1. Introduction: Civil Society and European Governance

Currently the participation of civil society in the decision-making process is welcomed by the institutions of the European Union (EU), especially the European Commission. Civil society’s participation is seen as an opportunity to legitimate European governance and to reduce the democracy deficit and has more positive connotations than at any time before (Commission of the European Communities 2001). This attitude has contributed to the rise in the number of interest organisations moving to Brussels and assigning themselves to the broad and conceptually unclear sector of ‘civil society’. Almost every communication of the European Commission stresses the importance of civil society. It is seen as an appropriate tool for bridging the gap between the EU and its citizens (Freise 2008).

That is why civil society is currently included in diverse consultations, and at the same time the EU is trying to improve its relationships with non-state actors. The EU has introduced online consultations (Hüller 2008), has implemented administrative procedures to consider stakeholder opinions (Quittkat & Finke 2008), and is continuously considering how European governance could be effectively linked to civil society without harming the principles of representative democracy (Ruzza 2007). In this context actors from the organized civil society have gained strong momentum in recent years.

Despite these examples of the growing importance of civil society organisations for the European Union, there is still a lack of research and understanding of the relations between the EU institutions and private actors. This especially holds true for the relations between the EU institutions and interest groups from the new member countries of the European Union, which acceded in 2004: Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Malta and Cyprus. Political science and integration studies focussed significantly on the enlargement and its effects on the EU institutions and on the joining countries (for an overview of this research see Beichelt 2004), but left out the effects on interest intermediation (Smismans 2006: 312). Even after ten new countries joined and civil society involvement became an especially ‘hot’ topic, interest intermediation on the EU level and the effects of the enlargement on it were among the less ‘trendy’ research topics.

Current research has little to say about the way civil society actors from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) act on the European level, although these countries have been members of the EU since May 2004. There are many open questions: Neither do we know which policy issues they are concentrating on, nor can we specify exactly how they deal with opportunities offered as well as challenges that arise. What changed, for example, in the lobbying scene? Do we have more interests and more lobbyists as it was widely expected at the beginning of the accession process (Kohler-Koch 1997: 8)? And what role are civil society actors from the new Member States playing today in the policy arena of EU interest representation? Were they full
members of the EU already four years after they came to Brussels and have they also been able to fully participate in the decision-making process? And if so: Have they been able to make their issues and their interests heard? What challenges have the organisations starting to work on the European level faced? What opportunities have they gotten and have they been able to adapt to them and use them? Or are they still in a role of observers plagued by the newcomer’s inferiority complex? Before going into further detail on how these questions can be answered, clarification of the main terms used here is indispensable.

1.1. Civil society and lobbying: Defining terms

In Brussels, a self-declared capital of Europe, lobbying is a growth industry. Since the passage of the Single European Act in 1986, the number of civil society interest groups and individual European public affairs professionals active in this ‘lobby planet’ has increased continuously (Aspinwall & Greenwood 1998a; cf. Greenwood 1997; Greenwood 2007; for consultants, see Lahusen 2003). In the meantime, the number of European peak organisations, so-called Eurofeds, as well as national associations’ offices in Brussels, grows, while regional entities, individual companies, international organisations, and multinational companies also move there (cf. Hooghe & Marks 2001: 15; Woll 2006: 458). How does one identify civil society actors or interest groups within the ‘lobby planet’? What do they do? What does lobbying entail?

1.1.1. Civil society: Normative and analytical dimensions

Admittedly, the notion of civil society is not absolutely necessary since over the years interest group research managed to go without this vague concept. Rather the role of various associations and other interest groups was discussed under the generic term of interest aggregation in political systems (Bignami 2006, Peters 2004). Research has explored what role associations have in political systems and if they are legitimate in the sense of democracy theory (Moravcsik & Sangiovanni 2002), as well as the advantages of competing models of representative politics and interest groups that are not legitimised democratically (Streeck 2006). The combination of interest group research with the civil society concept took place only in recent years,

---

1  Phrase coined by the Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO). ‘Lobby planet’ helps orient a person in the Brussels EU quarter like the ‘Lonely planet’ travel guide on any tourist route (www.corporateeurope.org).
but was established first within European Union research, which itself connected the empirical phenomenon of interest representation with various normative conceptions of civil society (Freise 2008).

