly focus on the method of preference attainment, pointing out its main strengths and weaknesses. Next I discuss the different types of data preference attainment requires and how this data was collected. Thereby I pay attention to the various aspects of the data collection process which aimed to minimize the drawbacks of assessing regional influence by means of preference attainment.

2.2. Conceptualization: distinguishing power, authority and influence

The scientific literature is characterized by a myriad of definitions, conceptualizations and operationalizations of political influence. The concept of influence is closely related and often intermingled with concepts of political power, authority, perceived influence, success and even luck. In this section I address how this study conceptualizes and operationalizes regional influence in the EU and how the study’s design is developed to support this conceptualization.

As a starting point, power can be defined as follows: “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something B would not otherwise do” (Dahl, 1957: 203). Pfiffner and Sherwood define political power as “the ability to shape and control the political behaviour of others and to lead and guide their behaviour in the direction desired by the person, group or institution wielding the political power” (1960, p. 5). These definitions imply that power is a relational trait, namely one can only have power vis-à-vis someone else. Power thus refers to social or collective action. When translated to a modern political system, political power can be understood as the ability to shape and control decisions that are binding for entire political societies. Political power is acquired and exercised in order to affect public policy. Hence, in the context of public policymaking, the focus of power is on controlling the content of policy output.6

Note that by handling this conceptualization of power, this study focuses on the analysis of the first face of power by examining who wins and who loses regarding a collectively binding decision over public policy (Dahl, 1957). The second face refers to an actor’s ability to set the agenda (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962). The third face relates to an actor’s capacity to prevent other actors from recognizing their genuine interests (Lukes, 1974).

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When political power is conceptualized as the ability to shape and control the outcome of public policymaking, one needs to distinguish between two aspects of political power: *influence* and *authority*. Political authority is the formal-legal right of actors to make and enforce official decisions on public policy. For instance, institutions such as the European Parliament (EP) or the Council of Ministers enjoy political authority as they have the formal power to adopt, reject or make amendments to legislative acts of EU policy (for empirical studies of formal power see Mesquita & Stokman, 1994; Thomson, 2011; Thomson, Stokman, Achen, & König, 2006). Political influence, on the other hand, is the ability of actors without formal power-legal power to impact the executive’s making of official policy decisions. James March, for instance, has defined influence as the power to force a decision-maker “to deviate from (his) predicted path of behaviour (March, 1955, p. 435). Hence, an actor possesses and exercises political influence to the extent that his interests and demands *are taken into account* by decision-makers when formulating public policy.

SNAs represent an interesting mixed category in this respect. On the one hand they are public authorities enjoying formal legal power to enforce decisions on public policy within their respective subnational territories. Yet, when it comes to policymaking at the supranational level, their shortage of formal-legal participatory rights in EU decision-making means that they have to rely on political influence to achieve their political objectives (Knodt, Greenwood, & Quittkat, 2011). In this sense, SNAs conceptually resemble interest groups when representing their interests in the EU. Both have a political interest in EU policy but have limited formal power which is why they lobby policymakers to influence outcomes. Therefore, definitions and operationalizations of interest group influence can be meaningfully applied to SNAs representing their interest in EU policymaking.

Within the interest group literature, influence has been defined as “the control over outcomes when these outcomes bring interest groups closer to their ideal points” (Dür & De Bièvre, 2007a, p. 3) or as “an actor’s ability to shape a decision in line with her preferences” (2008b, p. 561). Similarly, this study considers SNAs as politically influential “to the extent that they succeed in obtaining policies that are most closely aligned with their preferences
than would have been the case without their participation in the policy process” (Bernhagen, Dür, & Marshall, 2014, pp. 203–204).

2.3. Operationalization: distinguishing influence, success and luck

Before providing details on how the conceptualization of regional influence is operationalized throughout this study and how data was collected for this purpose, I briefly discuss two other methods that have been identified in the interest group literature to measure influence, namely process tracing and measures of attributed influence (see Dür, 2008b for a more detailed discussion on measuring influence).

Process tracing can be described as a qualitative assessment of influence based on a detailed knowledge of a case (Dür, 2008a, p. 1223). When applying process tracing researchers aim to reconstruct a detailed structured narrative of a case by examining the preferences of stakeholders, their influence attempts, their access to decision makers, decision makers’ responses to the influence attempts, the degree to which stakeholders’ preferences are reflected in outcomes and stakeholders’ statements of (dis)satisfaction with the outcome. Most studies of interest group influence in the context of the EU follow such an approach (see for example Dür & De Bièvre, 2007a and Michalowitz, 2007). One of the method’s most alluring strengths is that it allows for analysing various causal mechanisms and causal chains. Because of the substantial knowledge of nearly all factors in influencing a political decision, researchers can take into consideration several rival explanations of an outcome before determining whether or not the influence exercised by specific actors had an independent effect on the outcome. On the downside, the need for detailed in depth knowledge of cases means the method can only be used in small N-studies. Generalizations across issues and policy fields beyond the observed cases tend to be difficult.

Alternatively, researchers can measure ‘attributed influence’ by asking stakeholders to assess their own and/or other actors’ influence, or by inviting experts to gauge the influence of different stakeholders. In other words, influence is attributed by means of self-, peer- or expert assessment (for examples see Fowler, Heaney, Nickerson, Padgett, & Sinclair, 2011; Ingold & Leifeld, 2014; Tatham, 2015). The main advantages of this method lie in its relative simplicity. In contrast to process tracing, the data requirements are far less extensive allowing for a larger N. On the downside, the results attained from such studies
have to be treated cautiously because stakeholders may have good reasons to over- or underestimate influence.

Dür (2008b, p. 565) notes that interest groups may have an incentive to exaggerate their influence: by stressing the relevance and effectiveness of their work they may seek to legitimize their existence vis-à-vis their members. A similar logic can be applied to SNAs. While the existence of SNAs does not directly depend on the financial contribution of ‘members’, they do use taxpayers’ money to represent their interests in Brussels. Regional governments need to legitimize public expenditure vis-à-vis their constituency. Therefore, they may equally have an incentive to overestimate the effectiveness of their EU-related activities. Interest groups and SNAs alike may also downplay their influence to avoid the creation of counter-lobbies. Expert assessments may also be unreliable since they may lead to a set of widely accepted beliefs, for instance, large regions with a strong cultural identity such as Flanders, Scotland, Bavaria and Catalonia are easily seen as influential. As a result, few surprising findings might surface from studies relying on expert assessments. Yet, even in the event research designs succeed in overcoming such issues of reliability, studies still measure perceptions of influence rather than actual effect over policy outcomes, leading to questions about their validity.

Considering the small-n nature of studies using process tracing and the concerns about reliability and validity associated with studies using attributed influence, I opt for preference attainment to operationalize this study’s conceptualization of influence. This method assesses the distance between actors’ preferences and outcomes across a series of cases. The idea is that the distance between an outcome and the preference of an actor reflects this actor’s influence. On the plus side, it provides a measurement that covers all channels of influence and can be applied to a large number of cases. The resulting large N-studies allow for generalizations of the findings. The choice for preference attainment is additionally motivated on the ground that it allows to detect variation in influence across a

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Moreover, if surveys asking for measures of self-attributed regional influence are targeted at regional representations in Brussels, respondents might have an incentive to exaggerate their influence by means of legitimizing the regional office’s existence vis-à-vis the government/administration at home.
relatively high number of issues. Because of this I will be able to test the effect of factors that are specific to the policy environment SNAs operate in when lobbying.

Just like with the other two methods, however, preference attainment also comes with a few methodological challenges. These include the challenge of determining actors’ true preferences and disentangling them from signalling strategies (e.g. revealed preferences or policy positions) or context-adjusted preferences (Frieden, 1999). Interviews might uncover the – possibly strategic – positions of actors rather than the underlying preferences. When different actors are engaged in a bargaining game, it makes sense for them to exaggerate their demands in order to get the best result possible. Yet, the method’s main limitation lies in the fact that it measures success – understood as the convergence of actors’ preferences and outcomes - as a proxy for influence, rather than actual influence. This can be problematic for the assessment of regional influence in the EU since success does not necessarily rely on influence but can also be the result of luck, understood as getting what you want without trying (Barry, 1980a, 1980b). Therefore, a major problem researchers face is the difficulty of attributing desired policy outcomes to stakeholders’ resources and strategies.

The definition used in this dissertation considers SNAs influential to the extent that they succeed in obtaining policies that are most closely aligned with their preferences. Hence, the coincidence of the policy preferences of SNAs with the output of the political decision-making process is a necessary condition for influence. However, getting what they want does not mean that SNAs are in fact influential. Success is not a sufficient condition for influence. There are a number of ways imaginable in which SNAs can be simply lucky to obtain political decisions in line with their policy preferences.

For instance, an SNA might have a policy preference that is closely aligned with the preference of an actor with formal decision-making power such as a member state government. In this case, success might well be the result of that member state’s power rather than the region’s influence. Besides, SNAs might have a preference regarding an issue that corresponds to what would be the natural compromise position. Imagine a political discussion on the budget of a certain regional policy programme whereby about half of the mobilized SNAs demands a budget of around 100 million euros and the other half demands a budget of around 200 million. In this case, an outcome of 150 million is more likely to be the
result of a compromise between all stakeholders, rather than the influence of one SNA with a preference for this particular budget size. Hence, when an SNA is successful it does not necessarily mean that the policy outcome can be attributed to the policy preference of this particular SNA.

In essence, the crucial point that distinguishes influence from pure luck is the causal link between the policy preferences of an actor and the output of the policy-making process (Nagel, 1975, p. 29). While luck is random, influence should not be. This means that if an SNA is able to influence a political decision, there must be a systematic association between some properties of this SNA and the policy output. These properties could for instance be the region’s size, its institutional power or the size of its lobbying coalition. When SNAs sharing similar structural characteristics or adopting similar lobbying strategies systematically succeed in being successful across various issues, this can hardly be attributed to pure luck. Instead, if one can detect a systematic, that is statistically significant, association between SNA properties and the policy outcome that is based on convincing theoretical reasoning, one can conclude that SNAs indeed influenced the policymaking process (see also Klüver, 2013). This argument is based on the assumption that errors made in the assessment of an actor’s influence in specific cases will cancel out across many cases (Mahoney, 2007a; Schneider & Baltz, 2003).

To improve the probability of capturing and explaining influence rather than luck, one needs to simultaneously control for explanations that are associated with being lucky. For instance, explanatory analyses of success should take into account the preference alignment of SNAs with other stakeholders, especially those with formal decision-making power in the EU such as member states and the Commission. Likewise, alignment with the ‘average’ preference of SNAs might also be relevant since such preferences may reflect some compromises which are more likely to be translated into policy outcomes (Bunea, 2013). If SNAs showing certain attributes systematically enjoy success in EU policymaking irrespective of their policy alignment, their success is more likely to reflect actual influence. Finally, to avoid attributing influence to SNAs that did not even try to be influential (cfr. Barry, 1980a, 1980b) analyses of regional success need to exclude SNAs that did not participate in the policymaking process.
What has become clear, is that measuring and explaining regional influence by means of analysing preference attainment requires substantial amounts and various types of data. Information is needed about (1) the participation of SNAs in specific EU policymaking processes, (2) the preferences of these SNAs regarding the controversial issues present during these processes, (3) the preferences of other relevant actors such as the Commission and member states, (4) and the political outcomes of controversial issues. How this data was collected is specified in the section below.

2.4. Data Collection

When regional influence is operationalized as preference attainment by SNAs, a vast and various amount of information is required. With the support of two research assistants\(^8\) this data was collected in a sequence of steps. The first step was the selection of five cases of policymaking where regional interests had a stake. The next step involved identifying the SNAs that actively participated in these five policy cases. Based on their region’s participation pattern in open consultations regional representations in Brussels as well as EC officials were interviewed with the aim of identifying relevant policy issues and empirically establishing key actors’ policy preferences. Below I provide more detailed information on how this data was collected and on what grounds selection of data sources was motivated.

\(^8\) I wish to express my gratitude to Kirsten Lucas and Evelien Willems for their indispensable support in coding stakeholder consultations as well as in arranging, conducting and coding interviews with EC officials and regional representations.
### Table 2.1. Data Collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of information</th>
<th>Source of information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telephone interviews⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection policy processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of active SNAs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of policy issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining policy preferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.4.1. Selecting policy cases

This study aims to analyze regional patterns of participation, preference alignment and success in EU policymaking. A logical first step towards these analyses is the selection of relevant cases of policymaking that will be treated continuously throughout the different empirical chapters. Existing theoretical and empirical studies on regional influence in the EU have suggested that the level of subnational influence is rather low (Hooghe & Keating, 1994b; Tatham, 2015). Therefore, I selected policy cases where some regional actors have a stake, and therefore, are more likely to attempt to influence the policy outcome. By selecting cases where SNAs have actively lobbied the probability that success reflects influence is enhanced. Based on a telephone survey among 127 regional offices conducted in 2011-2012 five policy cases were identified that were considered as highly salient among regional representatives (for more details see Donas, Fraussen, & Beyers, 2014). These include the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Environment Action Programme (EAP), Horizon 2020 (H2020), Cohesion Policy (COH) and the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T).

All five policy cases concern legislation aiming to revise already existing policies for the policy cycle 2014-2020 and represent five distinct policy domains: agriculture,

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⁹ Not a original dataset, see Donas, Fraussen and Beyers (2014).
environment, research and innovation, regional policy and transport respectively. The inclusion of distinct policy domains improves the generalizing power of the findings, given the fact that the literature suggests that there is certain amount of variation across EU policy areas in terms of modes of governance and stakeholder participation (Mahoney, 2008, p. 6; Quittkat & Kotzian, 2011). One could argue that by selecting policy cases that are highly salient for regional interests this study tends to overestimate the influence of SNAs in EU policymaking in general. While this might be true, I argue that the aim of this study is to first and foremost explain variation in relative influence among SNAs, not to measure absolute levels of influence and compare these with other types of stakeholders.

2.4.2. Identifying active (regional) stakeholders

In order to be able to assess regional preference attainment regarding five policy cases, one first needs to know what actors have actively participated in such processes. Participation in policymaking can be considered a necessary condition for influence. By definition it is impossible to be influential without actively representing your interests. Assessing the level of success of SNAs that did not actively engage with EU policymakers would reflect (bad) luck rather than influence.

Interest group scholars have focused on the access of interest groups to the EU institutions based on the assumption that only those organizations having access to different decision-making venues can effectively voice the interests they represent, becoming thus potentially of consequence over policy outcomes (Mazey and Richardson, 2006; Bouwen, 2002; Coen, 1998; Eising, 2007; Woll, 2006). Scholars of regional mobilization have focused primarily on the opening of regional offices in Brussels as an indicator of regional engagement with EU policymaking (Blatter et al., 2010; Marks, Nielsen, et al., 1996; Moore, 2008). This is a problematic indicator, however, since having a regional representation does

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10 Apart from the policy domain, the five policy cases selected are fairly similar ensuring comparability. All processes were negotiated parallel between October 2012 and December 2013 on the basis of the ordinary legislative procedure (OLP). The vast majority of European laws are adopted under OLP, whereby the Commission holds the monopoly to propose new legislation and the same procedural weight is awarded to the European Parliament and the Council (Wallace, Pollack, & Young, 2015, p. 56).
not necessarily reflect the ambition to participate in and influence EU policymaking (Marks et al., 2002). Moreover, having an office in Brussels is rather static and does not allow to observe variation in regional participation across different policy processes.

This study operationalizes participation of SNAs in policymaking by assessing whether they took part in one or more of the Commission’s open consultations. In total eight such consultation rounds were selected that correspond to the five policy cases studied (see table 2.2.). Any actor could formally participate either by submitting a position paper or through completing a structured questionnaire. For all participating actors, characteristics including actor type and level of mobilization were coded. Public authorities that are mobilized at the subnational level were considered SNAs if they met three criteria: (1) being located at the first level below the central government, (2) not being a de-concentrated administrative unit, and (3) having an average population of at least 150,000 inhabitants (see also Donas, 2013).\(^1\) Importantly, SNAs were treated as unitary actors. This means I did not differentiate between different departments or ministries when participating in consultations. This approach led to a total of 137 unique SNAs that participated at least once in one of the selected consultations.

\(^{11}\) This threshold is used for various reasons. First, to avoid selecting the lowest level jurisdiction of countries such as Cyprus, Slovenia and Luxembourg in which case small villages and communes would have vastly outnumber larger regions, counties, provinces or cities in our sample. Second, we decided to use the same threshold as Hooghe et al. (2010) because data on self-rule and shared-rule, as well as most economic indicators, are only available for jurisdictions of this size (see also Donas, 2013).
Table 2.2. Commission consultations per policy case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy case</th>
<th>Commission Consultation</th>
<th>Consultation period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>- Consultation on the &quot;Health Check&quot; of the Common Agricultural Policy Consultation...</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Policy Consultation for the Impact Assessment on the &quot;Common Agricultural Policy...</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Policy Consultation on the Conclusions of the Fifth Report on Economic and...</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>- Consultation on the EU environment policy priorities for 2020: Towards a 7th EU...</td>
<td>2010–2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H2020 - Consultation on Green Paper – towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU...</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TENT - Green Paper &quot;TEN-T : A policy review – Towards a better integrated trans-European...</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Consultation on the future Trans-European Transport Network Policy - Preparatory...</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Preparatory to the Communication &quot;A sustainable future for transport: Towards an...</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(March and September)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consultations are increasingly used to identify policy-bound stakeholder populations (Bunea, 2013, 2014, 2015; Klüver, 2012a, 2012b; Quittkat & Kotzian, 2011; Rasmussen & Alexandrova, 2012). The focus on consultations is usually justified by arguing that interest groups who engage with the Commission in the early stages of policy formulation have the highest chances of affecting policy outcomes (Bouwen, 2009). Naturally, online consultations are not the only channel through which stakeholders, including SNAs, can actively voice their preferences. Especially regional governments who have ministerial access to the Council might find it more worthwhile to voice their preferences at intergovernmental venues instead.\(^\text{12}\) Yet, while access to the Council is considered a scarce good, consultations are easily accessible and imply limited costs. By detecting regional involvement in policymaking via consultations, I aim to catch all SNAs that actively voiced preferences, not just the...\(^\text{12}\)

\(^{12}\) One could rightly question to what extent policy preferences voiced during Council meetings would represent true regional preferences, given that regional representatives are generally legally obliged to represent an official member state position (Panara, 2015; Panara & Becker, 2010).
resourceful or powerful ones. By means of cross-validation, I asked Commission officials during interviews to list those SNAs that were most heavily involved. All SNAs that were mentioned had already been identified based on their participation in consultations.

The next essential step in measuring regional preference attainment is the identification of relevant policy issues that were present in the five selected policymaking processes. Interest group research using preference attainment has drawn on formal EC calls for consultations, stakeholders’ written submissions and answers to online questionnaires to identify policy issues, either by using qualitative content analysis (Bunea, 2013, 2014) or quantitative text analysis (Klüver, 2009, 2011, 2013a). For this study, I opt to identify issues based on face-to-face expert interviews with Commission officials and regional representations in Brussels.

When assessing preference attainment issues need to be very specific to allow researchers to code to what extent a stakeholder was successful. This calls for a disaggregation of political decisions to single dimensions of conflict, or the so-called assumption of uni-dimensionality (Dür, 2008b, pp. 568). Often issues touch upon several articles of a legislative proposal, and such linkages are not obvious on the basis of policy documents alone. Therefore, detailed discussions with policy experts were needed to find out exactly on what aspects of the legislation there was disagreement among stakeholders. Identifying issues in EU policymaking based on face-to-face interviews with the EC is strongly supported in the literature (Dür et al., 2015; Thomson, 2011).

In a first wave of interviews EC officials were approached as the principal source of information on policy issues. Five officials were interviewed in total, one per policy case. Respondents were usually the individuals who were involved in drafting the legislative proposals of the policy initiatives and also monitored closely the discussions that took place in the Council and EP. A second wave of interviews with regional representations was primarily aimed at confirming and discussing the issues identified by the EC. However, when

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13 See Bunea and Ibenskas (2015) and Klüver (2015) for a detailed discussion on whether quantitative text analysis can be an appropriate methodological tool for identifying policy issues and stakeholder preferences.

14 See Annex I for an overview of legislative proposals per policy case.
a new issue came up repeatedly in various interviews it was included in the set of policy issues as well.

The procedure for identifying or constructing issues was the same for interviews with the EC and regional representatives. The interviews were based on a semi-structured questionnaire and followed a logical sequence of steps. First, respondents were asked to identify or confirm the main controversial issues that were raised by SNAs during the policy process. Controversial issues were defined as legislative content that is characterized by several lines of disagreement or conflict among stakeholders. This study focuses on controversial issues since I am interested in the relative influence of SNAs. To explain variation in influence policy outcomes need to create both winners and losers.

If new issues were identified the next part of each interview focused on specifying them as policy scales, such as those depicted in Chapter IV. Per issue the respondent was asked to identify the actors that favoured the most extreme policy alternatives on both sides of the conflict. These policy alternatives defined the far ends of the policy scale or continuum used to represent this issue, which was given a range of 0 to 100. The interview then continued with the collection of information on actors’ policy preferences by placing them on the policy scale. This approach has been termed as the spatial approach to measuring preference attainment (Bernhagen et al., 2014). Respondents were typically practitioners who are familiar with thinking about legislative content in terms of competing views. However, they were usually less familiar with such stylized representation of political

15 See Annex II and III for the full interview guides with EC officials and regional representatives
16 Note that disagreement between stakeholders refers to all types of stakeholders, such as business groups, NGOs, member states, and not only SNAs.
17 Bernhagen et al. distinguish between qualitative and quantitative approaches to measuring preference attainment: “Qualitative approaches either code dichotomously whether or not actors have attained their preferred policy outcomes or they indicate on an ordinal scale whether they have attained all, some or none of their goals. By contrast, quantitative approaches gauge the extent to which actors have attained their goals on a continuum ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘fully’. This latter view of policy success implies that successful actors manage to bring policy outcomes closer to their preferences, which corresponds to spatial models of political conflict” (2014, p. 204). For other examples of spatial representations of decision-making processes, see Bueno de Mesquita and Stokman (1994) or Thomson (2011).
conflict. Therefore, I had to play an active role in formulating the issues by translating what experts had told me into a spatial representation. The spatial representation was then shown to the expert by drawing the issues on paper and writing the actor’s names at the relevant points of the scale.\(^{18}\)

This approach led to a total of 24 issues, eight of which were identified by the EC (and confirmed by regional representations) and sixteen of which were identified by regional representations. On average 4.8 issues were identified per policy case. However, Table 2.3 shows that this measure is somewhat misleading because of the high number of issues for TEN-T. This high number is due to the its redistributive nature. TEN-T “Connecting Europe Facility” is a financial programme that funds large infrastructural projects with the aim of connecting Europe’s main ‘nodes’ via ‘corridors’. Instead of focusing on overarching issues with clear advocates and adversaries, SNAs that were active on TEN-T aimed to get their particular project included in the annex of the legislative text, meaning that the region would be eligible to receive European funding.\(^{19}\) This resulted in more issues for TEN-T but typically less SNA preferences per issue, thereby not overly disturbing the balance of the sample.