The concept of civil society used in academia has different facets. The intent here is not to review all facets of the concept, which are described and analysed elsewhere. However, two dimensions of the notion ‘civil society’ can be distinguished: a normative one and a rather analytical one. Both are relevant for the debate on interest groups and their involvement in European governance. Basically, as argued by Jürgen Kocka (2003), the notion of civil society can be divided into three components, which are emphasised in different ways depending on the context in which they are used. The first component defines the term according to its field of action. In this case, civil society is defined as a societal sphere situated between the poles of the state, the market and the private sphere, sometimes overlapping with these neighbouring spheres. In this more or less analytical usage, civil society is often reduced to its organisational underpinnings. Thus, civil society is composed of the group of formal organisations (some authors, e.g., Lauth 1999, also include non-formal organisations) that can be assigned neither to the state or market, nor to the private sphere. In this very narrow understanding, civil society is composed of associations, foundations, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), as well as new social movements and social gatherings (Brix 1999).

The second component of the civil society concept, according to Kocka (2003), is its view of civil society as a specific form of social action. In this case, civil society stands out due to a particular form of behaviour (Zimmer & Freise 2008). Theorists do not agree on one single definition of this form, but different definitions have one thing in common: the behaviour of civil society differs from the behaviour of actors in the market, state and private spheres. Peaceable behaviour, characterised by solidarity, openness and non-profit orientation, is a typical feature of civil society in any definition (Reichardt 2004). Although this component has been very important in the concept’s historical development, it plays only a secondary role in discussions on interest representation in European governance.

However, for interest representation research, the third component of conceptualizations of civil society highlighted by Kocka (2003) is much more interesting. According to this, every concept of civil society features a utopia in the sense of democracy theory (Freise 2008: 31). Hence, civil society describes a model of society that is more democratic and somehow better than the current model. That is why concepts of civil society have become so popular within the European Union: everybody using it has in mind not only a societal sphere or a specific form of citizen ac-

---

tion, but also a normative concept of a better social order. This normative idea is also obvious in the discussion on the democracy deficit of the EU: the involvement of civil society organisations on the European level is clearly connected with the hope of instilling more democratic decision-making processes.

Because of this, civil society is referred to in nearly all recent publications by the European institutions dealing with the further development of European governance. In the EU context, the utopian, normative understanding of civil society is reflected in a definition based on the societal sphere component and first laid out in 1999 by the European Economic and Social Committee and later adopted by the European Commission. According to this definition, the following groups are counted among civil society: 'trade unions and employers’ organisations (‘social partners’); nongovernmental organisations; professional associations; charities; grass-roots organisations; organisations that involve citizens in local and municipal life with a particular contribution from churches and religious communities’ (Commission of the European Communities 2001: 14, footnote 9). Contrary to many academic definitions, the European institutions’ understanding includes trade unions and business interests’ organisations. This is the definition of civil society used throughout this book. Although based mainly on the understanding of civil society as a societal sphere composed of more or less formal organisations, the analysis, indeed, also picks up the utopian component of the civil society concept, especially when considering the implications of the findings for democracy theory.

Here it is important to clarify what functions the European institutions assign to civil society. Matthias Freise (2008) has shown that in the EU’s documents and statements, civil society is assigned very different expectations: it is anticipated that civil society will make the notoriously non-transparent decision making in the EU governance system more transparent, bring expertise into the policy-making process, bring the citizens closer to the technocratic administrative apparatus, and finally provide services, for example, in the social policy field.

The analysis presented here focuses on one of the many functions ascribed to civil society organisations, namely, representation of their members and advocacy of endogenous and exogenous interests. In the EU context, since organisations establish their offices in Brussels in order to represent their interests on the EU level, they can be called interest groups. The notion ‘interest group’ refers to an ‘organisation which seeks or claims to represent people or organizations which share one or more common interests or ideals’ (Wilson 1981: 4) and which ‘[is] united by specific political objectives and [tries] to influence the policy process in the pursuit of these goals’ (Woll 2006: 465). Accordingly, throughout this book, the terms ‘interest groups’ and ‘civil society organisations’ or ‘civil society actors’ are used synonymously. This usage is also in keeping with the jargon of the European Union’s institutions (‘Eurotalk’) (Eisele 2008).
1.1.2. Lobbying: Communication and information exchange

Several terms are used in the research literature to describe the activities of interest groups, including ‘lobbying’ (e.g., Coen 1998; Mazey & Richardson 1993), ‘representation’ (e.g., Grant 2000; Greenwood 1997) and ‘mobilisation’ (Marks 1992). However, the terms ‘lobbying’ and ‘mobilisation’ in particular tend to be problematic.