**Table 2.3. Issues per data source and policy case (N)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CAP</th>
<th>EAP</th>
<th>H2020</th>
<th>COH</th>
<th>TEN-T</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional rep.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4.3. Measuring policy preferences

\(^{18}\) This sometimes resulted in a reformulation of what the experts had said. For instance, the issue about the creation of transition categories was not about whether this category should be created or not (which could be two extreme policy alternatives) but about on what basis funding for transition regions should be determined (regional GDP compared to the EU average or amount of funding received during the previous programme).

\(^{19}\) Considering securing EU funding as a controversial issue might seem at odds with its definition since it does not necessarily imply explicit disagreement between stakeholders. Some projects such as the Central Pyrenees Crossing or the Via Karpatia, however, were directly challenged by an alternative project promoted by other SNAs (see chapter IV). Yet, even without the competition of direct alternatives funding is limited. Since not all projects can be funded these issues also bring forth ‘winners’ and ‘losers’, be it indirectly.
The final piece of information that is needed are the policy preferences and outcomes for each identified issue. Determining the preferences of key actors has been highlighted as one of the most challenging methodological aspects of measuring preference attainment (Dür, 2008b, p. 567; Lowery, 2013). To measure policy preferences and outcomes research has employed a variety of data sources and methods such as coding newspapers and official documents (Bernhagen, 2012), qualitatively and quantitatively examining stakeholders’ formal position papers submitted in consultations (Bunea, 2013, 2014, 2015; Klüver, 2009, 2011, 2013a) and interviewing policy advocates (Mahoney, 2007a; Schneider & Baltz, 2003) or policymakers (Dür et al., 2015; Thomson, 2011). For this study I opt to empirically establish policy preferences on the basis of interviews with regional representatives in Brussels.

The choice for this particular type of data source is motivated on three grounds. First, regional offices act as hubs for their home region’s interest representation activities in the EU (Tatham, 2008). The Catalanian government, for instance, has pooled all its resources for influencing EU policy in Brussels. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that regional representatives have a strong awareness of their region’s policy preferences regarding highly salient issues in EU policymaking. Secondly, scholars have pointed out that policy preferences ascribed to interests may not necessarily represent their sincere preferences but rather their strategic negotiating positions (Frieden, 1999; Ward, 2004). Because of strategic behavior, asking advocates about their preferences is likely to lead to more accurate estimates than asking lobbying targets such as the EC or coding lobbying tools such as position papers. Incentives for respondents to report strategic positions are also weak since the selected policy processes had already been finalized at the time of the interview.

\[\text{Speech by Amadeu Altafaj, Representative of the Catalan government to the EU, at the conference Regions in Europe and the World: Challenges and Opportunities, 24 May 2016.}\]

\[\text{Only in some exceptional cases, this assumption was not upheld. For instance, the regional representation of Midi-Pyrénées admitted that they were unaware of some of the policy preferences its regional government had concerning certain issues.}\]

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and the anonymity of the estimates was guaranteed. Third, and perhaps most importantly, I am interested in regional preferences on EU policy issues, not official member state positions. Decision-making in the EU often represents a two-level game (Putnam, 1988). Some SNAs internally coordinate their policy preferences with other SNAs and the central government with the aim of achieving a common pre-negotiated position that is to be defended in the Council (Panara & Becker, 2010). Analyzing SNAs’ official position papers submitted to the EC or discussing their preferences with EU officials might result in uncovering national compromises rather than genuine regional preferences. Given their involvement in internal coordination mechanisms by proxy, regional representatives can distinguish between preferences of intra-state actors.

The selection of regional representations that were interviewed was based on the participation pattern of SNAs in the EC’s open consultations. To make data collection more efficient, representations were requested for an interview if their regional government participated in consultations that correspond to at least two of the five policy cases. For instance, if an SNA participated in consultations related to Horizon 2020 and TEN-T its regional office was invited to discuss the issues that were present in both policy processes. When multiple policy cases were discussed interviews with representations often involved more than one respondent, typically the policy officers responsible for each case. How many policy cases were eventually discussed depended on the scope of the region’s policy involvement and time constraints. This approach resulted in a total of 39 interviews covering 67 policy cases (on average 1.7 policy cases per regional representation).

During the interviews respondents provided information on the policy preferences of SNAs by placing them on the policy scales that were constructed earlier. This information was expressed in numerical estimates ranging from 0 to 100. An important assumption of the spatial model is that each actor has a single peaked preference function. This means that an actor prefers the policy alternative corresponding to its position and the further away a policy alternative is located from an actor’s position, the less the actor favours that alternative.

The qualitative analysis in chapter IV indicates that reported preferences appear to reflect SNAs’ underlying interests.

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22 The qualitative analysis in chapter IV indicates that reported preferences appear to reflect SNAs’ underlying interests.
alternative (see also Thomson, 2011). Regional representatives were asked to provide information on the preferences of their own regional government and if possible any other SNAs that actively voiced its preference on a given issue. Usually these were SNAs that belonged to the same lobbying coalition. This approach resulted in a total of 145 preferences of 73 unique SNAs belonging to 15 different countries on a total of 24 issues (see table 2.4. for an overview).

For each issue the policy scale was completed with respondents locating central governments, the EC and the policy outcome relative to the positions attributed to SNAs. Estimates for central governments were provided by regional offices representing SNAs belonging to the member state while the source of the estimates for the EC and the policy outcomes depends on who identified the issue. It is important to note that the position of the Commission reflects its stance towards the issue that was present in its policy proposal.23 In some instances, information was also given on the position of other EU institutions such as the EP, the Council, CoR and other organized interests such as NGOs and farmer associations that were active. Information on the position of the EP and Council is not available for all issues since often there existed strong disagreement between party groups or member state coalitions respectively. These actors’ positions are used sporadically for the description of the issues in chapter IV but are not included systematically in the analysis.

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23 For this study I treat the Commission as a unitary actor but this is not necessarily the case. For instance, concerning the issue about structural funding for developed regions (see chapter IV figure 3.8) there was strong disagreement between DG BUDGET (who was against) and DG REGIO (who was in favour) during the preparation of the legislation. However, since funding for developed regions was eventually included in the EC’s proposal, it was coded as fully in favour.
Table 2.4. Overview of regional preferences per policy case and country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country to which SNAs belong</th>
<th>Number of SNAs per country</th>
<th>Number of preferences per policy case</th>
<th>Total number of preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>H2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>72</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next to its labour intensity, one of the biggest drawbacks of measuring actors’ policy preferences subjectively is that respondents’ estimates can contain errors due to a lack of information and of analytical capacity or a faltering memory. Because of this, estimates of actors’ preferences can differ between respondents, especially when measured on a range of 0 to 100. To efficiently cross-validate the data I proceeded as follows. Before the respondents were asked about the policy preference of their region they were presented with a spatial representation of the issue representing all actors whose preferences had already been identified as well as the policy outcome. Then they were asked whether they could agree with the positions that were mapped on this scale or whether something needed to be changed. In the vast majority of cases experts comfortably confirmed the spatial representation of the issue they were presented with. However, if convinced that certain positions needed to be changed they were asked to provide arguments to substantiate the change. Based on the quality of the arguments I made a judgement about which sets of estimates to include. For instance, the numerical representation of the German central government’s preference on a certain issue is not an average of the estimates provided by different German regional representatives. Instead it reflects the judgement of
the respondent that displayed the most detailed knowledge of the issue and the strongest ability to translate this knowledge into a quantitative estimate.

2.5. Summary

Despite its centrality to the field of political science, questions of influence were not highly prominent in the research literature on regional mobilization in the EU. The reluctance to study the effectiveness of regional mobilization can be attributed to the methodological challenges associated with measuring influence. More recently, however, interest group scholars have developed different approaches to empirically measure influence, each with its advantages and drawbacks. I choose for the method of preference attainment arguing that its methodological challenges can be overcome when sufficient amount of care is awarded to the data collection process. The first methodological challenge associated with preference attainment is identifying single-dimensional issues and SNAs’ policy preferences. For this I draw on a total of 44 intensive face-to-face interviews with EC officials and regional representatives. This chapter has provided arguments on why I rely on this type of data source as well as details on how the data was collected. The second challenge involves distinguishing influence from luck. For this purpose I collected additional information on the participation pattern of SNAs in policymaking (as a necessary condition for influence) and their preference alignment with other stakeholders (as a control for being lucky). In sum, this study’s research design has provided me with three different types of information, namely information on SNA’s participation in consultations (chapter III), their preferences on policy issues and alignment with other stakeholders (chapter IV) and success (chapter V) (linking preferences to outcomes) which will be scrutinized empirically in the following chapters.
During the past decades, most European countries faced a bidirectional process whereby states simultaneously transferred power upwards to the European level and downwards to the sub-national level (Hooghe, Marks, & Schakel, 2010). Both processes led to a situation in which some sub-national authorities (SNAs), on the one hand, became responsible for the implementation of European Union (EU) policies, while, on the other hand, their ability to shape EU policy outcomes remained limited (Jeffery, 2015; Tatham, 2014). To avoid the risk of becoming mere policy-takers without being policymakers, SNAs have a strong propensity to represent their interests in various ways at the EU-level (Knopt, 2011, p. 420). At the same time, various studies demonstrate that SNAs show substantial differences in the extent to which they seek to influence EU policies (Marks et al., 2002; Tatham, 2015).

One increasingly used venue to upload policy preferences is the open consultations process organized by the European Commission. For this study, I conceive active involvement in open consultations as one specific instance of regional mobilization or lobbying. More specifically, I aim to explain why SNAs take part in these consultations. Previous literature has often sought to explain variation in regional interest representation by testing for regional-level variables such as regional autonomy, resources or political distinctiveness (Blatter et al., 2010; Donas & Beyers, 2013; Marks, Nielsen, et al., 1996; Tatham & Thau, 2014). By looking at policy-centered contextual variables, such as the simultaneous mobilization of private interests and other SNAs, I will provide additional insights into how and why regional interests take part in EU policymaking.

Studying the participation of SNAs in open consultations is relevant for two reasons. First, consultations are increasingly used by the EC to improve the quality of its policies and, at the same time, enhance the involvement of a wider range of stakeholders – including sub-national interests – to counter-balance the prominent presence of specific interests in EU lobbying processes (Quittkat, 2011). It is therefore relevant to learn to what extent, why and under which conditions SNAs use open consultations to upload their preferences. Second,

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24 An article based on this chapter is accepted for publication in the Journal for Common Market Studies.
Despite increased attention for open consultations among interest group scholars, there is only limited attention for the fact that both public authorities and private interests make use of this channel. Some studies provide broad and descriptive accounts of the number and types of organized interests participating in consultations (Quittkat, 2011; Quittkat & Kotzian, 2011), while explanatory studies mainly focus on the participation pattern of traditional interest groups such as business interests and NGOs (Bunea, 2014; Klüver, 2012b). Yet, not many scholars have considered an explanatory approach that accounts for the entanglement of public authorities with other interests during consultation processes. Moreover, existing studies primarily focus on those actors that take part in consultations, and therefore predominantly cover interests that demonstrate a rather substantial level of political activity. The set of identified actors usually does not include those that could have participated, but did not do so. The analysis presented in this chapter relies on the entire population of SNAs, including those that did not participate, enabling us to offer a robust assessment of why certain SNAs, at certain occasions, decided to participate in a consultation while others did not.

I propose two distinct sets of explanations. First, I look at regional characteristics that are invariant to the concrete policy issues at stake during an open consultation: economic resources, regional autonomy and the extent to which these regions are embedded in the ‘Brussels scene’. I expect that rich and politically powerful regions that are well represented in Brussels are more likely to make use of open consultations. Second, my hypotheses take into account the varying context of concrete policy processes. The main mechanism is as follows. By participating in EU policymaking an SNA sends a signal, not only to EU-level or national policymakers, but also to other interests such as regional interest groups or other SNAs in the same country. Mobilization is contagious: acts of active participation in a specific consultation trigger additional participation. In short, SNAs never lobby alone. Hence, I expect that SNAs show a higher propensity to get involved in consultations when sub-national private interests of their region or other SNAs from the same country also participate.

I test these hypotheses by analyzing the participation pattern of 296 SNAs in eight consultations that are related to policy processes in the domains of agriculture, environment, transport, research and cohesion policy. While the analysis confirms many of
the expectations, most predictive power can be attributed to policy-centered contextual factors. The probability that SNAs participate in open consultations increases significantly when private interests of the same region and/or other SNAs of the same country take part in the same consultation.

In the next section I briefly review how the literature has studied political-institutional variables to explain SNA participation in EU policymaking. Next, I argue that policy-centered contextual factors can add additional insights to the process of regional mobilization. I subsequently develop hypotheses regarding both sets of variables. Part four presents the research design and data-set, while part five discusses the main results. I conclude by presenting a reflection on the broader implications of this chapter’s main findings.

3.1. Sub-national involvement in EU policy-making

The simultaneous processes of European integration and national decentralization have triggered SNAs to seek policy influence in the EU (Jeffery, 2000, 2015; Jones & Keating, 1995). Scholarly interest in this topic originated in the mid-1990s pointing at regional mobilization as the growing engagement of sub-national governmental actors with the EU institutions and policymaking processes (Hooghe, 1995b). Various studies hypothesized that a new pattern of ‘multi-level governance’ (MLG) would increase the number of channels of regional representation and trigger SNAs to seek direct and unmediated access to European policymakers (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; Hooghe & Marks, 1996; Tatham, 2008). However, the literature on MLG also agreed that regions do not engage equally in these activities but that ‘there are wide differences in the capacity of regional actors to exploit these channels’ (Hooghe & Marks, 1996, p. 74). For instance, many studies aiming to explain the varying pattern of regional mobilization have focused on the determinants of establishing a Brussels based office (Blatter et al., 2010; Donas & Beyers, 2013; Marks, Nielsen, et al., 1996; Nielsen & Salk, 1998; Tatham & Thau, 2014).

Analyzing why regions establish a Brussels-based presence has some limits. To begin with, whereas a regional office might have been an asset in the 1990s, today it has become such a common practice among SNAs that it tells us little about the variation in regional mobilization. Most scholars would agree with Moore who concludes that ‘the model of a
regional representative office has been institutionalized within patterns of regional interest mediation in the EU’ (2008, p. 520; see also Kettunen & Kull, 2009). Second, having an office in Brussels does not necessarily mean that an SNA also actively engages with EU policymaking, nor does it say which concrete policies it monitors or aims to influence. For instance, Marks et al. (2002) demonstrate that regional offices themselves emphasize information gathering more than seeking policy influence through lobbying.

Moreover, most explanatory efforts were situated within a MLG vs. state-centric perspective and focused on regional and state-level variables such as regional resources and autonomy a region enjoys vis-à-vis the central government (see also Jeffery, 2000; Tatham, 2010). Thereby the dominant focus was on vertical interactions, namely whether and to what extent central state governments are bypassed. This focus somewhat underexposes how SNA-activities correspond with the lobbying attempts of regional private interests and other SNAs (but see Greenwood, 2011; Knodt, 2011; Quittkat & Kotzian, 2011). At the same time, interest group scholars who studied consultations do consider the inter-organizational context that surrounds particular policy issues (Bunea, 2014; Klüver, 2012). In short, a substantial part of the literature shows a considerable neglect of the concrete policy context in which regions operate when analyzing their engagement with EU policymaking. Without neglecting the insights developed in the earlier literature, I believe that a policy-centered approach that controls systematically for contextual factors may significantly add to the scholarly understanding of regional mobilization in the EU.

3.2. Regional-level and policy-centered explanations for subnational participation in open consultations

Combining the literature on consultations with the literature on regional mobilization enables the development of two accounts of regional participation in open consultations. The first is located on the regional level, emphasizing factors related to SNA characteristics, in particular resources and political autonomy. It primarily considers assets that can be used in exchanges with policymakers. The second is policy-centered and conceptualizes representation as a communication act – not only with policymakers, but also with other stakeholders – in relation to specific policy issues.
The first perspective conceptualizes lobbying as an exchange whereby the EC offers access and attention, in return for policy information supplied by organized interests (Bouwen, 2002, 2004). The EC is faced with a huge challenge to develop and monitor legislation for a highly diverse set of member-states, both in terms of legal traditions and socio-economic circumstances. Open consultations are one tool to collect information regarding the technical adequacy of specific policies as well as the political support these policies may enjoy. At the same time, stakeholders see these consultations as a venue to upload their policy views. Moreover, open consultations are not the privilege of private interests, but, as I will show below, they also attract a substantial number of public authorities.

A regional-level perspective seeks to explain patterns of information supply to the EC by factors related to the SNA’s characteristics. Central is the SNA’s capacity to provide policy-relevant information and the extent to which its interests are potentially affected by EU legislation. I formulate four hypotheses related to the capabilities and/or regulatory exposure of SNAs that may explain their participation in consultations.

First, in order to produce policy-relevant information, interested parties need material resources such as money and staff. The importance of resources for interest representation activities has been demonstrated repeatedly, both for private interests (Beyers & Kerremans, 2007; Dür & Mateo, 2012; Eising, 2007) and for regional authorities (Donas & Beyers, 2013). More specifically, Blatter et al. (2010) show that resources positively affect the likelihood of opening a Brussels based regional office. The larger and better funded an office, the more likely that seeking policy influence is a key goal (Marks et al., 2002, p. 9). With regard to consultations, Klüver (2012b) finds that as resources increase, the level of information interest groups supply to the EC increases as well.

\textit{H1 The more resources, the more likely an SNA participates in open consultations.}

Second, actors with a wide range of interests in multiple policy fields are more likely to be affected by EU policy initiatives rendering them more inclined to seek attention for their policy positions (Bernhagen & Mitchell, 2009). This implies that regions with significant political autonomy and policy competencies are more likely to mobilize because they face higher levels of regulatory exposure. They become active at the EU-level because the costs
of remaining inactive may be high, but also because more policy benefits can be realized (Marks, Nielsen, et al., 1996). Various scholars have demonstrated the effect of political autonomy on territorial interest representation activities. For instance, the more regional autonomy, the more likely regional offices are established (Donas & Beyers, 2013; Marks et al., 1996, p. 182; Tatham & Thau, 2014), the larger the staffing size of regional offices (Blatter et al., 2010; Tatham & Thau, 2014), the larger the size of the policy portfolio (Donas et al., 2014) and the more likely the SNAs will seek to influence EU policymaking (Marks et al., 2002).

**H2 The more autonomy, the more likely an SNA is to participate in open consultations.**

Third, the policy influence capabilities in Brussels depend on how well the SNA is embedded in the ‘Brussels scene’. Organizations with a permanent presence and/or structural ties with other players or networks within the EU policymaking community, are more aware of opportunities to exert influence (Beyers & Kerremans, 2007; Bunea, 2014; Dür & Mateo, 2012; Eising, 2004). SNAs strive for supranational embeddedness most prominently by establishing regional offices and joining trans-regional associations (Donas & Beyers, 2013). Regional offices monitoring EU affairs provide an early warning mechanism to alert regional governments if upcoming EU legislation implies benefits or costs for the region (Rowe, 2011). Therefore, I expect that having a regional office increases the information producing capacity as well as the awareness of political opportunities, thus stimulating participation in consultations. Mahoney (2004) supports this expectation as she finds that interest groups with a permanent presence in Brussels show a stronger engagement in EU policymaking and are more likely to participate in open consultations.

**H3 SNAs with an office in Brussels are more likely to take part in open consultations.**

In addition to regional offices, SNAs join trans-regional associations to facilitate information exchange among regions, hereby improving their ability to develop well-informed policy positions. Being member of a trans-regional association creates benefits as the SNA is more likely to become involved in lobbying coalitions, saving resources due to sharing of information. In addition, it has been shown that the way advocates are connected to each
other affects how they seek and gain access to policymakers (Beyers & Braun, 2014; Carpenter et al., 1998). For instance, with respect to open consultations, Bunea (2014) finds that the intensity of interest group preference articulation is positively affected by the number of formal membership ties with other stakeholders.

\[ H4 \text{ The more SNAs are member of trans-regional associations, the more likely they participate in open consultations.} \]

To sum up, the first four hypotheses build on the notion that the participation of an SNA in open consultations is the result of a region’s capabilities in terms of resources (H1), policy competencies (H2), embeddedness in Brussels (H3) or formal ties with other SNAs (H4).

These four hypotheses have in common that they implicitly presume that participation is invariant to specific policies or the extent to which these policies generate attention from other stakeholders. However, much advocacy and interest mobilization is characterized by herding and bandwagoning. This means that lobbying practices are contagious: the mobilization of one interest tends to trigger the mobilization of other interests (Banerjee, 1992; Baumgartner & Leech, 2001; D. Halpin, 2011). Lobbyists often operate in a crowded environment with other interests – business associations, labour unions, NGOs, other public authorities. This is especially true in the case of open consultations where the EC aims to obtain input from a large and diverse set of stakeholders. Therefore, when explaining advocacy behaviour, it is important to account for the overall organizational context. I argue that, when taking part in consultations, stakeholders do not only exchange information with policymakers, but their act of involvement also signals their position on a particular issue to other potentially relevant stakeholders (see also Bunea, 2014). In other words, participating in consultations has a communicative function towards other stakeholders as well. Specifically, I expect that SNAs signal their position to two other types of relevant stakeholders: regional private interests and other SNAs from the same country.

Formally, SNAs represent a ‘public interest’ that is tied to constituencies located in a particular region. In this regard, their EU representation might also be a substitute or intermediation for regional private interests, such as companies, business associations or NGOs. In this way, the SNA adopts the role of a ‘transmission belt’ between regional
constituencies and the European institutions, acting as a spokesperson for territorially rooted interests (Greenwood, 2011; Knodt et al., 2011). For instance, SNAs can coalesce with particular economic and functional interests that are tied to a region, such as ports, airports, research institutes or specific economic sectors. For such interests, the active support of a regional government may be valuable as this increases the political credibility of their claims (Rowe, 2011). As representatives of the ‘common regional interests’, I expect that SNAs are more likely to mobilize when regional private interests are at stake. Hence, they will show a higher propensity to take part in consultations when private interests of the same region participate as well. By communicating with EU policymakers SNAs show their regional constituency that they are actively taking care of an issue that is highly important for some regionally based private interest.