The word ‘lobbying’ has acquired rather negative connotations. For example, it is claimed that ‘lobbying confers an unfair advantage on those that can afford to carry it out and therefore runs counter to the notion of democracy’ (Warleigh & Fairbrass 2002: 2).

What does lobbying actually mean? The Latin word *labium* means ‘entrance hall’ or ‘lounge’. And that has a relation to the current discussion: policy decisions are nowadays often made in the pre-parliamentarian phase of balancing the various interests, i.e., at the ‘entrance hall’ before the formal process has begun. According to Beyme (1980), lobbying means ‘diverse intensive activities of social groups, chambers and companies in the political and bureaucratic vestibule’. The oldest research definition is given by Milbrath (1960: 32), who considered lobbying primarily to be a communication process: ‘Communication is the only means of influencing or changing a perception; the lobbying process, therefore, is totally a communication process’. Van Schendelen (1993) adds a new aspect to the definition of lobbying: ‘Lobbying is the informal exchange of information with public authorities, as a minimal conception on the one hand, and as trying informally to influence public authorities, as a maximal description on the other hand’. The most comprehensive definition is formulated by Koeppel (2001: 71): ‘Lobbying is the attempted or successful influence of legislative-administrative decisions by public authorities through interested representatives. The influence is intended, implies the use of communication and is targeted on legislative or executive bodies’.

The word ‘mobilisation’ also has certain limitations. This term and the related term ‘resource mobilisation’ refer, especially in the earlier academic literature, to social protest movements, particularly in an American context (e.g. McCarthy & Zald 1977). Researchers using this term usually have tended to focus on resources in terms of the staff and funding of protest groups, and have disregarded the external political and social environment in which these groups operate. Later studies of protest movements refined the ‘resource-mobilisation’ approach by considering ‘the external political opportunity structures’ (Kitschelt 1986). According to Warleigh and Fairbrass, despite this refinement to the resource-mobilisation approach, it is still problematic to use the term ‘mobilisation’ on the European level for two reasons: first, not all interest groups see themselves as social protest groups, e.g., business or agricultural interest associations, and second, the aspect of influence is not captured (Warleigh & Fairbrass 2002: 2).

Because the term ‘interest representation’ has no problematic connotations or limitations to particular areas, it is used most in the academic literature to refer to those activities, tactics and strategies utilized by state and non-state actors when they
attempt to influence European public policy. According to the definition of Warleigh and Fairbrass (2002: 2), ‘it ranges across lobbying, the exchange of information, alliance building, formal and informal contact, planned and unplanned relationships: in other words, all forms of interaction that are designed to advocate particular ideas, persuade the decision-takers to adopt different positions or perspectives, and ultimately to influence policy’. The term is also popular because ‘representation’ is a major buzzword in the current debate on EU legitimacy (Goehring 2002: 134).

However, a comparison of the definitions of ‘interest representation’ and ‘lobbying’ shows that they are very similar concepts. The problem is that lobbying has acquired negative connotations; in particular, lobbying at the European level has engendered a set of critical labels such as ‘Lobbycracy’, ‘lobbyist’s paradise’ or ‘shadow politics’ (Coen 2007). In the public discourse, lobbying has given rise to very ‘dark’ connotations. Nevertheless, the aim of this research is to define lobbying in the EU governance context.

This research draws on the European Commission’s and the lobbying practitioners’ definitions of lobbying, which departs significantly from that often appearing in the media, which depicts lobbying as ‘dirty business’ and far removed from ‘good civil society’. The European Commission’s Transparency Initiative Green Paper of 2006 refers to the classical definition of lobbying, seeing it as ‘all activities carried out with the objective of influencing the policy formulation and decision-making processes of the European institutions’ (Commission of the European Communities 2006: 5). Hence, lobbyists are ‘persons carrying out such activities, working in a variety of organisations such as public affairs consultancies, law firms, NGOs, think-tanks, corporate lobby units (‘in-house representatives’) or trade associations’ (Commission of the European Communities 2006: 5). The practitioners regard lobbying as a means not only to influence, but also to contribute to identifying and formulating solutions and resolving problems. Guéguen (2007: 135), for example, emphasises that ‘a good lobbyist is part of the solution’. Another prominent practitioner refers to lobbying as an information-provision process, which helps officials and legislators more fully consider the broad range of options and possibilities (Cassidy 1999).