**H5 When regionally based private interests participate in an open consultation, the regional public authority is more likely to participate in the consultation as well.**

Next to private interests, I expect that a regional authority may wish to signal its activity or respond to the efforts of other SNAs from the same member-state. SNAs from the same country might have similar or opposite policy interests. In case interests align, SNAs might cooperate by jointly promoting ‘the general regional interest’ from one particular member-state. As a result, they might encourage each other to participate in open consultations to reinforce their joint position. Alternatively, simultaneous involvement may also occur in case SNAs have competing interests, for instance about EU funding. When a competitor signals a position and shows that it is actively promoting its interests via consultations, it might trigger others to counter their efforts in order to balance the scale (Austen-Smith & Wright, 1996). Both lines of reasoning lead to the following hypothesis:

**H6 A particular SNA is more likely to participate in a consultation if other SNAs from the same country participate as well.**

### 3.3. Data and Research Design

In order to analyse the participation pattern of SNAs in open consultations, all stakeholders are mapped that were active in eight consultations situated in five distinct policy cases. First, based on a survey among 127 regional offices conducted in 2011-2012 I identified five policy
areas that were considered as highly salient among regional representatives (for more
details on how policy cases and consultation rounds were selected see 2.4.1.). This concerns
the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Environment Action Programme (EAP), Horizon 2020
(H2020), Cohesion Policy (COH) and the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T).

Next, a database was developed with all the actors that participated in these
consultations. Anyone can formally participate, either by submitting a position paper or
through completing a structured questionnaire. Position papers or questionnaires from
individuals were not included in our dataset. If a position paper was submitted in the name
of more than one organization (for instance, by a coalition), all those organizations were
added as distinct entries. This resulted in an initial dataset of 2,123 unique actors that
responded to at least to one of the consultations. For each actor, characteristics were coded
based on the information available on their website including national origin (where the
headquarter is located), level of mobilization (whether it is a regional, national, European or
global organization) and actor type (whether it is a business, NGO, labor union or something
else).\(^{25}\) We could not find useful evidence for 133 organizations, resulting in a total of 1,990
fully coded actors.

For the explanatory analysis, this dataset was merged with another dataset based on
research conducted by Donas and Beyers (2013) who collected data on 296 European SNAs.
The selected SNAs meet three criteria: (1) being located at the first level below the central
government, (2) not being a de-concentrated administrative unit, (3) having on average a
population of at least 150,000 inhabitants.\(^{26}\) The merged dataset is hierarchically structured,
meaning that the unit of analysis is a SNA-policy area dyad, namely for each of the 296 SNA
we assess five times whether or not they took part in one of the consultations that were
organized for the five policy areas. As such, for all 296 regions I have five repeated

\(^{25}\) See Annex II for the full codebook that was used for coding organizations participating in consultations

\(^{26}\) We use this threshold for various reasons. First, to avoid selecting the lowest level jurisdiction of countries
such as Cyprus, Slovenia and Luxembourg in which case small villages and communes would have vastly
outnumber larger regions, counties, provinces or cities in our sample. Second, we decided to use the same
threshold as Hooghe et al. (2010) because data on self-rule and shared-rule, as well as most economic
indicators, are only available for jurisdictions of this size.
observations, giving a total of 1,480 observations. I rely on two types of independent variables: variables relating to regional capacities (H1), autonomy (H2) and EU embeddedness (H3 and H4) are measured at the SNA-level, while mobilized private interests (H5) and other SNAs (H6) are measured at the level of each separate SNA and the specific policy area in which it submits a position paper or completes a questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Overview of dependent and independent variables</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional-level variables (n=296)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources (GDP in millions of Euro)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurostat, OECD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rule Hooghe et al., 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared-rule Hooghe et al., 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion funding per capita in euros (2007-13) Eurostat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaison office Donas and Beyers, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliations with trans-regional association Donas and Beyers, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy-centered variables (n=1480)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional private interests of the same region AUTHOR CODING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-national authorities of the same country AUTHOR CODING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent variable (n=1480)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in open consultation AUTHOR CODING</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

I use GDP as a proxy for regional resources to test the effect of resource endowment. To test for regional autonomy I rely on the Regional Authority Index (RAI) (Hooghe et al. 2010, 27).

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27 One might argue that GDP is too remote a proxy for resources and that data on the size of the budget SNAs spend on EU advocacy would be better. However, reliable and comparable budget data are not readily available for most SNAs in our sample. The regional GDP can be considered as a close proxy of an SNA’s capabilities; the partial correlation of our GDP measure with the budget data of Blatter (2010, N=80 regions) is .81, when controlled for the self-rule, shared rule, and GDP per capita (and .74 when the outlier Ile-de-France is included). Moreover, Blatter’s data is substantially correlated with Hooghe’s et al. index of self-rule (r=.49, p<.0001) (see Donas & Beyers 2013). To strengthen our main argument we ran alternative models in which
which looks at self-rule (the authority exercised by a regional government over those who live on its territory and thus the autonomy of a region from the central government) and shared-rule (the joined authority and thus the regional participation and co-decision-making at the central state level); the models include both dimensions. I expect that expressing preferences by submitting a position paper is especially affected by the level of self-rule, much less by shared-rule. Hence, I operationalize regional autonomy by self-rule and control for shared rule. Additionally, we control for the amount of structural/cohesion funding a region receives as it is sometimes expected that SNAs that receive substantial funding from EU sources will show higher levels of political activity with respect to EU policymaking processes (Bache, 1998; Hooghe & Keating, 1994; Marks et al., 1996). Based on data collected by Beyers and Donas (2013), EU embeddedness is operationalized by looking at regional offices and membership of trans-regional associations. I developed a simple dichotomous variable indicating whether an SNA has established a regional office. For trans-regional associations we a count variable was created capturing the amount of trans-regional associations an SNA is a member of. Because GDP, cohesion support and the affiliations with trans-regional associations show a skewed distribution, I log-transformed these variables.

As mentioned earlier, all actors that have been active, either by submitting a position paper or by completing a questionnaire, were coded for each of the eight consultations. On the basis of this information I included a dichotomous variable to depict whether or not private interests from the same region were involved in the consultations of a specific policy case. In addition, we developed a variable for assessing the participation of other SNAs from the same country while making sure that the index is comparable across a set of diverse countries. For instance, if two (out of three) SNAs from Belgium participate in a consultation this is a high number, whereas in Romania a score of two (out of 42) is rather low considering the respective amount of regions. We first divided the number of other GDP as a proxy for resources was substituted by other candidates such as GDP/capita and population size. These models largely confirm our main findings (for more information see the Online Appendix).
participating SNAs by the total number of SNAs of the member state. To accommodate the skewedness of this variable and to ensure that the variable is meaningful, I established three categories, namely 1) no other SNAs submitted a position paper, 2) less than half of the other national SNAs submitted a position and 3) more than half of the other national SNAs took part in the consultation.

3.4. Data Analysis

I first provide a short descriptive overview of the data. Table 2 shows that there is a great diversity in the type of actors and the level on which they are mobilized. Most participants originate from the national level (n=758, or 38 percent), while the number of submissions originating from the sub-national level is substantial as well (n=564, or 28 percent). Also the high number of public authorities that originate from the sub-national level (n=321, or 16 percent) is remarkable. Alongside mobilizing private interests, a large share of sub-national actors involved in consultations are public authorities. I also observe that, in general, business interests outnumber civil society organizations such as NGOs and labor unions.

| Table 2. Actor distribution according to interest type and level of mobilization (frequencies) |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------|--------|-----------------|-------|
|                                                | Business | Labour | NGO    | Institution | Public authority | Unknown | Total |
| Subnational                                    | 152      | 2      | 26     | 32         | 321              | 31     | 564   |
| National                                       | 228      | 21     | 70     | 219        | 178              | 42     | 758   |
| EU                                             | 170      | 9      | 59     | 128        | 82               | 61     | 509   |
| International                                  | 87       | 2      | 30     | 26         | 3                | 8      | 156   |
| Unknown                                        | 0        | 0      | 1      | 1          | 0                | 1      | 3     |
| Total                                          | 637      | 34     | 186    | 406        | 584              | 21     | 1990  |

Index: Institutions are semi-public organizations that have no membership structure, such as hospitals or universities.

The actor distribution varies substantially depending on the policy case. Figure 1 gives an overview of the actor types by policy case. In the CAP consultations, businesses (in particular farmers and food industry) and NGOs (especially environmental NGOs and consumers) are most prominent. The environmental consultation has the lowest response rate, with a high prevalence of business interests and NGOs. In cohesion policy, public authorities – of which 68 per cent (n=170) are sub-national – are by far the largest group, which is not surprising considering that regions are important beneficiaries of structural funds. The representation of public and private interests is more evenly balanced in H2020 and TEN-T. With respect to H2020, the participation of institutions – such as universities and research centers – stands
out, again due to being direct funding beneficiaries. Interestingly, in TEN-T more public authorities, of which 62 per cent (n=157) are located at the sub-national level, participated compared to the consultations.

**Figure 1. Overview of the actor types by policy area (frequencies, N=1990)**

![Bar chart showing actor types by policy area](chart.png)

To test the hypotheses, I ran multilevel logistic regression models predicting the participation of a region in consultations within a certain policy area. The SNAs are nested within member states and for each SNA we have five repeated measures, one for each area. Given the hierarchical structure of the data, the assumption of independent and identically distributed data is violated and an ordinary logistic regression might over-estimate the magnitude of the predictors. Therefore, a three level model is used allowing two intercepts to vary, one for the member state level and one for the SNA level. The independent variables are introduced step by step. I compare the fit of the expanded model with the more parsimonious model to check if adding a particular set of variables significantly improves the model fit and/or affects the parameter estimates.

Model simply controls for the random intercepts for country and region and the five policy areas using dummy variables. Taking CAP as a reference category, it can be observed that policy area has an effect: it is more likely that SNAs participate in consultations on Cohesion Policy, TEN-T or H2020 than in consultations on CAP or environmental policies.
Model II adds variables that test the effect of regional resources and autonomy. This leads to a significant better fit ($2^*\text{-LL-LL}=25.58$, $\Delta\text{df}=4$, $p<.0001$). As expected GDP (H1) and self-rule (H2) have a significant positive effect on the regional participation in open consultations, whereas cohesion funding or shared-rule have no significant effect. The null result for cohesion funding corroborates with earlier claims that the distribution of structural funds is largely a matter of socio-economic criteria and high-end political bargaining and that securing structural funds is not the only or most important concern of sub-national policy advocacy (Donas & Beyers, 2013).

Model III tests for EU-level embeddedness, while controlling for resources and autonomy. Again, this model gives an improved fit compared to Model II ($2^*\text{-LL-LL}=14.58$, $\Delta\text{df}=2$, $p=.0007$). Having a liaison office in Brussels does not predict the involvement in public consultations (H3), whereas being a member of a trans-regional association enhances the likelihood of getting involved in consultations (H4). Interestingly, GDP remains significant, although less so than in Model II, and self-rule no longer significantly predicts the participation in consultations. The better fit of Model III means that by adding these variables we get a more accurate prediction of the probability that SNAs take part in consultations. Yet, at the same time, the predictive importance of regional characteristics decreases (in the case of GDP) or disappears (in the case of self-rule), which means that a more parsimonious model with only these factors overestimates the relevance of resources and autonomy. Based on Model III, we should indeed reject our second hypothesis. We must slightly nuance this finding, however, since having a Brussels-based liaison office and being a member of trans-regional associations is a privilege of regions with more self-rule and a higher GDP (Donas & Beyers, 2013). Maybe, the effects of self-rule and GDP are engulfed by the explanatory power of membership in trans-regional associations.
Table 3. Explaining the participation of subnational authorities in consultations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed effects</th>
<th>Model I</th>
<th>Model II</th>
<th>Model III</th>
<th>Model IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy domain (ref.cat. = CAP):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENV</td>
<td>0.642 (.35)</td>
<td>0.642 (.35)</td>
<td>0.642 (.35)</td>
<td>0.73 (.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2020</td>
<td>6.100*** (2.47)</td>
<td>6.102*** (2.47)</td>
<td>6.089*** (2.46)</td>
<td>3.327*** (1.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>24.720*** (9.92)</td>
<td>24.602*** (9.89)</td>
<td>24.531*** (9.85)</td>
<td>9.865*** (4.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TENT</td>
<td>15.370*** (6.12)</td>
<td>15.337*** (6.12)</td>
<td>15.298*** (6.1)</td>
<td>6.320*** (2.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP (log)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-rule</td>
<td>1.169** (.09)</td>
<td>1.034 (.08)</td>
<td>0.997 (.08)</td>
<td>0.951 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared-rule</td>
<td>0.998 (.09)</td>
<td>0.997 (.08)</td>
<td>0.997 (.08)</td>
<td>0.997 (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion funding (log)</td>
<td>1.035 (.13)</td>
<td>1.010 (.12)</td>
<td>0.939 (.12)</td>
<td>0.939 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional office (ref.cat. = no)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans-regional association (log)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private stakeholders (ref.cat. = no)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNA of same country (ref.cat. = no):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than half of the SNAs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than half of the SNAs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.012 (.01)</td>
<td>0.001 (.001)</td>
<td>0.001 (.001)</td>
<td>0.002 (.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random intercept</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country constant</td>
<td>1.551 (.65)</td>
<td>0.739 (.34)</td>
<td>0.479 (.25)</td>
<td>0.014 (.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNA constant</td>
<td>0.786 (.32)</td>
<td>0.572 (.29)</td>
<td>0.461 (.27)</td>
<td>0.744 (.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model fit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Df</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-LL</td>
<td>-464.19</td>
<td>-451.40</td>
<td>-444.11</td>
<td>-421.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Index: multilevel logistic regression; odds ratio’s; standard-errors between brackets; * p=.05, **p=.01, ***p=.001, N=1480
Finally, adding the key explanatory variables, the private stakeholder (H5) and SNA participation (H6), leads to a much better prediction (2*(-LL-LL)=44.54, Δdf=3, p<.0001). Both provide a robust explanation, even after controlling for regional capacities, autonomy and EU embeddedness. More so, the impact of GDP and self-rule simply evaporates, meaning that being resourceful or having many policy competencies does not add to a better prediction if we control for whether private regional interests or other SNAs from the same member-state mobilize. Figure 2 illustrates the impact of these variables on the predicted probabilities while holding all other variables in Model IV at their mean. If there is at least one private regional stakeholder submitting a position paper, the likelihood that the SNA of that region gets involved increases from 11 percent to almost 40 percent. The likelihood that an SNA uploads a policy view is almost zero if no other SNA from the same country makes an effort to take part in consultations. There is a significant increase when a small number of SNAs becomes active, but the likelihood to take part increases to more than 50 percent in case more than half of the SNAs from one country get mobilized. If we consider situations where both SNAs and private interests get involved, we predict that if these two conditions are maximized and all other factors are kept constant, the likelihood for an SNA to take part in consultation is more than 70 percent.

Figure 2. Predicted probabilities of the main explanatory variables
3.5. Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that SNAs actively use open consultations to voice regional preferences and influence EU policymaking. While, unsurprisingly, SNAs are most active in consultations on cohesion policy, a mapping shows that their participation stretches into policy areas where territorial interests are less directly tangible. Hence, SNAs constitute an important ‘advocate’ type and should not be overlooked when studying the EC’s consultation regime. Moreover, there is strong evidence suggesting that the participation of societal interests may trigger regional lobbying and vice versa. This implies that in order to identify the mechanisms behind consultation practices, future research should pay closer attention to the way in which territorial interest representation gets intermingled with private interest mobilization (and vice versa).

Although SNAs are relevant policy players, there is strong variation in the extent to which SNAs participate in EU policymaking via open consultations. The observation that nearly all SNAs have some kind of regional representation in Brussels constituted proof for some authors that a ‘convergence of regional mobilization patterns’ had occurred (Moore, 2008; see also Tatham & Thau, 2014). However, while having a regional office has become commonplace, advocacy via consultations certainly has not. Of the total population of 296 identified SNAs, only about half (137) participated in at least one of the selected sets of consultations. Interestingly, we did not find a significant effect of having a regional office on participating in open consultations. This supports the view that a regional office first and foremost serves to increase visibility, but does not necessarily add much in terms of seeking effective policy influence (see also Knodt et al., 2011).

Instead, the analysis demonstrates that involvement in open consultations depends on the specific context of a particular policy process. Regional participation in consultations might be stimulated by the presence of other interests either through membership of formal associations or through the simultaneous involvement by private interests and/or other SNAs. Nonetheless, I should remain careful and not underestimate the relevance of regional characteristics when explaining regional advocacy behavior since resources and autonomy are somewhat connected to some other explanatory variables. For instance, more resources and autonomy increases the likelihood of having a regional office and strengthens the ties with trans-regional associations (Donas & Beyers, 2013: 540; Marks et al., 1996; Tatham &
Moreover, regions with a high GDP generally have more industrial activity, a more diverse economy and therefore more societal interests that are potentially affected by EU legislation. If such resourceful regions are additionally endowed with substantial competences (self-rule), they show a higher propensity to harbour private interests that are organized at the sub-national level (Keating & Wilson, 2014).

Additionally, the fact that the explanatory power of shared-rule and self-rule is limited or disappears when controlled for contextual policy-centered variables, might point at some other relevant aspect related to some specific particularities concerning open consultations. Generally, SNAs with high levels of regional authority tend to have developed extensive intra-state channels for regional interest mediation in the EU (Beyers et al. 2015; Jeffery, 2000; Tatham 2011). These intra-state channels may depress the need to take part in open consultations as more effective channels are available. This might explain why shared-rule and to a lesser extent self-rule is not such a strong and robust predictor for participation in open consultations. Yet, this finding does not necessarily rule out regional authority as an important factor as it might be relevant for other, perhaps more effective, forms of regional mobilization, such as gaining access to Commission expert committees.

The main contribution of this study is that I provide proof for the claim that the involvement of SNAs in EU affairs should be analyzed in a broader context and requires a policy-centered research design. While I find a strong association between regional private interest involvement and the participation by SNAs, the mechanism that leads to this coinciding participation remains black-boxed. This raises a couple of interesting questions. First, despite the co-occurrence of private and public interests, it is unclear at this moment to what extent the policy positions put forward in the submitted documents align. A public and private actor originating from the same region might as well submit documents with opposing positions. Secondly, consultation data cannot provide a decisive answer about the direction of the relation between private and public sub-national actors: who triggers who into participating in online consultations? To answer this question, future research involving interviews with regional administrations for instance, is required.
4. Listening to the regional voice: discerning patterns of regional preference alignment in EU policymaking

Scholars of regional mobilization have mapped out the various channels sub-national authorities (SNAs) use when seeking access to the EU policymaking process in an attempt to influence policy (Hooghe & Marks, 1996; Tatham, 2008). In contrast, little scholarly attention has so far been awarded to the policy positions SNAs represent once mobilized at the European stage. Early studies on multilevel governance (MLG) focussed strongly on the EU’s Cohesion Policy hinting that regional policy preferences at the EU-level are first and foremost aimed at maximizing their share of the Structural Funds (Bache, 1998; Hooghe, 1996; Hooghe & Keating, 1994a).

More recently, however, Chalmers (2013a) pointed out that lobbying for structural funds takes place mainly between regions and central governments and that EU-level lobbying is not primarily concerned with winning funds. The analysis in the previous chapter corroborates this finding as the amount of a region’s structural funding does not seem to trigger participation in open consultations. Moreover, it was demonstrated that the lobbying activity of SNAs is not limited to cohesion policy alone but stretches into other policy areas such as Research and Innovation (Horizon 2020) and Transport (TEN-T) (see also Donas et al., 2014). These findings confront us with the fact that the current scholarly understanding of what kind of issues SNAs face and accompanying policy preferences they represent in EU policy-making processes is rather limited. I find this lack of research problematic because what regions want, and more specifically how this resonates with what other decision-makers and stakeholders want, might not only affect their lobbying strategy (Beyers et al., 2015) but also the effectiveness of their lobbying, as I will test in the chapter V.

This chapter examines the policy preferences SNAs defend at the European level regarding ten contemporary controversial issues where regional interests had a stake. More specifically, I analyse the extent to which these preferences are in conflict or agreement with the position of other stakeholders, most importantly their national governments (national cohesion) and other SNAs (regional cohesion). Based on this, I put forward a classification that describes four types of issues: conflict with the national government, conflict between regions of the same country, conflict between national coalitions of regions and conflict with
a ‘third party’. The data and methodology section detail how these issues and the positions of the relevant stakeholders were identified. The results section demonstrates – with the help of quantitative and qualitative data – how and to what extent each issue corresponds to one of the four types described above. The concluding section elaborates on how looking at the positions of SNAs in concrete policy issues, and based on this making a distinction between different types of issues, can enhance our understanding of regional influence in the EU.

4.1. **Towards a more encompassing understanding of regional policy preferences**

An in-depth analysis of the policy positions of SNAs in EU policy-making processes is called for because the current literature on regional mobilization is characterized by two implicit presumptions. The first implicit presumption is that policy positions of SNAs at the EU level are fairly homogenous. In the 1990s, scholars argued that regional mobilization physically manifested itself via the creation of new regional ‘access channels’ such as the Committee of the Regions or the various regional associations that were established in this era (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; Hooghe & Marks, 1996). These new venues sought to aggregate and enhance the representation of regional interests in the EU. The effectiveness of these access channels largely depends on the presumption that the interests of the European regions are to a great extent aligned. The strong focus on channels that promote ‘the common regional interest’ fuels the impression that regional mobilization mostly benefits all European regions to more or less the same extent.

Research on EU interest representation as well systematically categorizes SNAs under the label of ‘regional and local interests’, next to other interest types such as ‘business’ or ‘civil society’ (Bunea, 2013, 2014; Chalmers, 2011; 2013a 2013b; Mahoney, 2007).\(^{28}\) However, classifying all SNAs under the same header, regardless of the varying position they represent on specific policy issues, disregards the possibility that the diversity among

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\(^{28}\) These are often large N-studies where a large diversity of actor types are examined. Local authorities (SNAs) usually represent only a small share of the sample, limiting options for differentiation. Therefore, this analysis is interesting as it allows for differentiation of regional policy positions across SNAs and issues.
regional actors and the heterogeneity of their interests leads to a variety of regional preferences.

A second implicit presumption in the early literature on regional mobilization is that SNAs have policy preferences that are in conflict with the preferences advocated by central governments. Scholars of multi-level governance (MLG) argued that SNAs mobilize at the EU-level first and foremost to seek direct and unmediated access to the European institutions, thereby circumventing the gate-keeping position of central governments (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; Hooghe, 1995b; Marks, 1996; Moore, 2008). Hence, the presumed rationale for regional mobilization implicated that SNAs pursue policy objectives which are not compatible with the positions represented by their central governments (see also Tatham, 2013, p. 64).

However, as Tatham rightly pointed out, ‘providing evidence that SSEs (SNAs) are active in Brussels does not equate to proving that they bypass their member state’ (2010, p. 77). In fact, recent empirical evidence demonstrates that SNAs are generally inclined to cooperate with their central government, rather than to bypass it (Beyers & Bursens, 2006; Beyers & Donas, 2014; Beyers et al., 2015; Tatham, 2008, 2010). Still, the literature’s dominant emphasis on the vertical tensions between the central governments and regional authorities has diverted attention away from the possibility that SNAs’ policy preferences can be at odds with other stakeholders want, including SNAs situated in the same or other member-states.

To sum up, I contend that the current understanding paints a somewhat simplistic picture: SNAs’ policy preferences are fairly homogenous and as generally in opposition to the positions of central governments. Instead, this chapter demonstrates that the pattern of regional policy alignment is much more nuanced. More specifically, I propose a classification of regional positioning on policy issues according to two dimensions.

The first dimension, called the ‘level of regional cohesion’, refers to the extent an issue concerns a conflict that involves antagonism among regions or not. If regional cohesion is high, the conflict is likely to be ‘vertical’ whereby SNAs show competing interests with other levels of government, for instance the central government or the European institutions. Vertical conflicts are conflicts where we do not observe strong competition among regions of the same and/or other member-states. In contrast, issues where regional
cohesion is low are conflicts that are horizontal and involve first and foremost SNAs that have competing interests and, therefore, engage in lobbying aimed at counter-acting the lobbying efforts of other SNAs.

The second dimension is the level of ‘national cohesion’. This indicates the extent to which positions of stakeholders within the same polity are similar. When national cohesion is low, we have mostly issues that are embedded within a member-state and where regions and/or the central government of a member state are in conflict. When the level of national cohesion is high, the conflict transcends national boundaries and puts regions of the same country along with their central government, in opposition to other regions and/or a ‘third actor’ such an EU institution or a foreign national government. When both dimensions are combined within one matrix, four types of issues are revealed (see Table 4.1.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional cohesion</th>
<th>National cohesion</th>
<th>National cohesion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Conflict between regions from the same country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Conflict with a ‘third party’ (e.g. European Commission)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conflict with the central government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rest of the chapter proceeds with verifying the validity of this classification by testing it on ten contemporary issues in regional interest representation. All issues will be ascribed to one of the four quadrants based on how their score on the two dimensions of ‘regional cohesion’ and ‘national cohesion’. Next, a qualitative assessment is made of whether the issues ascribed to one of the quadrants correspond to the type of conflict that is expected by the matrix. How these ten issues were identified and the information regarding policy positions was gathered is detailed in the section below.

4.2. Data and Research Design

For the analysis I use data on the policy preferences of SNAs and central governments. This data was gathered through 39 semi-structured interviews with regional representations. The interviews covered the five policy cases that were selected earlier. On average, 1.7 policy case per respondent was discussed, resulting in a total of 67 covered cases. More
specifically, of the 39 representations we interviewed, eight worked on CAP, six on EAP, 14 on Horizon 2020, 25 on Cohesion Policy and 14 on TEN-T. Figure 1 shows that some policy areas were discussed more frequently than others. Yet, when the share of interviews covering a certain policy area is compared with the share of position papers that have been submitted regarding the consultations of that particular policy area, it can be observed that the distributions are reasonably similar. Actually, when compared to the activity level in consultations, the less salient policy areas such as CAP, EAP and Horizon 2020 are represented more strongly in the interview project, while we have relatively less interviews for Cohesion Policy and TEN-T. Variation in salience thus explains differences in the number of regional preferences that were collected per policy case.

**Figure 2.1. Overview of interviews and position papers by policy area (percentage of total)**

The 40 regional representations that were interviewed have 14 different national backgrounds, being Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. For seven member states – Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta and Slovenia – there are no SNAs that fulfil the above mentioned criteria and therefore no respondents coming from these countries were interviewed. For the regional representations of Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Portugal and Romania no officials were interviewed; these SNAs generally have
less resources and/or enjoy less regional autonomy. Previous research has shown that such SNAs are less likely to participate in open consultations or to have a Brussels-based regional office (Donas & Beyers, 2013; Van Hecke, e. a., 2016). Since this implies that their overall involvement in EU policymaking is less intensive, their omission should not be considered overly problematic.

Based on an interview procedure described in detail in chapter II, information about 145 preferences of 73 unique SNAs regarding 24 issues was collected (see table 2.4. for a detailed overview). The empirical analysis does not include all identified issues, but focusses on issues where a substantial number of SNAs were active (n >= 5). A low confirmation rate might indicate that the issues are not that important in terms of divisiveness. The issues “Regional coordinators” and “Voie Férrée Centre Europe Atlantique” are not included in the analysis because the position of the central governments could not be identified properly. Table 2.2. shows all ten issues, including those to be analysed (in bold).
### Table 2.2. Issues and positions in regional lobbying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy area</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Number of SNA positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Greening</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Flexibility</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capping of Payments</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>Level of Ambition</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EU monitoring capacity</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2020</td>
<td>Excellence vs Widening Participation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flat Rate vs. Full Cost Accounting</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COH</td>
<td>Macro-economic conditionality</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Code of Conduct</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transition Regions</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funds for Developed Regions</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEN-T</td>
<td>Valencia Railway</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>France-Italy railway connection</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Via Karpatia</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vienna-(Bratislava-)Budapest railway</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Central Pyrenees Crossing</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Berlin-Szczecin waterway connection</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regional coordinators</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Great Eastern Main Line</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prague-Linz connection</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voie Férrée Centre Europe Atlantique</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>München-Prague railway</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ravenna Extension</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bothnian Corridor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.3. Quantitative Data Analysis

In the empirical section of this chapter I examine whether the proposed classification of can be applied appropriately to the set of identified issues. I do this in a two-way approach involving both numerical and qualitative data. First, I empirically replicate the classification matrix that is theoretically constructed in Table 2.1. I do this by operationalizing both ‘regional cohesion’ and ‘national cohesion’ of SNAs’ preferences and by providing each issue with a numerical score on both dimensions. Next, I build a scatterplot placing all ten issues into one of the four quadrants of the matrix. The expectation is that issues within each quadrant represent a specific type of regional conflict, i.e. conflicts of SNAs with their central
government, conflicts between SNAs from the same member state, conflicts between national coalitions of regions and conflicts of SNAs with a ‘third party’. To test this I consequently make a qualitative assessment based on interview data of whether these issues fit their classification.

### 4.3.1. Measuring regional cohesion of SNA policy preferences

A first step in the construction of the matrix involves the operationalization of regional cohesion. Here, we are interested in the extent to which preferences of SNAs on controversial issues are divergent. When regional policy positions are relatively homogenous, we expect that SNAs promote some kind of common regional interest, for instance to protect or enhance their institutional position within the EU. In this case, conflict is likely to be vertical, opposing other levels of government such as central governments or EU institutions. Alternatively, when SNAs have policy preferences that are very different I expect that SNAs have horizontally conflicting interests and that their lobbying efforts are targeted first and foremost against each other. We measure the level of regional cohesion by looking at the standard deviation for the regional positions per issue.

By means of illustration, the boxplots in figure 2.3 already show that there are strong differences regarding the dispersion of regional positions per issue, allowing for differentiation. For some issues, such as *Greening* or *funds for developed regions*, the policy preferences of SNAs are grouped together (neglecting the outliers). For other issues, such as capping direct payments and transition regions, the preferences of SNAs are more dispersed across the policy scale.
4.3.2. Measuring national cohesion of SNA policy preferences

Measuring the ‘national cohesion’ of SNAs’ preferences is less straightforward. How to meaningfully operationalize ‘national cohesion’ depends on the level of regional cohesion, or more specifically, whether the conflict is vertical (with other levels of government) or horizontal (with other regions). One the one hand, if the level of regional cohesion is high (and conflict is vertical), it is more useful to understand ‘national cohesion’ as the extent to which the positions of SNAs differ from their respective central governments. When the policy distance between SNAs is low but the average distance to their central governments is high, a traditional vertical conflict between SNAs and their member state is expected. In case the differences between regional preferences are low but the average distance to the respective central governments is low as well, a vertical conflict with a ‘third party’ such as EU institutions or foreign central governments is expected instead. I operationalize the average policy distance to the central government by subtracting the numerical estimates for the preferences of SNAs with the numerical estimates for the preferences of central
governments and taking its absolute value. Next, the average policy distances per issue is calculated.

In case the level of regional cohesion is low and conflict is mainly between SNAs themselves, on the other hand, it is less useful to operationalize ‘national cohesion’ by measuring the average policy distance to the national government, since positions of SNAs and their distance to the national government might be very different. Instead, it is here more interesting to measure ‘national cohesion’ as the extent to which policy preferences of SNAs belonging to the same country are clustered together. When preferences of SNAs in general are very heterogeneous but, at the same time, SNAs belonging to the same country are grouped together, I expect that conflict mainly exists between ‘national coalitions of regions’. In contrast, if positions of SNAs belonging to the same country are very heterogeneous, we expect that the conflict mainly involves a domestic regional battle.

Below, two scatterplots are presented. For both scatterplots, the level of regional cohesion (Y-axis) is operationalized by the standard deviation of the positions of SNAs. For figure 4.1. the level of national cohesion (X-axis) is operationalized by the average distance between the positions of SNAs and their respective national governments. For this scatterplot, the bottom two quadrants (1 & 2) which represent vertical conflicts are relevant. For figure 2.5., the level of national cohesion (X-axis) is operationalized by the average standard deviation of preferences of SNAs belonging to the same member state. For this scatterplot, the upper two quadrants representing horizontal conflicts (3 & 4) are relevant.
Figure 2.4. Scatterplot for vertical conflicts

Figure 2.5. Scatterplot for horizontal conflicts
4.4. Qualitative Data Analysis

Based on our numerical data on regional policy positions we have divided ten issues over four quadrants of a scatterplot. The expectation is these issues correspond to the type of conflict that is described by matrix depicted in table 2.1. This means that issues located in quadrant one (Q1) should entail conflicts with the national government, issues located in quadrant 2 (Q2) should entail conflicts with third parties, issues located in quadrant three (Q3) should entail conflicts within countries and issues within quadrant four (Q4) should entail conflicts between national coalitions of regions. To verify whether this is the case, each issue is discussed in detail below based on qualitative interview data with policy experts and regional representatives.

4.4.1. Q1: conflict with the national government

Q1 represents issues where positional differences between SNAs are relatively small, but the average distance of SNAs to their central government is relatively large. For these issues, I expect mostly conflicts between SNAs and their respective national government. Three issues are situated within this category, namely ‘macro-economic conditionality’, ‘code of conduct on the partnership principle’ and ‘funds for developed regions’. Below I discuss these three issues in detail followed by an evaluation of the extent to which these issues can indeed be considered as conflicts with the national level.

The issue of Macro-Economic Conditionality (MEC) concerned the idea that EU structural funding would depend on a member-state’s compliance with some economic governance requirements. Should a member-state fail to take measures recommended under the instruments of macroeconomic coordination in the event of imbalance or excessive budget deficit at national level, the structural support it gets from EU funds could be suspended. The EC introduced MEC in its initial legislative proposal. While the idea was strongly supported by the Council, and more specifically by the “Friends of Better Spending”29, it was strongly opposed by regional associations, claiming that it is a “dead-end in terms of effectiveness

29 A group of member states consisting mainly out of net-contributors to the EU budget, such as Germany, Sweden, Austria, the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands.
and a political misconception” (interview with CEMR). Their argument was that sanctions would affect the regional and local level, but that governments at this level are not or only weakly responsible for the fiscal policies of a member-state as a whole.

The average position of SNAs on this issue was 19.29 on a scale of 0-100, indicating that most SNAs followed the logical argument made by their regional association. “For us, French regions, it was tricky to have this macro-economic conditionality because we were thinking that we are not responsible for the economic situation of our country” (interview with Picardie). Another SNA added that “not everything can be foreseen and planned in advance. Cohesion policy should not be conditional” (interview Pomerania) and “it puts the cohesion policy as a whole at risk” (interview with Wallonia). In contrast, one Austrian SNA was openly in favour of having MEC since the region would not be affected for both economic and legal reasons: “… because in the background there was always this idea that we won’t be affected. It would affect maybe Spain, Italy, Greece, Hungary, …. It depends on the national situation and the national constitution whether the national or the regional level would bear the consequences. Many regions have told us that at least in Eastern-Europe, the regions would bear the consequences. In Austria, this would not be the case. It would be an interesting legal question, but I think the national level would pay. We had a legal opinion on this and the national level did not disagree with this opinion” (interview with Vienna).

In fact, it is quite remarkable that, although most SNAs positioned themselves against macro-economic conditionality, many of them indicated that they did not think the issue was important enough to campaign against. One argument was that many SNAs believed that they would not be affected because they had good faith in the macro-economic management of their central governments. “From a European point of view, yes [it was problematic], but from the viewpoint of the German state, the macro-economic conditionality was somewhat less of a priority because we had no problems during the times of those decisions. So it was important, but it was not as bad as in other member states who economically did a lot worse. We had a certain level of trust in the macro-economic governance of our central government” (interview with Mecklenburg-Vorpommern). A Finnish region contended that “the issue of macro-economic conditionality was not really of importance to us, because the Finnish central government has her financial household in
order. This issue was more of a concern to regions whose central governments traditionally have poor macro-economic governance” (interview with North and East Finland).

This view was echoed by SNAs who in principle were opposed to MEC, but believed it was not important enough to oppose the central government. “We were a bit lame on the issue of macro-economic conditionality because there we had a different position than the national level. We kept out of the discussions because it was not very important to us and it was not important enough to get into a fight with the national government. It was easily agreed that we would not openly act against our government. Since our biggest concern was not to slow down the negotiation process on the overall cohesion policy, we decided not to actively mobilize with regard to this issue” (interview with Brandenburg). Some also claimed that acting against MEC would be useless because it would happen anyway since the Commission and the Council were aligned on the matter. “After all, the Commission and the Council have more power than the EP and the regions. The EP was very strong but not strong enough to fence off both Commission and Council, because the Commission and Council for one time really worked together. Of course, the best would be to delete this, but we saw from the very early start that this cannot be a real position because in the end it would be this” (interview with Saxony-Anhalt). “It was somehow accepted that it would happen and that it would come to that” (interview with Mecklenburg-Vorpommern).

Figure 2.6. Policy scale MEC

The Code of Conduct (CoC) on the Partnership Principle requires member states to strengthen cooperation between authorities responsible for spending EU structural funds and project partners such as regional and local authorities, NGO’s and other civil society actors. It includes a set of standards to improve consultation, participation and dialogue with these stakeholders during planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects.
financed by the European Structural & Investment Fund (ESIF). The Commission proposal on cohesion policy reform provided for such a partnership principle. Regional associations embodied the most extreme ‘positive’ position by welcoming these CoC, but at the same time advocating an even stronger version by arguing that the role of local and regional authorities should be emphasized more and become better differentiated from other stakeholders such as trade unions or civil society. Moreover, they pleaded in favour of a retro-active effect and financial penalties in case the CoC would be violated. The Council embodied the most extreme ‘negative’ position, was strongly against the CoC and sought to delete it from the EC proposal (interview with DG REGIO). The member-states in the council argued that it was not needed because regional authorities were already involved in their partnership agreements. Moreover, they felt that it was up to them to decide whether and how to consult local and regional authorities and this should not be imposed top-down by the Commission (interview DG REGIO).

With an average score of 74 on a scale from 0-100, the SNAs we interviewed expressed themselves in favour of the CoC. “We were in favour of the code of conduct because it would change the architecture of the cohesion policy. For us, it will be the first time since this year that the regional council is the main authority to be consulted in the operational programmes. This is why we decided to be in favour of such an agreement because it was a way to legitimize our actions towards the European institutions” (interview with Picardie). “This was very important for us because we do not have this kind of thing, so it was really motivating for us” (interview Presov). The relatively low standard deviation of 33 and an average distance to the national government of 67 on a scale from 0 to 100 indicates a substantial conflict between SNAs and their central authorities.

Remarkably, it was especially SNAs of federalized countries who were less enthusiastic about the CoC. For them this was a matter of institutional autonomy vis-à-vis the central state. “It is also a question of principle. I think the situation especially in Austria, Germany and Belgium is that we have a functioning partnership principle. European funds are regionalized in Austria. So for us it was no question of living or dying. We often see that there is a good idea behind it, but it leads to more administrative burdens because you have to prove to the EC that the processes are ongoing. If you would make a study I think the outcome would be that the whole process became more complicated” (interview with
“The German federal government said that we don’t need it” (interview with Saxony-Anhalt) and “we don’t want to go out of the legal framework” (interview with Wallonia).

Figure 2.7. Policy scale CoC

The third issue is in the bottom-right quadrant concerns the **Funds for Developed Regions**. At the early stages of the policymaking process a non-paper was leaked by DG BUDGET proposing to allocate structural funding exclusively to the less developed regions, thereby cancelling structural funding for the vast majority of the more developed regions (GDP/head $\geq 90\%$ of EU average). This idea was strongly supported by a member state coalition called “The Friends of Better Spending” (see note 8). With an average position of 91 and a relatively low standard deviation of 30, SNAs were very much opposed to this idea. This was clearly an issue with strong conflict among multiple levels of governance. “In the beginning they (the Austrian national government) were fiercely against it, but in the end, since this is really the competence of the regions and since we have an internal coordination process, there was clear unanimity that all regions were in favour so the federal government had to take this into account” (interview with Lower Austria). Remarkably, even lesser developed regions of Poland and Slovakia expressed their support for continuing to give money to developed regions. “The Cohesion policy should be a development tool and it is not charity, so it should not be only given to the poorest. Of course that was in a way against our interests at the time, but the problem was that we would reshape the image of the cohesion policy, that it was not a development tool but a mechanism that is there to help the poorest. Cohesion policy is not about redistribution but investment.” (interview with Pomerania).

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Vienna).
Following the discussion above, we can conclude that all three issues situated in the bottom-right quadrant indeed involve conflicts between SNAs and the national level. Here, SNAs mobilize at the EU-level to defend regional interests at the expense of the member-states. At the same time, this conclusion needs to be nuanced since SNAs, and especially those of federal countries, also seem to remain loyal to their national governments when individual interests do not seem to be directly affected (MEC and CoC). In contrast, less developed regions did show solidarity with more developed regions when their funding was threatened to be cancelled. For this type of issues the EC seems to play a decisive pivotal role as they supported SNAs concerning the CoC but opposed them on MEC, leading to relative lobbying success and lobbying failure respectively.30

4.4.2. Q2: conflict with a third party

The previous section presented instances where SNAs positions are fairly congruent and where SNAs opposed the central government. Yet, what if at the same time, the divergence with the national government is relatively small? If so, I expect the conflict as vertical and directed against other stakeholders than the central government, such as the European Commission or foreign national governments. Below we discuss two issues that fit this classification, namely ‘Greening’ and ‘Excellence’.

The issue Greening is a classic example of a conflict between SNAs along with their central governments on the one hand and the European Commission on the other hand. During the reform of the CAP, the EC proposed some very ambitious greening measures. It

30 For the issue ‘Funds for Developed Regions’ the position of the EC was less clear since there was a strong substantive disagreement between DG BUDGET and DG REGIO.
planned to make 30 percent of the national budget for direct payments conditional upon compliance with three key greening measures, including crop diversification, maintaining existing permanent grassland and creating ecological focus areas. Should farmers fail to implement these, they would become ineligible to the greening component of the direct payments. Environmental groups embodied the most extreme ‘positive’ position by urging the EC to go even further than what it had proposed. “The Commission’s proposal includes well-meaning initiatives, but they are simply not enough to address these problems and the overall package is weak” (position paper Friends of the Earth-Europe). Governments charged with administering the CAP, however, quickly expressed concerns that such policies would be burdensome and criticized that these uniform environmental rules are at odds with the diversity of European agriculture. The Council, although being officially in favour of greening the CAP, unanimously agreed that the greening measures should be more flexible, less rigid, and meet national and regional differences (interview with DG AGRI).

With an average score of 28 and an average distance to the central government of 21 on a scale from 0-100, SNAs strongly supported the views of their central governments. “It is not a matter of good versus bad, sometimes you think that the way the Commission proposes to deal with the environment is not the right way. A ‘one fits all policy’ is not a good idea. Now direct payments have become very complicated while it should be easy. Instead of one page you now have 100 pages and you cannot control it and then the Commission isn’t happy either. This was our national position” (interview with Brandenburg). “We wanted to maintain the status quo. We wanted only voluntary measures not a directive by the EU. We call this ‘the Bavarian Way’” (interview with Bavaria).

Figure 2.9. Policy scale Greening
The discussion on ‘Excellence’ as the main driver of Horizon 2020 versus the widening of participation towards regions and countries with a lower R&D performance was the result of an interim evaluation of the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. This evaluation showed that less than five percent of all funding under the 7th Framework programme was allocated to projects originating from Eastern European research centres and universities. This resulted from the fact that ‘excellence’ is the single most important criterion for the funding of projects and the concentration of highly performing research institutes in Western Europe, fuelling a heated discussion during the negotiations on the reform of Horizon 2020 whereby the ‘new’ member states plead to expand the opportunities to participate in the programme.

With an average score of 71, SNAs expressed themselves mostly in favour of keeping ‘excellence’ as primary criterion for the distribution of Horizon 2020 funds. This is mainly due to the fact that most respondents are from SNAs located in Western Europe (and weak presence of Central-Eastern regions in Brussels). It is remarkable that the only Eastern European SNA that was interviewed on this issue had a position of 20. Most regional advocacy was thus targeted against other member-states, namely those member states who sought to relax the excellence requirements. Yet, we can observe some variation in the positioning among regions within Western Europe that harbour traditionally strong universities and research institutes such as Bavaria, Capital Region Denmark, Stockholm region on the one hand, and regions that are less significant in research and innovation on the other. “We advocated strongly for excellence. We tried to find a common position with all the German Länder to avoid confusion and contradiction vis-à-vis the Commission via the Bundesrat, but this issue was too complicated to have a clear-cut common position on” (interview with Bavaria). “In Sweden 80 percent of the application to FP7 were made by a total of 5 actors. We strongly oppose that” (interview with Smaland-Blekinge).

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As expected, the issues of Greening and Excellence involve conflicts where SNAs and their central governments acts as coalition partners vis-à-vis a third party. For Greening this third party is represented by the EC, for Excellence the third party is represented by the member states of Eastern Europe.

4.4.3. Q3: Conflict between SNAs of the same country

In this section I discuss issues where the policy positions of SNAs are heterogeneous and there are strong differences regarding the positions of SNAs belonging to the same member state (average standard deviation of SNA positions belonging to the same country is high). I expect that when this is the case, the EU level can become a battle turf for domestic issues. Below two issues that correspond to these attributes are discussed, the ‘capping of direct payments’ and the ‘Central Pyrenees Crossing’.

The first issue concerns the **Capping of direct payments** in the CAP. In light of the CAP reform, the Commission proposed a ‘capping’ of direct payments that would gradually reduce pillar 1 payments to farming cooperatives and large landowners receiving more than €150,000 per year. This proved to be particularly worrisome for farms located in Eastern Germany and neighbouring regions because they traditionally have large farms, something they inherited from the communist era. “For us it was very important that we won’t get a capping because we have big farms” (interview with Brandenburg). Farms in Western Germany, notably in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, on the other hand are relatively small and would gain a competitive advantage in case agricultural subsidies would be capped. Consequently, a battle emerged between SNAs from Eastern and Western Germany (hence, the high standard deviation for the position of German SNAs). Eventually, the German federal government brokered a deal whereby there would be no capping, but an additional
bonus would be awarded to young and small farmers. “The loss of the capping of payment was not a great disadvantage for the small farmers but they benefitted greatly from the bonus for small farmers” (interview with Bavaria). “We kept this compromise until the final negotiations. It was a wonder, but sometimes federalism works’ (interview with Mecklenburg-Vorpommern).