Despite the negative image associated with it, the notion of ‘lobbying’ better reflects the communication and information exchange among interest groups on the European level, and these two processes are crucial in order to determine the involvement of actors in policy making. Like the terms ‘civil society actors’ and ‘interest groups’ used synonymously to describe the actors involved, this definition follows the actual use of these notions in Brussels language habitus. Though this may lead occasionally to a reduction of theoretical profundity, the deficiency is compensated for, however, in the theory discussion and conclusion.
1.2. Research questions and research design

In seeking to understand how civil society actors act within the complex European governance system and, in particular, how those from the new Member States from Central and Eastern Europe are integrated in the policy-making process and act within it, the research questions need to be reduced to an appropriate level of analysis in terms of geographical scope as well as range of issues.

As noted at the outset, a multiplicity of actors seeks participation at the European level. According to Richardson (2006: 12), ‘the addition of new Member States significantly adds to the number and range of interest groups’. This research examines whether private actors from the four Visegrád countries, i.e., those with the largest populations in the CEE region, increased the quantity and the range of interests on the EU level and what strategies they use to promote their interests.

The research focuses on the Visegrád countries not only for the practical reason of narrowing its scope. These four Visegrád countries played an ‘avant garde’ role in the process of the accession to the EU, presenting an example for the other countries in the CEE region, and could be compared with the Benelux countries at the beginning of the European unification process (Weidenfeld 2002). Because of this forerunner role in the CEE region, it is especially interesting to examine how the private actors from the Visegrád countries act on the European level after the enlargement and how they lobby for their interests in the EU (governmental actors from the CEE have been much more the focus of contemporary research).

It is plausible to assume that these four countries had more advanced lobbying operations in Brussels because they co-operated with the European institutions and European federations long before their accession to the EU (Beichelt 2004). Moreover, Visegrád countries negotiated strategies with each other in the round of accession negotiations (Laws 1999). More important, among the CEE countries, these four were most suitable for the research because their populations are larger than those of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia or Slovenia. Based on a review of the European Public Affairs Directory, it appears that organisations from large countries such as Germany and France have the most offices in Brussels, while organisations from smaller countries such as Luxembourg, Finland and Portugal are usually less represented. It can thus be supposed that countries with larger populations open representative offices in Brussels more often.

The aim, then, is to examine the integration, i.e., the capacity to act and make one’s interests heard, of new actors from these four target countries in the European policy-making process. While it is difficult to measure integration per se, it is, however, possible to investigate ‘who is in a position to influence the policy process’

---

3 Visegrád countries comprise Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.
and ‘the conditions which enable private actors to gain access to the policy process’ (Woll 2006: 460). The selected issue within the broader policy process is the formulation of the Directive on services in the internal market, one of the most fundamental issues in the EU in recent years: it is a part of the Lisbon reform agenda and is a very important issue for the economies of the EU Member States and the competitiveness of the whole EU (for a detailed overview on this policy issue see Neergaard 2008).

The point of observation is the issue network surrounding the Services Directive, with a particular focus on the position of the actors from Visegrád countries in the network structure. In the EU context, the term ‘network’ is used in at least two ways. The first refers to the way the EU governs: the whole political process is called ‘network governance’. The second reflects the pattern of interest intermediation: the way different interest groups interact is called a ‘policy network’. This research adds a third usage in this context: ‘network analysis’ is a method to describe and analyse one concrete issue network. In this case, the involvement of the actors from Visegrád countries in communication and information exchange relations in the issue network surrounding the Services Directive is an independent variable, which shapes to a considerable extent the actors’ possibilities to bring input into the decision-making process. This research design, in which policy networks are independent variables, analysed how network structures affect the behaviour and strategies of the actors involved (for more on such a design, see Thatcher 1998: 410; Peterson 2003: 9). Thus, this research employed an inductive approach: a particular case was analysed using quantitative and qualitative methods with the objective of deriving indications about involvement of interest groups from the CEE countries in the policy-making process on the European level in general.

Against this background, two sets of questions drove the empirical research: On the one side, how is this policy issue network structured in relational terms and what impact does this structure have on the new actors; how is the important policy resource, i.e., information, distributed within the network? On the other side, what capacity to act do the actors from the new Member States demonstrate; are they capable of representing their interests on the European level; and how do they do that? It might be hypothesised that actors that are less integrated have fewer chances to give inputs, and actors who are not integrated at all are excluded from the policy-making process. Because the relational position of actors in a network structure explains in large part their ability to realise their interests and influence outcomes, examination of the extent of embeddedness of the actors from Visegrád countries permits an assessment of their actual possibilities to give voice to and contribute their interests to the policy-making process.