2.11. Policy scale Capping of direct payments

The issues of the Central Pyrenees Crossing was part of the discussion on TEN-T, the EU’s transport infrastructure policy that aims to close the gaps between member-states transport networks. Under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), €26.25 billion was made available from the EU’s 2014-2020 budget to co-fund TEN-T projects. Nine core network corridors are identified in the annex to the CEF Regulation, which includes a list of projects pre-identified for possible EU funding during the period 2014–2020. There was a strong debate on a part of the Mediterranean corridor that connects Spain with France. Two possible routes were presented: either from Valencia along the Mediterranean coast via Barcelona to the cities of Marseille and Nice or from Madrid via Aragon through the Pyrenees to Toulouse. This meant that the regions of Aragon and Midi-Pyrenees were very much in favour of the Central Pyrenees Crossing, but that regions such as Valencia, Catalonia and Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur (PACA) were against as they preferred the alternative route. The Spanish central government was also more in favour of having the Central Pyrenees Crossing “This was an issue where the interests of our region and the interests of other regions and the Spanish government were directly opposed to each other. Eventually it was France that tipped the balance” (interview with Catalonia).
2.12. Policy scale Central Pyrenees Crossing

The issues of “capping of payments” and “Central Pyrenees Crossing” were indeed two issues where the interests of SNAs that belonged to the same country were in conflict. These SNAs fought their battle on the European stage. For this type of issue, the position of the central government seems to be crucial. In the first issue, the German government was able to find a compromise. In the second issue the Spanish government chose sides.

4.4.4. Q4: Conflict between national coalitions of regions

The fourth quadrant includes issues where positions of SNAs in general show strong differences, the positions of SNAs that belong to the same member-state coalesce. We expect these issues to involve conflicts between national coalitions of SNAs from different countries whereby SNAs are often aligned with the central government. Two issues that correspond to this classification, ‘Transition Regions’ and ‘Regional Flexibility’ are discussed below.

Concerning the issue of ‘Transition Regions’, the Commission proposed to introduce a new intermediate category of regions with a regional GDP between 75 and 90 percent of the EU average for its cohesion policy. While there was not much debate on whether or not to have measures for ‘intermediate regions’, how to calculate the share of funds for these intermediate regions was highly contested. The original idea of the Commission was to calculate the portion of the funds based primarily on the regional GDP, including regions in France, UK and Belgium. Some SNAs tried to build a coalition of transition regions to promote this idea. “We started to build a lobby coalition with them within a network called “the transition regions” which was initiated together with some the German Länder concerns” (interview with Wallonia).
The German federal government and some German Länder, however, were against the idea to establish a new and big category of intermediate regions. “We were not sure what that (new category) was going to entail with regard to the availability of funding and with regard to how many other regions were going to be in that bracket. When you look at the scale between 75 and 90 percent of GDP, there were points in time – especially during the economic crisis - that nobody really knew how many regions were going to be in there. So the fear was that if the funding would stay the same but more regions were included in the category, that this would decline the total amount of funding” (interview with Mecklenburg-Vorpommern). “We were not very keen on the overall transition region category because many Italian, French and Spanish regions would also be part of this category and it would cost a lot of money. And that would get of the money that we would need for our phasing out regions” (interview with Brandenburg).

The German federal government did not favour a ‘general transition category’ which would include about 50 European regions. This would spread the funds too much. Instead, the German federal government favoured to concentrate on maximizing structural funds in the Eastern German Länder. So instead of creating a new intermediate category, the German federal government urged its Länder to stop building this trans-regional coalition. They came up with the idea to create a ‘safety net’ which would guarantee former ‘phasing-out’ regions a minimal share of two thirds of the funds which these regions received under the previous programming period. “They were looking for a specific solution for their Länder, they tried to build a ‘phasing out of the phasing out’. So they pressured their own Länder to stop this lobbying and to promote the single solution they would like to put in place for the German Länder concerns, but they called it transitional regimes too” (interview with Wallonia). Apparently, the approach worked. “Of course you can have trans-regional networks but they don’t matter in the end. Sachsen-Anhalt tried to make such a transnational coalition. Berlin made one phone call, they stopped” (interview with Lower Saxony).
The second issue was the issue of **regional flexibility in the CAP**. The proposed legislation on CAP was largely designed in such a way that it presumed that central governments were largely competent for agriculture. This posed a problem for federal or devolved member-states where the regional level holds — exclusive or shared — competences over agricultural policy. A prominent example is Belgium, where the Flemish and Walloon Region have full autonomy in the field of agriculture. However, the Commission proposals on the CAP Reform did not leave room for a diverging interpretation and implementation of its policy within one member-state. Therefore, central governments and SNAs that were confronted with this problem, argued for the possibility of a regional implementation of the entire CAP policy.

Although the Commission was somewhat sympathetic towards the Belgian request, it feared that such a possibility would create a precedent for member-states such as Germany or Spain and that it would lead to a significant increase in workload. “Belgium only has a ‘northern region’ and a ‘southern region’ coordinated by a central agricultural office, Germany has sixteen Länder who would each have an own interpretation of the CAP leading to a document of more than ten pages. This, the Commission could not accept” (interview with DG AGRI). Despite the fact that the Commission was not fundamentally against the idea, they were not eager to expand further the possibilities regarding regional implementation of the CAP.

For most involved actors, the issue of regional implementation was not a major concern. Especially devolved and federal member-states took a double-sided interest in the issue. On the one hand, member-states where agricultural policy was a devolved competence argued for a regionalized implementation so that the European policy would fit better with the domestic institutional structure. This group of countries consisted most prominently of Belgium and the United Kingdom who tried to replace every reference in the legal texts to “member-state” by “member-state/region”. On the other hand, member-
states with a less clear-cut division of competences, feared that this provisions would lead to ammunition for regionalist ambitions. This group of countries existed out of Spain, Germany and Italy. “Bavaria does not want regional implementation, it wants a policy for the nation as a whole. If a Bavarian farmer has land in Saxony and has to fulfil different regulations... . We want an implementation that is the same for the whole of Germany” (interview with Bavaria). “It was not our position to have regional flexibility, because we work very closely together with the other German Länder and the German federal government and we prefer one position and not 16 or 17 positions (interview with Brandenburg).

2.14 Policy scale Regional Flexibility

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4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that issues in regional interest representation are complex and can be very different in terms of actor constellation. Current scholarly understanding of regional policy preferences has been characterized by two implicit presumptions; firstly, that regional preferences at the EU-level are fairly similar and are geared towards defending the common regional interest in the EU’s decision-making system; secondly, that mobilizing in Brussels allows SNAs to defend policy positions that are in conflict with the central state level. Both presumptions have spurred the research community on to focus on vertical tensions between central and regional governments when studying regional mobilization in the EU (Bache, 1998; Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; Tatham, 2010, 2012, 2013). In fact, an in depth analysis of the policy preferences of SNAs reveals that there is a strong variation in the homogeneity of regional preferences and the extent to which regional preferences are in conflict with the central state level. This variation in regional preference alignment allows to differentiate between four types of issues: conflict with the national government, conflict with a third party, conflict between SNAs of the same country and conflict between national coalitions of SNAs.
One of the four types indeed represents conflicts between central and sub-state tiers of government, as presumed in the literature. These issues include the discussions on macro-economic conditionality, code of conduct and funds for developed regions. Yet, while our analyses confirm the existence of traditional state vs. regional conflicts at the EU level, they do not seem to be the raison d’être of regional lobbying in Brussels for a couple of reasons. First, even for an issue where regional and national interests seem to be directly opposed to each other (e.g. macro-economic conditionality), regional preferences show a substantial level of diversity. Interviews with regional representatives illustrated that certain SNAs would rather stay loyal to the national position than defend the common regional interest. Secondly, we find that national governments can also act as partners for their SNAs when defending a common national interest vis-à-vis for instance the Commission (e.g. Greening). Third, given that half of the issues we have identified represent a conflict amongst SNAs, one could doubt whether ‘the common regional interest’ exists at all. The classification put forward in this chapter differentiates between two types of inter-regional conflict: conflict between SNAs from the same country and conflict between ‘national coalitions of SNAs’. For both types of issues the central government can play an important supportive role. In case of a conflict between SNAs belonging to the same country the central government can be crucial for brokering a deal and negotiating a compromise solution (e.g. Capping of direct payments). For conflicts between national coalitions of SNAs they can strengthen these coalitions by actively joining them (e.g. Transition regions).

To conclude, I have expressed expectations about four different types of issues based on patterns of regional preference alignment. Despite the fact that the sample exists only out of ten issues I was able to provide evidence for the existence of all four types, validating the classification of issues in regional interest representation put forward in this chapter. Next to the descriptive in-depth empirical insights these case studies offer, studying patterns of regional preference alignment are hypothesised to be important because they potentially affect an SNA’s level of lobbying success. An SNA representing a policy position that is at odds with ‘the average regional preference’ might face a harder time having its preferences heard and taken into account by EU policymakers. For instance, SNAs that were in favour of cancelling structural funds for developed regions were clearly in the minority, thereby possibly lessening the appeal of their preferences for decision makers. Equally, SNAs
representing policy positions that are in conflict with the national government might be subject to more acts of counter-active lobbying via the Council. SNAs advocating to cancel macro-economic conditionality, for instance, met strong resistance of their central governments that are represented in the Council. Since the Council enjoys a considerable level of decision-making power (Thomson, 2011), the ability of SNAs achieving their policy objectives in this case looks less likely. In other words, preference alignment of SNAs might be an important explanatory variable when assessing regional influence in the EU. In the next part I therefore include expectations concerning preference alignment in the set of hypotheses that is aimed at explaining regional success in EU policymaking.
5. Escaping the gilded cage? Explaining regional preference attainment in EU policymaking

Due to a competence overlap between subnational and supranational levels of governance, subnational authorities (SNAs) have mobilized at the European level to gain direct and unmediated access to EU institutions and exert influence on EU policymaking processes (Jensen, Koop, & Tatham, 2014; Jones & Keating, 1995; Marks et al., 2002; Tatham & Bauer, 2014). As a result, research regarding various aspects of regional lobbying emerged, including the opening and maintenance of regional offices in Brussels (Blatter et al., 2010; Donas & Beyers, 2013; Marks, Nielsen, et al., 1996; Tatham & Thau, 2014), the emergence and proliferation of regional associations (Donas & Beyers, 2013), information exchange with EU policymakers (Beyers et al., 2015), and participation in the European Commission’s (EC) open consultations as demonstrated in chapter III. Yet, participating in EU policy-making does not equal actually influencing policy outcomes. Therefore, how and why SNAs represent their regional interests in the EU “does not necessarily throw light on what ought to be the most important question about subnational mobilization: does it make a difference?” (Jeffery, 2000, p. 3).

There has been an intense academic debate regarding the impact of regional lobbying in the EU. While early on, scholars of multi-level governance (MLG) showed great confidence in those access channels that circumvent the gatekeeping position of the central government (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; Hooghe & Marks, 1996; Marks, 1996; Tatham, 2008), others have more recently argued that the more important influence-creating channels to EU policy-making are those that exist within member states (Beyers & Bursens, 2006, 2013; Jeffery, 2000; Tatham, 2011). Some empirical evidence has added weight to the latter’s claim. For instance, SNAs rarely pursue policy objectives in the EU independently from their central government (Tatham, 2010) and their regional offices share network ties predominantly with SNAs that belong to the same country (Beyers & Donas, 2014) and always consider the permanent representation as the most important contact point in Brussels, irrespective of what is at stake (Beyers et al., 2015). What has been missing to really substantiate this debate, however, is a comprehensive empirical assessment of the
effectiveness of regional lobbying in terms of influence over policy outcomes (but see Tatham, 2015).

This study aims to measure and explain variation in regional influence by assessing the degree to which SNAs are successful in attaining their preferences in EU policymaking. For this purpose, over 39 face-to-face interviews with Brussels-based regional representatives were conducted, discussing the policy positions and strategies of their region with regard to a total of 24 controversial policy issues that were present within five highly salient policy processes for regional interests; the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy 2014-2020 (CAP), the Environment Action Programme to 2020 (EAP), Horizon 2020 (H2020), and the reform of the Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 (COH). Different sets of hypotheses involving SNAs' regional capacities, EU-level lobbying strategies and preference alignment are tested. I find that the ability of an SNA to achieve policy outcomes that are favourable to its own interests, depends on the size and diversity of its lobbying coalition and the degree of its preference alignment with other stakeholders of the policymaking community. The policy distance to the position of the EC, the national government or the average preference of mobilized SNAs, all severely damage an SNA’s prospects of successfully influencing EU policy. Although argued repeatedly in the literature, I do not find a significant positive effect of institutionalized formal power on success. Instead, whether or not an SNAs can be influential players in EU policymaking depends on policy-specific coalition strategies and issue-specific actor constellations.

In the next part I briefly discuss the literature on regional mobilization that has touched upon the question of regional influence. Here, I mainly focus on the work by Tatham (2015) that is considered to be the first step to a large-N analysis of regional influence in the EU and point out the major similarities and differences between our approaches. This is followed by the presentation of three sets of hypotheses that are situated on three different levels: regional capacities, lobbying strategies and preference alignment. After elaborating on how the data was collected and the variables were operationalized, I present the empirical analysis. The results are further discussed in the conclusion.
5.1. A policy-centred approach to subnational influence

While previous research has elaborately investigated different aspects of subnational mobilisation, the question whether such mobilization leads to influence has been left to a limited volume of qualitative case study analyses (Bache, 1998; Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; Hooghe & Keating, 1994a; Jeffery, 2000; Keating, 1999; Lynch, 2004). Most studies agree that “there has been a great deal of regional mobilization but that its effectiveness is questionable” (Hooghe & Keating, 1994a) or that “regional government influence in the EU has been limited in spite of their extensive efforts at mobilization” (Lynch, 2004).

Recently, Tatham (2015) published ‘a first step in the exploration in the determinants of regional influence in Brussels’ on a large scale (2015, p. 398). He finds that senior regional bureaucrats report relatively low levels of self-attributed influence, confirming what had been argued by qualitative case-studies. Interestingly though, his study equally highlights that under certain circumstances regions are more likely to exert some influence directly at the supranational level. Specifically, he finds that subnational influence in the EU increases with the region’s size and with the supranational embeddedness of its top officials: “This suggests that the European political system rewards its more Europeanized players. Hence, if regions wish to influence developments supranationally, they cannot afford to mobilize only domestically” (Tatham, 2015, pp. 387–388).

This study takes Michaël Tatham up on his invitation for future research on the determinants of regional influence in Brussels, not by replicating his study but by presenting a different approach that complements its strengths and weaknesses. First, whereas Tatham has focused on attributed influence, I gauge the degree to which SNAs attain their preferences in EU policy-making as a proxy for influence. Secondly, I test certain alternative explanations that were absent in his study, most importantly coalition patterns with other public and private interests. Third, I use a policy centred approach allowing for variation on the dependent and independent variables within SNAs but across policy issues. Instead of assessing generic influence in the EU on the whole at the level of the region, I measure a region’s degree of preference attainment on the level of specific policy issues. This means that one and the same SNA can be very successful on one issue, but at the same time be unsuccessful with regard to another. This approach allows for further exploration of explanations that are likely to vary across policy processes and issues, such as lobbying
strategies and preference alignment, providing more detailed insights in understanding regional lobbying success. For instance, contact patterns with EU venues is different for different policy processes and mostly depends on the policy alignment between the SNA and the lobbying target (Beyers et al., 2015). Therefore, the effect of contact patterns between regional and supranational actors on a region’s lobbying success should be assessed at the level of separate policy processes.

5.2. Regional lobbying in the EU: capacities, strategies and alignment

Interest group research has recently emphasized the impact of the policy environment when explaining interest groups’ preference attainment in the EU (Bunea, 2013; Klüver, 2011; Mahoney, 2007a). In agreement with this literature, I present an explanatory framework involving three sets of explanations about regional capacities, strategies and preference alignment that are situated on three different levels, i.e. the regional level, the policy-level and the issue-level respectively.

SNA characteristics are situated at the regional level since they are invariant to specific policy processes and issues. Alternatively, SNAs employ different lobbying strategies for different policy processes. For instance, an SNA may have intense contact with the Commission concerning the reform of the Cohesion Policy for 2014-2020 but less so concerning Horizon 2020 (see Beyers et al., 2015). However, I do not expect lobbying strategies to differ according to the specific policy issues that come up during such processes. Interviews with regional representatives clarified that they seek access to policymakers to discuss a legislative package on a whole instead of singling out specific policy issues and having separate meetings to discuss them. Therefore our expectations concerning lobbying strategies are situated at the level of the policy case. How the policy preferences of SNAs are aligned vis-à-vis other stakeholders, on the other hand, does differ according to policy issues (see chapter IV). The preferences of SNAs are issue-specific. Therefore, the extent to which this position is in (dis)agreement with other stakeholders varies on the issue level.

The characteristics of the SNA itself can play a role in their chances of having lobbying success. First, Tatham (2015) has identified a region’s size as a determinant of regional influence. Regions that are larger in size generally represent more citizens and more
industry. Because of their relatively heavy demographic and economic weight, policymakers may be more inclined to their preferences about EU policy into account. Equally, regional governments of regions that are large in principal have larger budgets to spend on EU-lobbying (see also footnote 37) which could improve its effectiveness.

Secondly, scholars have emphasized the formal power SNAs enjoy within the domestic institutional context scholars as the key resource of variation in regional mobilization, and by extension, regional influence (Blatter et al., 2010; Jeffery, 2000). Tatham (2011) has pinpointed eight different dimensions of regional institutionalized involvement in EU policymaking that is formalized via intra-state legal arrangements. For instance, an SNA may enjoy constitutionally guaranteed participation rights in shaping the national policy position; it may make use of article 203 (Maastricht) to participate in the Council of minister meetings; or its regional Brussels staff may enjoy diplomatic accreditation. The strong differences between SNAs in terms of resources and institutional has on occasion led to a distinction between two leagues of regions: a first league of strong and richly endowed SNAs, such as the Belgian regions, German Länder or some Spanish Autonomous Communities, and a second league which includes ‘the rest’, usually less well-resourced and institutionally weaker regions (Tatham, 2008, p. 509). As such, we expect that larger regions with more institutional tools at their disposal will be more successful in translating their preferences into policy outcomes.

H1 The larger the size of an SNAs, the higher its degree of success.
H2 The more institutional power an SNA has, the higher its degree of success.

In addition to the permanent characteristics of the region, the strategies SNAs employ during a given lobbying campaign may also be important for explaining regional success in the EU. First, literature on interest representation has identified access, described as direct contact with policymakers, as one the most important lobbying strategies used by interest groups to influence EU policy-making (Beyers, 2002; Beyers & Kerremans, 2007; Eising, 2004). It can therefore be argued that SNAs who enjoy more access to policymakers will be more influential. Scholars of regional mobilization have generally identified six direct access channels through which SNAs can seek to influence the EU policy process: the Council of Ministers, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Committee of the
Regions, regional Brussels offices and European networks and associations (Hooghe & Marks, 1996; Tatham, 2008). Tatham (2015) finds that EU embeddedness, understood as the pattern of information interchange between regional officials and policymakers, increases the level of self-attributed influence. Here as well, I expect that more access leads to more success.

Secondly, lobbying is rarely a solo endeavour, but takes place in coalitions (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Hula, 1999). A coalition is defined then as a group of actors that share common goals and seek to attain these goals through collaboration. This is because being a member of a coalition has several advantages. Coalitions facilitate exchange of information and expertise among its members, and through a division of tasks lobbying can become more efficient. The scope and diversity of a coalition signals to policy-makers the support or opposition to an idea or proposal (Mahoney, 2007b). Beyers and Braun (2014) find that being part of a coalition means more access to policymakers while Klüver finds that irrelevant of interest group type, the size of any given lobbying coalition increases its likelihood of success (Klüver, 2011, 2012; see also Mahoney, 2007b). A similar observation has been made with regard to regional mobilization. For example, Bomberg and Peterson (1998) have concluded that “influence in EU decision making derives largely from effective coalition building, both with other like-minded actors but also, inevitably in the case of sub-national authorities, with central governments”. Often, such coalitions are ad-hoc and short term and assemble around a certain issue and do not establish their own formal membership or organizational structure (Mahoney, 2008). Therefore it is plausible to assume that coalition patterns vary across policy processes. More in particular, we expect that when SNAs are member of strong coalition in terms of its membership size and national diversity, they will be more successful.

\[H3 \text{ The more supranational access an SNA has, the more success it has}\]

\[H4 \text{ The stronger the coalition an SNA is part of, the more success it has}\]

Finally, I hypothesize that it is important to take into account the policy preferences of SNAs, or more specifically, how the preferences of SNAs are aligned with the preferences of other key players of the EU policymaking community. Policy outcomes at the EU level are heavily influenced by institutions who have formal decision-making power such as the Commission
(EC) and national governments via the Council (Thomson, 2011). Therefore, the success of an SNA might strongly depend on the policy preferences of such actors and the alignment between both sets of preferences. I put forward three key policy positions to which the policy distance may affect SNAs’ degree of preference attainment.

First, the position of the Commission might be important. Since it has the legislative monopoly to propose new EU legislation, it is plausible that the final outcome of a policy process will not be too far away from the Commission’s original proposal. Secondly, being successful might be more likely when preferences of SNAs and their central governments are close to each other. The previous chapter showed that for certain issues SNAs defend policy preferences at the EU level that are in conflict with the preferences of their central governments. Having conflicting preferences might damage an SNA’s prospects of seeing its preferences translated into outcomes, either because of counter-active lobbying by the Council of Ministers or because the Commission is less prone to take diverging policy preferences of authorities belonging to the same member state into account (Tatham, 2008). Thirdly, I take into consideration how the policy preferences of SNAs are aligned with the policy preferences of other SNAs that are mobilized on the same issue. Bunea (2013) finds that preferences that are in a median position relative to others are consistently more likely to be translated into outputs arguing that policymakers seek legitimate outcomes and tend to compromise (Mahoney, 2008; Thomson et al., 2006). Accordingly, I hypothesize that having a policy preference that is further away from the average regional preference’ will negatively affect the degree of preference attainment.

\[ H5a \text{ When policy distance to the Commission increases, success decreases.} \]

\[ H5b \text{ When policy distance to the national government increases, success decreases} \]

\[ H5c \text{ When policy distance to the ‘average regional preference’ increases, success decreases.} \]

5.3 Data and research design

Most of the data were collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with regional representations. How this data was collected is specified in chapter II. Below I proceed with the operationalization of the dependent and independent variables.
The dependent variable measures the degree of preference attainment an SNA has on the level of the policy issue. Here we understand preference attainment as the difference between an actor’s ideal point and the final outcome. The underlying idea of such a *distance-to-outcome* measure is that the closer an actor is to the final outcome, the greater its success. In form of an equation: \( S_{ij} = Q - |X_{ij} - O_j| \) where \( S_{ij} \) is the success of SNA \( i \) on issue \( j \). \( Q \) is the distance between the minimum and the maximum on the scale. \( X_{ij} \) is the position of SNA \( i \) on issue \( j \) and \( O_j \) is the outcome on issue \( j \). The greater \( S \), the greater the lobbying success of an SNA.

The independent variables are operationalized in various ways. The regional-level variables regarding the resources and institutional power of SNAs are operationalized based on secondary data. We use regional GDP as proxy for regional size\(^{32}\) to test for the effect of financial resource endowment. The data was retrieved from Eurostat for the period 2011-2012. This time frame corresponds to the period in which the identified issues were subject to EU decision-making. To test for an SNAs domestic institutional power I rely on the index for Institutionalized Regional Involvement (Tatham, 2011). The index is based on eight dimensions, five for the pre-legislative phase, three for the post-legislative phase. It is relevant to take into account the opportunities for SNAs in the post-legislative phase because they can serve as leverage for influence in the pre-legislative phase.

During the interviews with reginal representations I asked for information regarding access and coalition strategies of their home region with regard to one or more of the five identified policy processes\(^{33}\). These variables are measured on the level of the SNA*policy process dyad. While the information on policy preferences is based on self-assessment as well as peer-assessment (see chapter II), the information on the strategies of an SNA was provided exclusively by its regional representation. Because of this, tests involving these variables are based on a subset of the sample (n=90).

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\(^{32}\) I also tested models where I used population size as a proxy for size, instead of regional GDP. Both measures correlate very strongly (see footnote 37). The models did not produce different results.

\(^{33}\) With regard to policy-related strategies I also asked SNAs about their timing (at what stage of the policy-making process did you start lobbying) and tactics. Both factors did not display strong variation among SNAs and policy processes and where therefore not included in the explanatory analysis.
Concerning access, respondents were asked to report their average frequency of contact with officials working in Brussels on a five-point ordinal scale ranging from “never,” “rarely,” “sometimes,” “frequent,” to “very frequent”. This includes contact with officials working within different tiers of the Commission, the European Parliament and Member-State delegations. In the same way they were also asked about the contact frequency with the Committee of the Regions and Trans-regional associations. In order to discern a pattern in the access points SNAs use I ran an exploratory factor analysis (cut-off point = 0.6). Based on the factor analysis in Table 5.1. four types of access channels can be distinguished. The first group includes policymakers from EU institutions that are in charge of the policy process. The second and third group respectively includes representatives of sub-national and national interests. The fourth group represent MEPs, excluding the EP rapporteur. Access is likely to be most effective when there is contact with policymakers who have formal institutional power. Therefore, to operationalize access, I created a variable that adds up the values for the three EU policymakers in charge.

### Table 5.1. Factor Analysis of SNAs access channels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU policymakers</th>
<th>Regional interests</th>
<th>MS delegations</th>
<th>MEPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner in charge of policy process</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapporteur of the EP Committee in charge of policy process</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC Directorate General in charge of policy process</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee of the Regions</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans-regional associations</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional offices of other SNAs</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambassadors and diplomats in the Perm. Rep.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National officials in specialized working groups of the Council</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ministerial level of the Council</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The regional respondents additionally provided information regarding their coalition partners. If for a given policy process they were part of a coalition, I asked them to list the other actors that were part of this coalition. This could be a wide diversity of actors including other SNAs, but also central governments, transregional associations, business groups, farmer associations, research associations, NGOs, et cetera. This information enabled me to measure the size of the lobbying coalition, as well as the national diversity of its members. Both measurements correlate strongly with each other (Pearson’s correlation coefficient = .95). To operationalize the strength of a lobby coalition while avoiding issues of multicollinearity (variance inflation factor = 10.6), I calculated an index adding up the scores for coalition size and national diversity of a coalition. Because GDP and coalition strength show a skewed distribution, I log-transformed these variables.

Concerning the policy-alignment explanation, I measure the policy distance between the position of an SNA and the position of the Commission, the position of the SNA’s national government and the average position of SNAs. Given the numerical nature of the data on actor’s positions the variables were calculated mathematically as the absolute value of the position of an SNA subtracted by the position of the other. When written in a formula: 
\[ D_{ij} = | X_{ij} - Y_j | \] whereby D is the policy distance of SNA i to actor Y for issue j (Y can either be the position of the Commission, the national government or the average position of SNAs on that issue). As such this variable is measured at the SNA*issue level.
5.3. Data analysis

I test the hypotheses explaining the degree of regional preference attainment by running a linear regression model. The expectations are grouped together in three different sets and each set is located at a different level. Resources and institutional power are measured at the regional level, access and coalition strategies are measured at SNA-policy process dyad level and policy alignment is measured at the SNA-issue dyad level. To test the effect of these variable groups, I gradually introduce them in the model and compare the fit of the model against the previous model to see if adding a variable group can significantly improve the model’s explanatory power of regional preference attainment in EU policy-making (see table 3.4).

Methodologically, the nature of the research question suggests that observations may not be completely independent from one another but are actually nested within regions and countries. However, a likelihood ratio test of the empty model with random intercepts for SNA and country returns estimates that are not statistically significant (p = .81), hence suggesting that the variance components model is not significantly different from a pooled model. Indeed, a calculation of the intraclass correlation at the regional and country level (.033) shows that a negligible percentage of variance is attributable to regional and country clustering. This means that the degree of preference attainment is not correlated within the same region or country and that the data does not have a strong multilevel structure. Therefore, I do not implement a multilevel model using random intercepts but instead control for country clustering by reporting clustered standard errors.

In Model I the issue-level predictors concerning the policy alignment of an SNA vis-à-vis other important actors of the policymaking community are introduced. I opt to include this set of explanatory variables first in the model since success may be the result of luck rather than of actual lobbying when the policy preferences of other stakeholders with decision-making powers are not controlled for (see chapter II). All three hypotheses involving policy distance to the central government, the Commission and the average regional position are confirmed at a < 0.001 significance level. A F-test test comparing Model I to the null model suggests that adding these variables to the model significantly improves the model fit (F3(14) = 229.09 Prob > F <= 0.001).
This confirms my expectation that the extent to which SNAs can successfully lobby issues in EU policy-making is heavily influenced by their position vis-à-vis other, more powerful, actors. This finding is at odds with Tatham (2015) who does not find an effect of policy alignment on regional officials’ level of self-attributed influence. This is most likely because his study measures policy alignment at the regional level, while here it is measured on the issue level. This dataset shows strong variation for policy alignment, even within SNAs but across policy issues.

All in all, the positive effect of policy alignment is not very surprising with respect to the Commission. Although its decision-making power in the final stages of the negotiation process is limited, it holds the monopolistic right to initiate and propose new legislation under the ordinary legislative procedure. Once a Commission proposal is published, a lot of the core policy issues are already decided on and are difficult to renegotiate. Having a position that is close to the position of the Commission thus significantly improves an SNAs prospect of achieving lobbying success.

The same is apparently true for national governments. SNAs that defend policy positions at the EU stage that are in conflict with the position of the national government experience a harder time to achieve lobbying success. This could be either the result of the counter-lobbying effort of the national government via the Council or because Commission officials and MEPs dislike conflicting policy positions originating from the same national polity. Interestingly, even when SNAs succeed to bypass the gate-keeping position of their central government, their level of success is still determined by to what extent their preferences are aligned.

Having a policy position that is closer to the regional average preference increases the likelihood of success. This finding suggests that regional preferences on aggregate are taken into account when deciding on issues where SNAs have a stake and confirms earlier observations that policy-making in the EU is compromise-seeking (Klüver, 2011; Mahoney, 2007a). Interestingly, the dataset shows that an SNA’s policy distance to the national government and the average regional position are inversely correlated (Pearson’s correlation coefficient = -.29 , p < .001). This implies that the net-effect of having a policy position that is further away from the national government but closer to the average
regional position is not necessarily negative, and vice versa. These findings offer SNAs some strategic leeway in finding partners to pursue their policy objectives.

In Model II, the regional-level variables are added. Regional size does not seem to be a significant predictor of the extent to which SNAs attain their preferences. I do find that the level of institutionalized involvement has an effect \( p < 0.05 \). However, the adjusted R squared of the model hardly improves, suggesting that adding variables about regional capacities to the model does not improve its explanatory power by much. The weak relationship between an SNAs institutionalized regional involvement in the EU policy-shaping process and the influence it exerts in Brussels is somewhat counterintuitive (cfr Jeffery, 2000). However, it somewhat supports Bomberg and Peterson’s (1998, p. 234) assertion that constitutional powers and formal channels of influence are important but not exclusive determinants of the influence of SNAs on EU policymaking. Tatham (2015) as well only finds an indirect effect of regional resources on the level of self-attributed influence. The limited effect of regional resources already gives an indication that regional policy influence in the EU is not necessarily reserved for the large and powerful regions.

Finally, Model III adds the variables regarding the lobbying strategies of SNAs. When adding these variables, the effect of institutionalized regional involvement loses its significance. Hence, when controlled for lobbying strategies SNAs with more formal power do not enjoy higher levels of success, further underling the weak relationship between formal power and influence. While increased contacts with EU policymakers does not seem to affect regional preference attainment, SNAs that are part of strong lobbying coalitions tend to enjoy more policy success. Although the adjusted R squared measure improves remarkably, comparing the fit of Model IV and III is not appropriate because the N is different due to less data on SNAs’ lobbying strategies. Yet, the positive effect of coalition strength corroborates earlier studies, especially in the interest group literature, which claim that coalition building is central to organized interests who wish to exert influence over policy outcomes (Klüver, 2013b). Regional lobbying in the EU only seems to be effective then when it is done together with a large amount of allies that originate from a large amount of countries. Based on this analysis we must reject the notion that the most important channels of regional influence are those that are located within the domestic national context.
### Table 3.4.: Explaining regional preference attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model I</th>
<th>Model II</th>
<th>Model III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explanatory variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to Commission</td>
<td>-0.30*</td>
<td>-0.32*</td>
<td>-0.42**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(0.12)</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to central</td>
<td>-0.24***</td>
<td>-0.25***</td>
<td>-0.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>government</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to regional mean</td>
<td>-0.68*</td>
<td>-0.71**</td>
<td>-0.49*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region size (GDP_log)</td>
<td>-1.16</td>
<td>-1.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.21)</td>
<td>(2.12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional institutionalized</td>
<td>1.54*</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involvement</td>
<td>(0.71)</td>
<td>(0.63)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition strength (log)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.48*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supranational access</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>104.19</td>
<td>105.55</td>
<td>102.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.91)</td>
<td>(12.82)</td>
<td>(10.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fit Statistics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>229.09</td>
<td>126.24</td>
<td>140.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.3759</td>
<td>0.3971</td>
<td>0.5440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R squared</td>
<td>0.3626</td>
<td>0.3754</td>
<td>0.5051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clusters</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Index: linear multiple regression; * p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001 robust standard errors for country in parentheses

### 5.4. Conclusion

What has been missing from the literature on regional mobilization is an assessment of its effectiveness in terms of influence over outcomes. Due to the methodological and epistemological challenges associated with detecting and measuring influence, scholars have for a long time side-stepped the ‘influence question’ by studying mobilization and assuming a correlation (see chapter II). Only recently, attempts at identifying the determinants of regional influence in the EU in a systematic manner have been undertaken (Tatham, 2015).

This chapter aims to contribute to our understanding of subnational influence in Brussels by
explaining the varying degree by which subnational authorities attain their policy preferences in EU policymaking. I find that under certain circumstances the outcome of a policy process is systematically closer to the policy preferences SNAs have. Highlighting these circumstances provides us with additional insights in how, why and when SNAs can be successful policy advocates in Brussels.

There has been an intense debate on what ‘kind’ of regional mobilization would lead to success in EU policymaking. On the one hand, scholars of multi-level governance emphasized supranational access channels that bypass the central state level, expecting that SNAs that are able to exploit these access channels – i.e. increasing their interaction frequency with supranational actors - would be more successful when representing their interests in the EU (Hooghe & Marks, 1996; Tatham, 2008). On the other hand, others argued that the most effective channel for SNAs to successfully defend their interests in the EU is through rather than beyond the established structures of the Member State (Jeffery, 2000). Here, the expectation was that SNAs who had been able to acquire more formal constitutional power within their domestic institutional setting would be armed more effectively to defend their interests at the EU level, leading to more success.

Interestingly, I do not find robust evidence for the effectiveness of intra-state channels. ‘Strong’ SNAs, both in terms of size and institutional power, do not see their policy preferences translated into output any more than other less well-resourced and endowed SNAs. While more individual access to EU policymakers does not seem to yield favourable policy outcomes, being part of a strong lobbying coalition – in terms of its size and national diversity – does. SNAs that defend their policy positions in cooperation with a large and nationally diverse set of partners find that the policy outcome is systematically closer to their preferences. This confirms our earlier statement that effective regional interest representation in the EU is first and foremost a social endeavour (see Chapter III).

While I find that by applying coalition strategies SNAs can exert influence, this study’s contribution equally lies in pointing out that an SNA’s ability to achieve favourable policy outcomes in the EU is highly dependent on the degree of policy alignment with a number of other key positions in the policymaking community. An increase in the distance between the policy position of an SNA and the position of the EC, the position of its national government, and the average regional position all have a negative impact on the degree of preference
attainment. This implies that the capacity of an SNA to be successful in attaining its preferences is heavily constrained by the policy position it has. Still, we can infer some valuable lessons that can help SNAs to increase their level of success in the EU.

First, the negative effect of having a policy positions that is in strong disagreement with the average regional position on a given issue implies that the EU’s decision-making system somehow takes subnational policy preferences into account, be it on aggregate. Despite the apparent difficulty to attribute influence to individual region’s characteristics and strategies, representing regional interests at the EU-level does seem to matter and can make a difference. By mobilizing on certain issues and signalling its position, an SNA passively shifts the average regional position in the direction of its own preferences, making success more likely. By being involved in trans-regional associations, the Committee of the Regions or other informal regional networks an SNA can also try to actively shape the average regional position by convincing other SNAs of their views, leading to a higher degree of preference attainment.

Secondly, the negative impact of policy distance to the Commission on preference attainment levels stresses the importance of lobbying the Commission before it has published its official proposal. Considering that in most cases, the Commission has the monopolistic right to propose new pieces of legislation, its position represents the starting point for further negotiations. The final outcome of a policy process may shift somewhat along the policy spectrum as result of negotiations between Parliament and Council but will unlikely be very far away from what the EC initially proposed. Therefore, being able to influence the content of the Commission’s proposal to the benefit of an SNA’s interests is likely to result in an outcome that better reflects its policy preferences. The phase prior to the publication of the Commission proposal has already repeatedly been identified as a key phase for gaining success in EU policymaking (Coen & Richardson, 2009b) and my analysis seems to confirms this.

Third, having a position that is in conflict with the national government also leads to less preference attainment by SNAs in EU policy-making. This has important implications for how we should evaluate the effectiveness of direct regional mobilization at the EU-level. For a long time, regional mobilization was seen as a ‘way out’ for SNAs who faced a conflict of interest with their central government concerning EU policy: by mobilizing directly at the EU-
level SNAs were able to bypass the gatekeeping position of their central governments and defend policy positions that were at odds with those of the central level. Based on our analysis, however, we can hardly call this strategy a fully-fledged alternative since having the support of its member state government clearly enhances an SNA’s attainment of its preferences in EU policymaking.

Interestingly though, the policy distance to the national government and policy distance to the average regional position are inversely correlated (Pearson’s correlation coefficient = -.29 , p < .001). This way, having a position that is further away from the central government but closer to the average regional position does not necessarily have a negative net effect on the extent to which SNAs can attain their preferences. This offers SNAs some strategic leeway in finding partners to pursue their policy objectives. When a region has a policy preference that is in conflict with its central government it is likely to find other mobilized SNAs that have a similar preferences to its own. Building coalitions with these SNAs and other like-minded actors can offer SNAs a path to policy success, even when its policy position is at odds with the central government and it has low levels of institutionalized involvement. Whether SNAs should ‘escape the gilded cage’ of their domestic institutional setting in order to be successful in EU policymaking, thus depends on the issue at hand, their policy position regarding that issue, and how their position is aligned with the Commission, their national government and the average regional position.
6. Conclusion

This dissertation analysed the nature and determinants of policy influence regional authorities can have in EU policymaking. For this purpose I developed a policy-centred research design (Chapter II) which allowed me to analyse different components of the influence production process. The three subsequent empirical chapters each analysed one aspect that is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of regional interest representation and regional policy influence in the EU: participation, preference alignment and success. This conclusion gives an overview of my key empirical findings. In addition, I provide a more in-depth discussion of what I consider as innovative and how my study contributes to the existing literature on regional interest representation in the EU. As a study on influence has some practical implications – namely what is the most effective lobbying strategy – I also provide a brief discussion on the policy implications for practitioners from the regional level who seek to increase their level of policy success in legislative policymaking. Next, I point at some normative implications for the functioning of the EU as a political system and the role of regional interests therein. Finally, I highlight some limitations of my study and point at some potential avenues for future research in this area.

6.1. Overview of the results

While some SNAs voice their preferences during the policymaking process, others do not. To explain this difference, chapter III analysed under what conditions SNAs take part in open consultations organized by the EC. There are strong differences in the level of activity across policy cases: consultations about Cohesion Policy, Horizon 2020 and TEN-T attracted more regional interests than consultations about the CAP reform or environmental policies. Yet, SNAs are not only active in the area of Regional Policy. In explaining regional mobilization, earlier studies focussed predominantly on regional characteristics such as resources and regional authority. Generally, scholars expected that that wealthy and politically autonomous regions with a strong cultural identity would act on the forefront of the European stage (Blatter et al., 2010; Marks, Nielsen, et al., 1996). The explanatory analysis in Chapter III provides only weak evidence for this type of explanation. Instead, my study demonstrates that regional participation in consultations strongly depends on policy-specific
contextual factors. Concretely, how SNAs behave correlates with how other stakeholders respond to a specific policy. For instance, SNAs are much more likely to take part in consultations when regionally based private interests participate as well, suggesting some sort of coordination between subnational public and private interests originating from the same region. In a similar fashion, the probability of SNAs taking part in consultations increases significantly when other SNAs of the same country participate as well, suggesting collective (counter-) lobbying strategies.

Chapter IV examined the different policy alternatives SNAs prefer with regard to ten EU policy issues and analyses how regional preferences are aligned. The current literature on regional mobilization has a strong state-centric flavour and emphasizes determinants of vertical conflicts of interests between SNAs and their central governments (Tatham, 2010, 2013). The quantitative and qualitative analysis in Chapter IV paints a somewhat more complex picture. Issues SNAs mobilize on involve conflicts between SNAs and their central government, domestic conflicts between SNAs originating from the same country, conflicts between national coalitions of SNAs and conflicts with a third party, usually the Commission. While it does occur that conflicts between SNAs and their central government are battled out at the supranational stage, it does not seem to be the raison d’être of regional mobilization in the EU. Such vertical conflicts do not occur very often. Instead, regional lobbying is often targeted against the Commission or other (compatriotic) SNAs, calling into question the existence of the common European regional interest or the predominance of vertical intra-member state conflict. As my analysis remains limited to ten issues, it does not allow for generalizations about what pattern of preference alignment dominates EU policymaking. Yet, my analysis shows that highly different patterns can emerge within the same policy area. For instance, the reform of the CAP invoked a conflict between SNAs and the Commission (the case of Greening) as well as a conflict among primarily German SNAs (the case of capping of direct payments for large farms).

Some SNAs are more successful than others in having their preferences translated into policy outcomes. To explain this variation explanations involving regional capacities, lobbying strategies, and preference alignment were tested in Chapter V. Remarkably, the regional institutional involvement in EU policymaking or the size of a region does not seem to have a strong effect on policy success. This finding is somewhat counterintuitive.
Generally, scholars and practitioners alike expected that especially large regions with considerable formal institutional powers would be able to wield more influence, and therefore, be more successful (Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; Jeffery, 2000). However, the limited effect I find for SNAs’ formal power disappears – i.e. loses its statistical significance – when controlled for informal strategies such as seeking access to supranational venues and involvement in lobbying coalitions. This means that when adopting similar lobbying strategies, large SNAs who are institutionally involved in EU policymaking do not attain significantly more or less of their preferences than SNAs that are smaller or have less formal power. The most important strategy for influencing EU policy is establishing policy-specific coalitions that are large and have a diverse set of members. Indeed, the other factors determining regional success are related to SNAs’ preferences. SNAs with policy preferences that are in strong disagreement with the Commission proposal, with what their central governments want or with what SNAs want on average – i.e. a compromise position – face strong difficulties in translating their preferences into policy output. The extent to which SNAs attain their preferences thus strongly depends on what their preferences are and how they are aligned. So even when applying the most effective lobbying strategies, SNAs can’t always get what they want.

6.2. Contribution to the literature

By applying a policy-centred approach to the study of regional influence, this dissertation contributes to the literature in a number of ways. First, this study applies a policy-centred approach to the study of regional influence in the EU. This approach is innovative since most existing studies either studied regional mobilization in the EU as a whole (Hooghe, 1995; Hooghe & Marks, 1996; Marks, Haesly, & Mbaye, 2002; Tatham, 2008, 2015) or focused predominantly on the EU’s regional policy (Bache, 1998; Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; Chalmers, 2013a; Hooghe, 1996; Hooghe & Keating, 1994a). By using a policy-centred approach, however, my empirical chapters demonstrated that SNA’s breadth of policy engagement is not limited to regional policy but also stretches into policy areas where regional interests are less directly tangible (see also Donas, Fraussen, & Beyers, 2014).

Analysing different policy cases situated in various policy domains gives strong leverage to my findings. On top of that, the systematic selection of cases and issues
contribute to the potential to generalize the findings. While there are strong differences between policy domains in the extent to which SNAs participate in consultations, the characteristics of the policy case plays only a minor role for the preference alignment of SNAs. Patterns of preference alignment are not specific to certain legislative packages but vary on an issue-by-issue basis that are part of legislative policy cases. The reform of the CAP, for instance, invoked issues where regional preferences were contentious (capping of direct payments) as well as homogenous.

A policy-centred approach also allows for testing explanations that are contextual. This approach is new for the literature on regional mobilization. Earlier studies have focused predominantly on regional characteristics to explain variation in the emergence, size and organizational form of regional offices (Blatter et al., 2010; Donas & Beyers, 2013; Marks, Nielsen, et al., 1996; Tatham & Thau, 2014), patterns of cooperation and conflict between SNAs and central governments (Tatham, 2010, 2013) and influence (Tatham, 2015). Yet, as my study shows, factors that vary on the policy-level seem to play a crucial role when accounting for differences in regional participation and success. SNAs are more likely to partake in consultations when certain other stakeholders participate as well, while their success depends mostly on the size and member diversity of their coalition (measured at the level of the policy case) and the preference alignments (measured at the level of the issue).

Secondly, the analyses presented in this study contribute to the literature on regional mobilization by stressing that regional lobbying is first and foremost a collective enterprise. The notion of collective lobbying is not new to the study of interest group politics (see Beyers & Braun, 2014; Bunea, 2013; Carpenter, Esterling, & Lazer, 1998; Klüver, 2013; Mahoney, 2007), yet, the literature on regional mobilization has strongly fixated on state-centric interactions between SNAs and central governments (Jeffery, 2000; Tatham, 2010, 2013). While inter-regional networks have been analysed (Beyers & Donas, 2014; Kettunen & Kull, 2009), scholarly understanding of how SNAs engage with private stakeholders or use coalition strategies to influence policy has remained underdeveloped. In contrast, I find that whether or not SNAs lobby and to what extent they are successful mainly depends on the links with other, both public and private, stakeholders.
For instance, SNAs that have many formal ties via transregional associations are more likely to participate in consultations. Moreover, while the exact causal mechanism remains unclear, SNAs’ involvement in EU policymaking corresponds with the participation of regional private interests or other SNAs of the same country. Especially the link between regions and private stakeholders is interesting since interviews revealed that some regional offices openly defend and promote the interests of societal stakeholders, such as chambers of commerce, specific companies or universities. Such offices are often also partially funded by private stakeholders.\textsuperscript{34} The interaction between SNAs and private stakeholders when representing regional interests in the EU is a somewhat underexplored topic and calls for further investigation.

In addition, Chapter IV suggests that regional lobbying is more effective when undertaken collectively. I could not find any support for a positive impact of individual lobbying strategies such as relying on formal institutional power or organizing high-level meetings with European policymakers. Instead, the influence of SNAs depends significantly on their cooperation with other stakeholders in policy-specific coalitions. Knowledge and being aware of the preferences of other actors is therefore crucial as collaboration and networks with other players will shape opportunities and constraints for success. Knowing who shares similar preferences facilitates coalition building, while the policy distance between SNAs on the one hand and the EC as well as central governments on the other hand predicts the degree of generated policy success. As such, this study contributes to the literature by highlighting that for regional lobbying an actor’s policy influence depends on what others want, and, therefore, that influence requires cooperation with as many of them as possible. As said at the start of this dissertation (Chapter II), influence and power are largely relational concepts.

Third, my approach is innovative because I pay attention to what regions actually want with respect to a substantial array of policies that are salient to them. Early studies often implicitly assumed that regional mobilization was mostly about securing structural funding (Hooghe & Keating, 1994a; Keating, 1999). However, my analysis shows that SNAs have

\textsuperscript{34} Some examples include Scotland Europa, Midi Pyrenees Europe and Capital Region Denmark
policy preferences about a much wider range of issues. Some preferences indeed reflect their aim to seek EU funding, either for the budget of SNAs themselves (e.g. transition regions, funding for developed regions, macro-economic conditionality, TEN-T projects) or for regional constituencies such as farmers (e.g. capping of direct payments) or research centres (e.g. excellence vs. widening participation). Other preferences were geared towards preventing or reducing administrative burdens (e.g. Greening, regional flexibility) or strengthening their role in EU policymaking (e.g. code of conduct).

What regions want can conflict with what others want. As noted earlier, these conflicts do not only involve the national government, but they can also refer to conflicts with the Commission and or competition with other SNAs. Hence, despite enthusiastic expectations about a ‘Europe of the Regions’ (Moore, 2008), promoting the regional interest within the EU does not appear to be on the forefront of the regional agenda. Discerning varying patterns of preference alignment is crucial for the further development of the literature assessing the effectiveness of regional mobilization since it turns out to be an important explanatory variable for regional success in EU policymaking.

6.3. Policy implications

This section briefly discusses the policy implications for practitioners aiming to improve their success in EU policymaking. To make a useful assessment of how SNAs can be successful, one should distinguish between factors they are able to manipulate and factors that are much less malleable. For instance, it is impossible for SNAs to change the size of their region. Increasing the level of institutionalized regional involvement might be possible, but is rather difficult and requires intense negotiation processes between SNAs and central governments which can take many years.35 Luckily, from a practitioners point of view, success does not depend strongly on these rather unchangeable characteristics. Instead, success depends on SNAs’ strategies which are pliable. Hereby, it is important to note that collective strategies are much more effective than individual strategies. To optimize the level of preference

35 For example, see the ongoing negotiations between Belgium’s federal and federated entities on a new Cooperation Agreement on representation in the Council or the negotiations between the Scottish and UK government on ‘Devomax’ which includes full Scottish representation at the EU level.
attainment, SNAs thus need to build networks and coalitions with a large and pan-European set of stakeholders. Hence, SNAs should never lobby on their own. Instead, they should always seek partners. These partners do not necessarily have to be SNAs only, but can also include central governments, research organizations, regional associations, farmer associations, companies, business groups and NGOs.

Naturally, the potential for building coalitions depends on the extent to which other stakeholders share similar preferences. Much of what you want and hope to get, depends on what others wants. Therefore, regional authorities should not only be fixated on pursuing their own interests with respect to one particular policy. Instead they need a careful and day-to-day monitoring of what goes on in Brussels. They should screen which policies are in the pipeline, what is (not) on the agenda, what policy expertise is available, whether private interests in the region are affected, and how other public and private stakeholders position themselves. This intelligence on the policy preferences of others allows SNAs to pick their battles. Consider an issue where there is strong disagreement with the EC’s proposal and the central government. In this case, investing resources into lobbying might not always be worthwhile because the probability of success is already very low. That does not mean that regions should always refrain from lobbying on such cases. Sometimes, it is useful to fight difficult battles because doing this may generate expertise, information, networks and lobbying experience because it shows to constituencies that their concerns are taken seriously. Yet, one should always remain realistic, namely acknowledging that generating policy influence is a highly risky and uncertain business. This also means that regions should be careful not to raise too high expectations as this may frustrate constituencies.

Finally, the relation between alignment with the EC and success implies that policy outcomes are highly correlated with what the EC initially proposed. This underlines the potential high rewards for lobbying the EC before the official legislative proposal is launched. Even more so, since previous research has suggested that the EC is rather open to take regional interests on board (Rowe, 2011; Tatham, 2008). In short, SNAs need to monitor their policy environment as this allows them to build coalitions, pick their battles carefully and makes them lobbying the EC during the early stages of the policy process.
6.4. Normative implications

Identifying the determinants of regional influence also has some important normative implications. While SNAs have become increasingly responsible for the execution and legitimation of EU policies, their formal possibilities to upload policy preferences to the EU-level have remained rather limited (Jeffery, 2015; Tatham, 2014). This gap between the preparation and implementation of policy may widen the EU’s democratic deficit, in particular for regions with strong legislative powers (Follesdal & Hix, 2006). EU-level regional mobilization may help to bridge this gap, both in terms of input legitimacy (SNAs are often elected bodies of governments representing the regional public interests) and output legitimacy (SNAs are often competent for the implementation of EU policies) (Rowe, 2011; Scharpf, 1999). Yet, such regional mobilization is only meaningful if it is to a certain degree influential. Dür and De Bièvre (2007) for instance noted that NGOs enjoy ‘inclusion without influence’ in trade policy. Considering SNAs, Bache (1998) similarly observed that the EU political arena is characterized less by multilevel governance than by multilevel participation: subnational actors participate, but do not significantly influence decision-making outcomes.

While these concerns are legitimate, the analysis presented in this PhD allows for some qualification. I showed that having policy preferences that are far away from the regional ‘average’ have a negative impact on the success of an SNA. This implies that policymakers somehow take into account regional preferences, be it on aggregate and not necessarily consciously, when deciding on policy outcomes. Moreover, it also shows that EU policymaking is not systematically captured by some extreme outlier preference defended by one particular type of region. Most policy outcomes are a compromise whereby many win something and very few win everything. This finding is also in line with the literature emphasizing the consensual nature of EU decision-making (Thomson, 2009, p. 776).

Normative evaluations are additionally concerned with how influence is distributed among stakeholders: if some actors always win while others are constantly losing, the democratic legitimacy of public policymaking is greatly undermined (Klüver, 2013b). I find some evidence that SNAs with more institutionalized involvement win more often, but the effect is not strong and robust. Still, one could question whether such an effect would really damage the EU’s political legitimacy. SNAs with more institutionalized involvement usually have more regional authority and therefore have a stronger representative function vis-à-vis
their constituency. Instead, I find that regional success depends on lobbying coalitions and the preference alignment with other players. These findings put into question the existence of a so-called ‘first league’ of influential regions and a ‘second league’ of non-influential regions (cfr. Tatham, 2008, p. 507). Instead, policy influence largely depends on and co-varies with policy specific features. Success thus depends on which policies are at stake, what an SNA wants, what other stakeholders want and the extent to which one was able to collaborate with others, much less on who you are.

6.5. Limitations and avenues for future research

In this section I address some limitations of the study and sketch avenues for further research. Some limitations can be attributed to the scope of the study or the drawbacks associated with measuring influence through preference attainment. I also discuss some possible rivalry explanations which I was not able to test for.

As a starting point, it is important to stress that this study’s scope is the relative influence of SNAs on controversial issues in the legislative phase of EU policymaking. This excludes other policy phases (and related) issues where SNAs may seek impact on public policy. First, I cannot provide any answers on whether and how SNAs influence the agenda-setting phase, i.e. the second face of power (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962). Future research could look into whether and how SNAs manage to put policy issues on the legislative agenda and how they shape EC proposals while the EC is still working on them. It would be relevant to test whether the same variables can account for variation in this stage as well. Secondly, SNAs can also have an impact on EU public policy during the implementation phase by transposing EU law in a way that suits their preferences. This observation pleads for incorporating the regional level more systematically in research on the implementation of EU policies in the member states. An additional suggestion that follows from this dissertation is to enrich the implementation research agenda by applying a policy oriented approach.

Secondly, the focus on controversial issues in policymaking may lead to an under-estimation of the potential influence of regions. Many EU policymaking issues are not controversial: SNA policy preferences are not necessarily opposed by other stakeholders. Individual characteristics or strategies such as formal power or access strategies respectively could matter when trying to influence decisions about very particular regional concerns in
much less controversial cases. For instance, Flanders was able to secure an EU-funded compensation for Flemish pear growers who suffered a decline in export as result of Russian retaliations against EU sanctions. While this could be considered a success (Flanders got what it wanted), it most probably did not provoke strong preferences amongst other stakeholders, rendering the emergence of (counter)lobbying coalitions unlikely. For non-controversial issues, other factors such as formal power, the size of the region or access gained to policymakers could well be of importance. This is a proposition that may be addressed in future research, potentially further qualifying my findings.

By focussing on specific issues in policymaking this analysis does not account for some other pathways that may enhance regional influence. First, SNAs may try to increase their impact on policymaking by strengthening their institutional position in the EU political system. They could do this by trying to influence intergovernmental negotiations on new EU Treaties and, for instance, by trying to increase the power of the Committee of the Regions (Jeffery, 2002). However, while the effectiveness of such strategy is uncertain, it would not explain differences in the influence of SNAs with respect to concrete legislative case as new institutional provisions would apply to all regions and not take into account policy specific idiosyncrasies. Second, SNAs may try to enhance their policy impact by influencing the selection of public office holders (Dür, 2008b, p. 568). This way the odds that preferences defended by European policymakers reflect their own are increased. For instance, an SNA may try to influence decisions on which of the DGs of the EC deals with a policy case or which MEP is selected as rapporteur, preferring those individuals who originate from its region. A Bavarian respondent made the remark that for the last ten legislatures, the German federal minister of agriculture is Bavarian. It would be interesting to see whether SNAs also manage in selecting policymakers at the EU-level. True, although such strategies might have some relevance, this study suggests that one should not rely on this only or even to a great extent. It should be combined with collective forms of representation. Or, more specifically, the German Bavarian minister of agriculture also needs to seek a coalition with like-minded policymakers from other member-states.

A second set of limitations can be attributed to the drawbacks associated with measuring influence through preference attainment. First, while I am able to identify some
determinants of regional influence, the process of how this influence is exercised remains black-boxed (see also Dür, 2008, p. 568). SNAs that are part of large and diverse coalitions have more success. However, it remains unclear how such coalitions are established, and how being part of a coalition causes the translation of preferences into policy outcomes. Somehow, surely, coalitions need to convince policymakers of their preferences. How members of a coalition coordinate their efforts is not clarified in this analysis. It cannot provide answers as to where (Commission, Council, Parliament) or how (bargaining vs. arguing) this happens. The best way to approach this problem is to triangulate studies of preference attainment with studies using different methods to measure and explain influence. For instance, cases where coalitions were successful in attaining their preferences could be scrutinized using process-tracing so that best practices can be identified.

Finally, no study can take into account all possible explanations of a particular phenomenon. Here, I list a number of additional factors that could potentially affect regional influence and clarify why they were not included in the analysis. First, while I test for the effectiveness of access strategies I do not do so for ‘voice strategies’ (Beyers, 2004b). Voice strategies include organizing protests, talking to the press, media strategies, et cetera. This set of tactics might be relevant for some types of interest groups (such as NGOs), but they are arguably less used by public actors such as SNAs. Second, I do not take into account whether or not SNAs cooperate with their national government. This is justified because of the fact that this is a constant. Since as good as all of them do this, even when preferences are not aligned – makes that it cannot explain any variation in the level of success (Beyers et al., 2015). Third, I do not look at the personal characteristics of policymakers or regional advocates. One could argue that regional advocates sharing a national or regional background or party-political linkages with decision-makers see their preferences translated more easily into policy output. However, unless a decision-maker is intentionally selected, one could argue that success in this case reflects luck (being lucky to share a personal tie with a policymaker) rather than actual, systematic and structural influence based on power or strategies.

I conclude by listing a number of avenues for future research that could further aid and enhance our understanding of regional influence in the EU. First, from a methodological
point of view it might be interesting to further validate my measurement of regional preferences based on interviews by comparing them with measurements based on other data sources such as position papers submitted to consultations. Similar studies already exist concerning estimates provided by EC officials and could be replicated for regional representations (Thomson et al., 2006).

Second, while this study focussed on explaining differences in success between SNAs it would be interesting to analyse to what extent SNAs were more or less successful than other stakeholders, such as member states and private interests. The fact that SNAs lobby in environments in which other types of interests seek influence points at the relevance of this question. The only large N-study to date comparing the preference attainment of SNAs with other interest types is Bunea (2013). She finds that organizations representing diffuse interests, including SNAs, perform significantly worse in achieving their preferences than main business groups, representing concentrated interests. However, her analysis focuses exclusively on environmental policy where SNAs are significantly less active than in cohesion policy, research and innovation or transport policy. To know whether SNAs are relevant policy players, their influence needs to be compared with other actors in policy areas where their interests are more at stake.

Third, since the preference alignment of SNAs seems to be a crucial factor for explaining policy success it might be interesting to understand better what explains preference alignment (see Bunea, 2015). For instance, do SNAs that share certain characteristics or (in)formal networks have preferences that are systematically more closely aligned? Similarly, considering that EU interest representation is a two-level game, an analysis of regional preference attainment could be applied at the member-state level. By comparing regional preferences with the official member state position, one can identify determinants of intra-state influence.

Finally, as argued earlier, future research should investigate how and to what extent subnational public and private subnational actors represent their interests collectively. One way of doing this is, is by analyzing whether preferences articulated in position papers are similar. During the data collection process I noticed that sometimes regional authorities and private interests submit position papers that are (quasi) identical. Therefore, one important
challenge for future research is to identify coordination mechanisms between public and private stakeholders in the influence production process.

Taking all limitations and avenues for future research in account, this dissertation has provided a comprehensive study on regional mobilization in the EU and its effectiveness. It’s main contribution lies in providing ‘wisdom’ regarding the conditions under which SNAs can be influential players in European policymaking processes:

“Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference” – Reinhold Niebuhr
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8. Annex

8.1. Annex I: list of legislative proposals

CAP reform


Regional policy


**Horizon 2020**


**Environment Action Programme**


**TEN-T**


8.2. Annex II: Codebook for coding consultations

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. Be efficient. Do not take too much time to code an organization. This means that you do not open any documents at the website or explore elaborate pieces of texts. If the information cannot be found relatively easy, you code the variable as a missing value.

2. Be smart. Most information can be found on the 'about'-pages of a website. You therefore always go to these pages first and retrieve as much information as possible. Only use other pages of the website if you cannot code all variables in this section.

Also, tips are included in this codebook to quickly find some specific variables. These tips are included in the sections dedicated to explaining the variables (see further in codebook). Make sure you have read these upfront in. Also if you feel some tips can be added, please feel free to make suggestions.

3. Be creative. If no website is found or a website doesn’t work, use alternative sources. This means that you look for information on the organization on the first 10 hits of Google (or another search engine) or on wikipedia, especially the wikipedia in the native language of the organization. You can use google translate to translate relevant information which is in a language you are not fluent in. If no information is found on these pages you also code a missing value.

4. Be correct. Always make sure that you use correct spelling, and fill in the correct observation you intend. It is better to check twice than not at all.

5. Be precise. In case you need to fill in the comment box, be precise about the message you want to give. Remember that it needs to be clear without having to check to website again.

6. Ask for help. In case of any doubt, always ask a supervisor for help. Especially in the early stages of coding you need to work in close collaboration to make sure errors remain limited. In case a supervisor is not present, make sure to make (clear) notes on your findings.

7. Be healthy and sharp. After every hour take a break of 5 minutes in order to stay healthy, sharp and focused. Do not stay seated behind your computer during this break, but walk around or get some fresh air.
A. **IDENTIFICATION VARIABLES**

The first variables relate to basic identification variables for the organization and the coder in case. Make sure that you fill in these boxes correctly and without language errors.

**id. Identification number of organization**

5-digit unique identification-number for each organization in the dataset. New organizations follow the last.

You should verify the code of the organization in the two other datasets.

**org. Name of organization**

Here you include

1. The official full name of the organization in the primary language of the website; first letters of words in caps. Add ‘the’ if this is incorporated in the official name. For instance: The National Rifle Association. Make sure that you use or check the correct spelling of the organization;

2. The official full name of the organization in English, as used on its webpage, if the primary language of the website is not English;

3. The official full name in another language if the organization uses more than two languages. Check which language this is. If the organization has more than three official languages ensure that you have the French, German and English;

3. The official acronyms of the organization in the included languages.

4. Older official names or alternative spellings that organization had that are referenced on its website

Note, that sometimes a specific subdivision is included as a separate organization. In these cases you delete the subdivision only if it is located in the same city. If a subdivision is located somewhere else we code them as separate organizations.

**abr. Abbreviation of organizational name**

In capitals

**url. Website**

URL of the website of the interest organization. If the website does not exist or does not open, try to find information on other website (esp. wikipedia) or try in another language (i.e. use Google translate). Finally, if no information at all can be found at the internet about the organization fill in data according to the name of the organization. For instance, the name American Agriculture Association consists of three indicators (i.e. it is American, it is about agriculture and it is an association) which can be coded.

Use the following codes in the box:

If website available: Copy URL from website to dataset (starting with http://)

If no website is available for the organizations code: <NOWEB>
If website doesn’t work: <WEBDW>

No website but information found on wikipedia <WIKIWEB>

No website but information found elsewhere: <OWEB>

**webdw. Website doesn’t work**

Mark this box if website doesn’t work.

**lang. Language of website**

Choose from the dropdown-box the language in which the website is written. Always choose the default language of the website (i.e. the language of the website when you open it).

1. English
2. French
3. Spanish
4. German
5. Asian
6. Other see memo

**coder. Name of coder**

Who coded the website? Choose from dropdown box

**date. Date of coding**

Date of coding. Choose from calendar.
B. TERRITORIAL VARIABLES

headq. Headquarters

Country in which the organization’s headquarter is located. If this is unclear, see whether you can find where the secretariat is located or where the first contact option is directed to. If no headquarters can be located via the website, but other information can be found with regard to the organization fill in <UNCLEAR>. If no information at all about the organization can be found leave the box empty.

TIP: See the contact section to see where the headquarters is located.

Level of mobilization

Variables plm1, plm2, plm3, plm4 are related to level of mobilization of the organization. Is the organization organized in a particular region or country? VNO-NCW, the Dutch employers’ organization is oriented at the national level, Business Europe, the European federation of employers’ organizations is organized at the European level, while Voka, the Flemish network of business is, is organized at a subnational level.

plm1. Level mobilization:

The options are:

1. Sub-national: Choose this option when resources come from a subnational level. For instance Quebec, Flanders or the city of New York. Use B3 and B4 to provide the name of the subnational entity and the country in which it is located.
2. National: Choose this option when resources come from a nation state. For instance Belgium or the US. Use B5 to fill in the name of the country.
3. Regional: Choose this option when resources come from a specific region: for instance the EU or South America. Fill in B6 to specify which region it concerns.
4. Global: Choose this option when resources come from more than one continent. This also means that when resources come from only two countries but in different continents this regarded as a global organization.
5. Unknown: Choose this option if you cannot find any information regarding the level of mobilization of the interest organization.

TIP: See where the members come from in the section ‘members’.

plm2 Level of mobilization: sub-national
Name of the subnational entity where the organization is mobilized. For instance Quebec, Flanders or the Strasbourg. Use English names always and take notice that the spelling is correct. If the organization is not subnational, leave the box open.

**plm3. level mobilization: country of subnational entity**

Fill in the country in which the subnational entity you filed in above (plm2) is located. For instance, Canada (in the case of Quebec) or the US (in the case of the city of New York). Use this box only if you marked ‘sub-national’ in plm2.

**plm4. Level mobilization: country**

Choose the name of the country where the organization is mobilized, from the dropdown box.

**Plm5. Level of mobilization: regional**

Choose the name of the region where the organization is mobilized, from the dropdown box.

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**C. ORGANIZATIONAL VARIABLES**

**os1. Organizational structure**

This variable describes the structure of an organization in terms of type of membership and the internal working of the organization. You can make a distinction between several types of organizations. The types are divided between major categories and in some case a selection of subcategories.

You can choose between three major categories, which include several sub-categories. The major categories consists of first line membership organizations, which have a direct membership; second line membership organizations which have membership organizations as their members, and; organizations without members. The subcategories are listed below.

Note: in the dataset you can choose up to three organizational formats for the organization you are coding. So, if an organization has both companies and individuals as members, you need to mark the organization as both “membership companies” and “membership individual”.

TIP: Almost all information can be found in the ‘about’-section. Also you might check the ‘members’-section to see which types of members the organization has.

**First line membership organization**

10. Membership companies: This is an organization that has business companies as members. For instance the American Association of Car Manufacturers.

20. Membership individuals: This is an organization that has individuals as members or contributors. Most NGOs and trade unions (but not all) fall in this category. There are three different types of organizations with individual as members.

21. Contributors: the members of these organizations only pay money, but in return do not have any say in the organization. For instance Greenpeace is such an organization.
22. Members: in this case members do have a say in the organization, for instance by voting for the course of the organization or the selection of the board of directors. Most trade unions fall in this category.
23. Mixed: some organizations have both members that can influence the direction of the organization as well as contributors.

30. Membership public authorities: this is an organization that has public authorities as members, i.e. authorities that are part of the political system. These are cities, provinces, mayors, etc. Not included are organizations that are part of the bureaucracy such as hospitals, police forces, or schools. These are called institutions (see B14 and B20).

40. Membership institutions: this is an organization that has institutions as members. Institutions are organizations without members such as hospitals, universities, etcetera.

Second line membership organizations

50. Association of membership companies: this is the umbrella organization of several membership companies’ organizations. For instance the International Association of Car Manufacturers, which has the associations of car manufacturers of several countries as their members, or the Chambers of Commerce in countries.

60. Association of membership individuals: this is the umbrella organizations of membership individuals. For instance the International Trade Union Associations which includes most trade unions of the world. Note that a network or coalition of NGOs is not included in this category as this is not a formal organization and there is no hierarchy between the organizations and the NGOs that are connected. For networks of interest groups we have a distinct category (see below)

70. Association of membership public authorities: this is the umbrella organization of public authorities associations. For instance the International Association of Cities.

80. Association of membership institutions: this is the umbrella organizations of membership institutions organizations. For instance the International Association of Hospitals.

81. Network of interest groups: This is a network of interest groups. Often at the international level interest groups will collaborate at political venues and sign in as a network. Most often this will be NGOs, but in certain cases also business associations are included. Basically this is a group of interest groups that cooperate, but there is no (formal) hierarchical position towards the network or the members within the network.

No membership organizations

91. Business organization. Organization which aims to gain a profit. Professional lobby organizations are also included.

92. Foundation. organizations that are funded by one or a few persons. Key is that they do not depend on members for financial survival, although often people can contribute to these organizations. For instance the Gates Foundation. In this case code the organization as both a foundation and a membership contributor organization.
93. Research organization/think tank. This organization does research on a certain topic and most of the function of the organizations is used to do this research. These organizations do not have members, but sometimes it is possible to donate money. Think-tanks are also included in this category.

97. University. Also specific branches of a university are included, such as departments on a specific topic (i.e. Harvard Ecological Centre). If a research organization is specifically linked to a university, but not a department (such as in the case of the Harvard Ecological Centre), both university as research organization are coded, as multiple coding is possible in the database.

99. Other non-membership organization that are not included in the above (e.g. hospital, church). Make a note of the actual organizational type in the comment box.

**Mixed category**

100. If the organization can be coded in more than 3 organizational structures. For instance an organization that has companies, individuals, institutions and public authorities as members.

**os2. Organizational structure 2**

Idem as C1.

**os3 Organizational structure 3**

Idem as C1.

**os4. Organizational structure**

Choose from the drop-down box whether this is an:

1. Business organization: choose this box if the members are business organizations and the goal of the organization benefits the business sector.
2. Labor organization: choose this organizational type if the members are workers or unions and the organizations works on labor issues.
3. NGO: use this organization if the organization works on social issues and they receive contributions or have members that support this goal.
4. Institution: choose this organization if the organization has no members.

Mixed category: use this if an organization cannot be placed in one of the above exclusively. Mark in the comment-box which types it concerns

**osm1. Amount of members**

For this variable fill in the amount of members linked to C1. For each type you marked above, give the number of members that this organization has. If no members where mentioned on the site fill in nothing. Note that in the case of second-line membership organizations you fill in the amount of membership associations and not the amount of members these later organizations represent. For
instance the members of The International Car Manufacturing Association are Car Manufacturing Associations of different countries as members. In this case you thus fill in the amount of Car Manufacturing Associations and not the total amount of car manufactures they represent.

TIP: A rule of thumb is that when individuals or organizations pay a contribution fee (or something alike) they are included as members. If no fee is paid (for instance affiliated organizations) they are not regarded as members.

osm2. Amount of members
Amount of members linked to C2.

osm3. Amount of members
Amount of members linked to C3.

stfs1. Staff-size
How many paid staff does the organization have. Examples are people who work for the secretariat, researchers, field workers, etc. Not included are people who are in the board of directors or volunteers. If there is no staff, fill in “0”. If it is unclear fill in nothing.

TIP: if you cannot find the staff size, check ‘contacts’. Often the staff is mentioned there.

fnd1. Year of founding
Provide the year of founding. If an organization has changed its name, the founding of the original (i.e. oldest) organization needs to be the provided. If, however, the organization has merged in the past with another organization, the date of the newly founded organizations needs to be provided. In the latter case this also needs to be addressed in the next box (i.e. merger)

fnd2. Merger in the past
Is the current organization a result of a merger of other organizations in the past?

fnd3. Organization has merged with other organization
Mark this box when the organization does not exist anymore as it did, but instead has merged with other organizations to form a new one. Also provide a name of the newly merged organization in the comment-box.

fnd4. Organization ceased to exist
Only use this box if an organization has seized to exist. If an organization has been renamed or merged into another organization you do not mark this box but use one of the former boxes. This is often hard to confirm as the websites of the organization are often still online (either working or not working). Check for updates at the websites. If there have been no updates for over 2 years, check the box supervisor check and make a remark on this in the comment field related.

D. GUILD INFORMATION

isic1.1 – isic1.4. Economic sector 1 (ISIC)
Fill in the correct ISIC code. You can choose for each organization four economic fields of activity or interest (D1-D4). If an organization is active in more than one economic sector fill in ’multiple fields of interest. Use this variable for all organizations, so also in the case of NGOs. See for more information the memo on ISIC coding. If more than 4 sectors use code: 6666

TIP: use the search option on the website of UN on ISIC. If you type in the sector you are directed to all hits within the ISIC codebook.


Disregard: 8412 (regulation of health care); 8413 (regulation of economy); 941 (employers’ organizations); 942 (labour unions); 9491 (political organizations); 9499 (other membership organizations).

**isic2.1 – isic2.4. Economic sector 2 (ISIC)**

Idem isic1.1 – isic1.2.

**isic3.1 – isic3.4. Economic sector 3 (ISIC)**

Idem isic1.1 – isic1.2.

**isic4.1 – isic4.4. Economic sector 4 (ISIC)**

Idem isic1.1 – isic1.2.

**act_es. Actual name of sector (either economic or social sector)**

Fill in the actual name of the economic sector. Do this always, also in the case when you were able to find a proper ISIC code.

**ss1**

10. Development
20. Poverty reduction
30. Human rights
   31. Indigenous groups
   32. Women
   33. Religious
   34. Democracy/Civil society
   35. Youth
   36. Peace
40. Labor
50. Human health
60. Consumer
70. Environment/animals
   71. Renewable energy
   72. Nuclear energy
   73. Nature conservation
   74. Animals
   75. Pollution
   76. Other environment, see memo
80. Multiple Fields of Interest
90. Other - see memo
ss2
Idem ss1.

ss3
Idem ss1.

ss4
Idem ss1.

E. OTHER

frame. Framing of issue

Copy paste text that is dedicated to the description of the problem and solution towards the issue of concern. This can often be found in the about section. Note that you do not need to interpret this, but merely copy paste the text entirely in the box: mission or goal of organization.

mem_print. Membership list of organization printed or stored

Does the organization explicitly mention who its members are. If so, store the list in separate file.

comm. Comments

In some of the former variables it was explicitly asked to add some information to the comment. These comments must be placed first. All other remarks you add are placed after this. Note that you spell correctly so we can track remarks systematically.

fini. Coding finished

When you have competed the coding choose one of the following boxes:

1. Coding complete: this means that all information that could be found on the website (or additional sources on the web) is coded in the database.

2. Supervisor check: this means that you are unsure about some variables and a supervisor needs to check/or fill in this information. Note: make sure you describe the problem in the comment-box.

fini_comm. Supervisor check comment

State the problem to which you want the supervisor to look into in clear fashion.
INTERVIEW GUIDE – EUROPEAN COMMISSION

BASIC INFORMATION ON THE INTERVIEW AND INTERVIEWEE

Policy field:

Name of interviewee:

Phone number: E-mail (if available):

Position at time of decision-making:

Position at time of interview:

Date of interview: Place of interview:

Time of interview:

Interview carried out by:

PRELIMINARY REMARK

This interview is part of a research project on regional authorities’ involvement in the EU decision-making process and seeks to explain variation of regional authorities’ influence on EU legislation and to identify best practices. In order to do so, we take all kinds of stakeholders into account that lobbied on issues in five policy fields (agriculture, transport, Horizon 2020, cohesion and environment). The project is carried out by the Policy Research Centre on “Foreign Affairs, International Entrepreneurship and Development Cooperation” under the auspices of the Flemish Government.

In this interview, we want to talk with you about the reform of the transport policy reform (TEN-T Connecting Europe) 2014-2020, and more specifically the following regulations:


We are keen to formally thank all those who have helped and supported us. Would you object to us listing you in the acknowledgements of our project? If you prefer to
1. Often, legislative proposals are characterized by several lines of disagreement or conflict around specific issues. For example, a proposal on emissions trading may trigger conflicts about the sectors of the economy that should be covered by the scheme, about the way emissions rights should be distributed, and so on. Our research has revealed that there has been conflict around three issues concerning (______________) in which regional or sub-national actors were stakeholders. By stakeholders, we mean interest groups, sub-national authorities, the Commission, government actors such as member states and party groups in the European Parliament.

Would you agree that these issues were indeed the most conflictual issues where regional or sub-national actors had a stake?

**Issue 1.**

- O yes  O no  O from the beginning  O at a later stage

**Issue 2.**

- O yes  O no  O from the beginning  O at a later stage

**Issue 3.**

- O yes  O no  O from the beginning  O at a later stage

2. If not, how would you define the conflictual issues in this proposal?

**Issue 4.**  ______________________________

- O from the beginning  O at a later stage

**Issue 5.**  ______________________________

- O from the beginning  O at a later stage
3. Thinking about these issues, were they already part of the discussion at the point that the Commission adopted its proposal or was it at a later stage that these issues became important?

4. We now have identified XX issues. On each of these issues, stakeholders may take differing policy stances and favour different policy outcomes. We are interested in the policy alternatives they favoured.

a.) Regarding issue 1 on (name issue), let’s start with the interest groups (such as associations, organizations, firms, universities and NGOs). When the consultation process began which two interest groups took the most divergent initial positions? [These actors are placed at the end of the issue continuum, the names written in the actor table, and the numeric values (0, 100) entered into the issue table. The 0 value should be given to the position that favours less integration or less regulation. If only one interest group took a position on an issue or all interest groups adopted the same position, then use other stakeholders’ positions to establish the other extreme.]

b.) Can you very briefly describe the policy positions of these interest groups? [Enter text into position table: ‘substantive’]

c.) Now, please locate the policy alternatives initially favoured by the other interest groups on the policy continuum. [Enter numeric values and substantive position in table]

d.) Could you now tell us which sub-national authorities took a clear position on this issue?

e.) And where would you locate the policy position favoured by each of these sub-national authorities? [Enter numeric values and substantive position in table. If a position is located outside the policy positions taken by the most divergent interest groups, use a number <0 or >100 to represent it.]

f.) Could you also locate the policy position favoured by the member states that took a clear position on this issue? [Numeric values and substantive position in table. If a position is located outside the policy positions taken by the most divergent interest groups, use a number <0 or >100 to represent it.]

g.) Please now also locate the position of the European Commission on the issue.
h.) Could you also locate the policy position favoured by the party groups in the European Parliament that took a clear position on the issue? [Numeric values and substantive position in table. If a position is located outside the policy positions taken by the most divergent interest groups, use a number <0 or >100 to represent it.]

i.) Now that the policy-making process on this proposal has been completed, what is the final outcome? Where would you locate this position on this dimension? [Numeric values and substantive position in table. If a position is located outside the policy positions taken by the most divergent interest groups, use a number <0 or >100 to represent it.]

j.) Now we are interested in talking about a ‘what-if’ scenario. If the Commission, Council and Parliament had failed to reach an agreement on the issue of (name of issue), where would you locate the status quo on the continuum? [Numeric values and substantive position in table. If a position is located outside the policy positions taken by the most divergent interest groups, use a number <0 or >100 to represent it.]

5. The tactics used by sub-national authorities are also of interest to us. With tactics we mean, among other things, direct lobbying of the Commission, forming coalitions with other stakeholders, publishing position papers. According to your experience, how frequently have sub-national authorities used the following political strategies to influence the (______________)? Please indicate whether the strategy was not used at all (1), used less frequently than on other proposals that you are familiar with (2), used about as frequently (3), or used more frequently (4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) directly lobbying the European Commission</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) seeking support from Members of the European Parliament</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) lobbying through policymakers within the member-states</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(d) building a media presence or conducting media campaigns</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(e) staging protest activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) forming coalitions with other stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g) publishing position papers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
(h) creating an extensive body of technical expertise and knowledge

6. If you are unable to answer this question for each of the sub-national authorities individually, could you then give us an aggregated view of the tactics used by regions?

1 2 3 4

(a) directly lobbying the European Commission
(b) seeking support from Members of the European Parliament
(c) lobbying through policymakers within the member-states
(d) building a media presence or conducting media campaigns
(e) staging protest activities
(f) forming coalitions with other stakeholders
(g) publishing position papers
(h) creating an extensive body of technical expertise and knowledge

7. One last question, if the sub-national authorities were active, when in the decision-making process did they start lobbying?

a. Green Paper
b. White Paper
c. EC proposal
d. EP position and Council position
e. 2nd reading EP
f. Council adopts/rejects amendments
g. Conciliatory committee
h. Compromise voted in Council and EP
i. Adoption of delegated acts/implementing acts

8. Finally, thank you for your time today and for answering our questions. Is there anything you would like to comment upon or feel we have overlooked?
POSITION TABLE ON POLICY FIELD:

ISSUE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor ID</th>
<th>Numeric</th>
<th>Substantive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
8.4. Annex IV: Interview Guide with regional representations

BASIC INFORMATION ON THE INTERVIEW AND INTERVIEWEE

Name of interviewee:

Name of organization:

Phone number:

E-mail (if available):

Position in the organization during the past four years:

Position at time of interview:

Date of interview:

Place of interview:

Time of interview: from ............. to ............... 

Interview carried out by:

PRELIMINARY REMARK
This interview is part of a research project on regional authorities’ involvement in the EU decision-making process carried out by ACIM in the framework of the Policy Research Centre on “Foreign Affairs, International Entrepreneurship and Development Cooperation” under the auspices of the Flemish Government. The project seeks to explain variation of regional authorities’ influence on EU legislation and to identify the strategies and tactics that led to influence.

Would you object to us listing you in the acknowledgements of our project? If you prefer to remain anonymous, we can guarantee that you will not be mentioned in our acknowledgements, your responses to our questions will be treated confidentially, and that you will not be identifiable in any of the publications that result from this project.

---

**Confirmation of the Policy Processes**

This interview will focus on your organization’s political activities in the period between 2011 and 2014. Based on previous research, for instance the screening of open consultations, we found that your region was interested in ongoing policy processes regarding (mention those appropriate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Process</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion Policy reform 2014-2020</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Agricultural Policy reform 2014-2020</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizon 2020</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEN-T Connecting Europe</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment Action Programme to 2020</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Can you confirm that these policy processes were of importance to your organization?
a. Next to the policy processes just mentioned we are also interested in (mention policy processes not already mentioned). Where any of these processes of importance to you? (Only ask question 1a. when not all PP are initially ticked)

b. Within any organization certain policies will necessarily be viewed as more important than others. For each of these policy processes, could you grade their importance to your region on a scale from 1 to 10, whereby 10 means that it was extremely important, while the lowest score 1 implies that it was not important at all?

As we aim to compare between these processes systematically we will discuss each of them separately with similar questions. This structured approach also leads to a more efficient and effective interview.

I will now start with policy process (handle in order above).
**Issue 2:**

_______________________________________________________________

yes O no O

b. If not, how would you define the conflictual issues in this proposal?

Issue 3: ____________________________

Issue 4:____________________________

3. On each of issues, did your organization invest more or fewer resources in shaping the legislative outcome compared to any other issues that you are familiar with / have been working on?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>More resources</th>
<th>About the same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issue 1</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue 2</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue 3</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue 4</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Spatial Mapping and Issue-specific questions**

We now start with issue X. Regarding this issue, stakeholders may take differing policy stances and favor different policy outcomes. Based on interviews with the European Commission and an extensive analysis of media content, we have made the following spatial mapping of positions on the issue of X (GIVE MAP X WITH DESCRIPTION).
4. Do you agree that the positions we identified reflect the conflicts that surrounded this issue? If not, what needs to be changed?
   a) Most divergent positions
   b) Commission proposal
   c) European Parliament
   d) Council of Ministers
   e) Policy Outcome

5. Now I am going to ask you to position some more stakeholders. Could you give:
   a) The position of your regional government
   b) The position of your national government
   c) The position of other regional representations that took a clear position on these issues?

6. Are there other relevant stakeholders, such as firms, agencies, interest groups, civil society organisations, who are not represented on this map?
   a) Who?
   b) Where would you position them?

7. How easy or difficult was it for your region to establish its position on this issue, keeping in mind the positions of the different departments, agencies and other involved actors in your region, etc.? Was this...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very easy</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
<th>Very difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Was your region’s position towards this issue established by the administration or by the political leadership in your region, such as ministers or cabinet chiefs?

9. To what extent was your region’s position towards this issue the result of coordination efforts with a) your central government and b) other regional authorities within your country?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No coordination</th>
<th>Little coordination</th>
<th>Medium coordination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Central government</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Regional authorities</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. To what extent was your region’s position towards this issue the result of coordination efforts with private stakeholders within your region?

    | No coordination | Little coordination | Medium coordination |
    |----------------|--------------------|---------------------|
    | O              | O                  | O                   |
11. In what policy-making phase did your region a) establish its position and b) became active in representing its interest towards this particular issue (name issue):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Establish Position</th>
<th>b) Became Active</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Commission Green Paper</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Commission White Paper</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Commission Proposal</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. First reading in EP</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. First reading in Council</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Conciliation</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. How would you divide the efforts you undertook in influencing the policy outcome regarding this issue over two different stages in the policymaking process?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior to the publication of the COM proposal</th>
<th>After the publication of the COM proposal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- IF NOT ALL ISSUES ARE DISCUSSED, GO BACK TO QUESTION 4
- IF ALL ISSUES ARE DISCUSSED? PROCEED TO QUESTION OVER TO THE OVERALL PROCESS

**Coalition strategies**

Now we are going to talk about your strategies regarding the overall policy process. More precisely the coalition activities you undertook in order to influence or affect the legislative outcome. Based on an extensive analysis of media sources and expert interviews with policymakers we identified the following list of advocates [SHOW LIST X].

13. Can you check this list and see whether there are actors missing who actively tried to influence the legislative outcome? (CROSSCHECK WITH Q6)
   a) Can you please indicate up to five actors who were the most active in lobbying on this issue?

14. In order to influence EU policies advocates may forge coalitions. We understand coalitions as explicit agreements between you and other actors, aimed at coordinating efforts to influence EU legislation, for instance through the issuing of joint position
papers. If you were involved in this type of activity can you indicate with whom you formed a coalition to influence the legislative outcome of this issue

a) Possibly there were other coalitions involved. What policies were these other coalitions seeking and who were members of these coalitions?

b) Who took the lead in establishing all these coalitions, including the coalitions to which you belong?

c) Which of these stakeholders, including your regional government, was influential in European policymaking on the proposal concerning X? Please also consider stakeholders that took a different position than you did.
Advocacy Strategies

15. In order to influence policies interest groups, politicians and public officials often seek access to each other. In these interactions information plays a vital role. Did you exchange information with the following actors? If yes, was this rarely sometimes, frequently or very frequently?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>1 Never</th>
<th>2 Rarely</th>
<th>3 Sometimes</th>
<th>4 Frequently</th>
<th>5 Very frequently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Commission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Commissioner in charge of policy proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Commissioner</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Commissioners</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>DG in charge of policy proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advisory committees or expert groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>European Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rapporteur of the EP committee in charge of this proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shadow-rapporteur of the EP committee in charge of this proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEPs from your own region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other MEPs from your member state</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEPs from other member states</td>
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<tr>
<td>Member-State delegations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Regional offices</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ambassadors, diplomats in the Permanent Representations</td>
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<tr>
<td>National officials in the specialized working groups of the Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministers, the ministerial level of the council</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Committee of the Regions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trans-Regional Associations</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. To what extent did you coordinate and collaborate with your own central government in pursuing your policy preferences with regard to this policy process?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cooperation Level</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No cooperation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little cooperation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium cooperation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong cooperation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17. With respect to the same policy process, roughly what percentage of your efforts consisted of activities that were in collaboration with your central government and what percentage concerned efforts that did not include the cooperation of your central government?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cooperation</th>
<th>Bypassing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. Irrespective of your message, did you emphasize different aspects of this proposal when approaching different institutions? For instance [PUT CROSS IF APPLICABLE],

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>for the EC</th>
<th>for Members of the European Parliament</th>
<th>when approaching member-state delegations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Technical and scientific aspects | Economic consequences (for instance for employment, costs for stakeholders…) | Legal and administrative implications | Political consequences (voters, members, public opinion…)

19. Which of the following activities did you undertake to try to affect or influence legislative outcomes? How frequently were these activities used? (never, rarely, sometimes, frequently or very frequently)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>1 never</th>
<th>2 rarely</th>
<th>3 sometimes</th>
<th>4 frequently</th>
<th>5 very frequently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Published research reports and position papers</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hired third parties such as consultancy firms or research institutes to carry out policy-oriented research</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Participated in the Commission’s online consultations</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Participated in the Commission’s Structured Dialogue with regional partners</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Participated in debates and/or events, such as the “Open Days”

6. Organized debates and/or events yourself to increase the attention of policymakers and provide them with information

7. Increased media attention by organizing press conferences, distributing press releases or contacting reporters and/or journalists

8. Promoted the appointment of domestic experts in advisory bodies to the Commission or EU agencies

9. Promoted the career of national citizens within European institutions

10. Encouraged regional MEPs to become EP-rapporteur

11. Contacted national MPs to trigger a “yellow card-procedure”

12. Encouraged the regional head of government and/or regional ministers to contact EU public officials

13. Encouraged private interest groups to lobby policymakers

14. Hired public relation firms or lobbyists on behalf of your organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concluding Questions (level of the regional office)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. How many people work at the regional representation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Of which Trans-Regional Associations is your region a member?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you for your time today and for answering our questions. Is there anything that you would like to comment upon or feel that we have overlooked? Where there any questions you found particularly challenging or difficult to answer? Where you surprised that we didn’t ask you any specific questions?

Immediately after the interview, please write down your judgment on the “quality” of the interviewee; that is, how well informed the interviewee appeared? (A-E Scale)