It can be assumed that, in light of the ongoing developments on the national level and the communist legacy, it is particularly challenging for actors from CEE countries to undertake interest representation on the EU level. Actors with long traditions of interest representation on the national level should be more apt to extend the interest representation also to a supranational level and to establish ties with the stakeholders from the other countries and integrate them into the policy networks. By
contrast, the weak traditions of interest representation and financial dependencies of interest groups on the national level should offer less support for the direct participation of interest groups in policy making on the European level.

The 2004 enlargement increased the heterogeneity of economic and institutional conditions in the European Union. The interest groups have a special role: they should reflect the societal diversity in the EU. Hence, the interests from the newcomer countries should expand the range of represented interests geographically as well as thematically in the decision-making process on the EU level. But are the new interest groups incorporated into the decision-making process? If not, why? The answers to these questions have implications for the democratic quality of European governance. From the perspective of the participatory democracy, it is a serious problem if the influence of interest groups in Brussels depends to a large part on their country of origin. Such a situation could increase the notorious democracy deficit (Tsakatika 2007), hinder any stronger involvement of civil society organisations, and undermine the acceptance of the EU in the new Member States. Before discussing whether interest groups from CEE countries are really incorporated into the policy-making process on the European level, a look at interest intermediation systems more generally and within the EU more specifically is necessary.

Thus, the next chapter presents the theoretical debates surrounding lobbying, European governance and Europeanisation and seeks to provide a research framework for the lobbying phenomenon. The literature on the legitimacy of the EU governance system is of particular interest for this work since the role of interest groups in the EU system is defined. Furthermore, the studies of interest intermediation patterns in the EU shed light on the ways the interest groups are incorporated into the policymaking process. Finally, the studies on the Europeanisation of interest groups are considered in order to take into account the interplay between the national and European level and its impacts on the interest groups. This theoretical literature provides an initial basis for a profile of the special characteristics of actors (lobbyists) required in order to be able to participate in the decision-making process on the European level. The profile is supplemented in the subsequent chapter with insights drawn from ‘lobbying guides’ and literature ‘from practitioners to practitioners and newcomers’, as well as from two EU lobbying professionals that were interviewed as part of the research. These practice-based inputs offer a view of the distinctiveness of lobbying in Brussels.

The fourth chapter then brings the focus to the civil society actors from Visegrád countries and their particularities. In these countries, interest representation on the national level is still developing since they gained their independence only after the ‘Velvet Revolution’ and had to rebuild their civil societies and overcome the legacy of the communist past. Their experiences in facing the challenge of European integration and their expectations lay the groundwork for the empirical analysis.

The analysis of the issue network around the Directive on services in the fifth chapter forms the core of this work. Through empirical analysis conducted via an online questionnaire and evaluated with the tools of network analysis, the extent of involvement of the actors from the Visegrád countries in this issue network and the
resulting opportunities to bring input into the decision-making process on the EU level will be explored.

These quantitative methods reveal only a part of the picture. In the sixth chapter, results of the qualitative research based on interviews with, among others, the representatives of organisations from Visegrád countries put the findings of the network analysis into the larger context and explore the reasons the Visegrád lobbyists hold their current position in the issue network.

The concluding chapter pulls the findings together to provide an overall evaluation of the lobbying behaviour of the civil society actors from Visegrád countries in the issue of the Directive on Services and to draw implications for the system of European governance more generally.

The topic of this book belongs to the European Union research and interest groups research in political science. It also ties up with the tradition of European governance research that is asking for the role and legitimacy of non-state actors in European policy making (for an overview see various contributions in Kohler-Koch & Rittberger 2007). The aim of this book is to deliver a contribution to the better understanding of extremely complex governance structures which have developed in the framework of the European decision-making system and of the role of civil society interest groups in these governance arrangements. The practical relevance of this book can be seen in its usefulness for the representatives of the interest groups who prepare to open a representation in Brussels and organise its work. It identifies pitfalls for the interest representatives and aims to contribute to the development of a more efficient interest representation in Brussels, consequently the concrete recommendations for course of action of the interest groups from Central and Eastern Europe in the self-proclaimed European capital Brussels can be deduced from this research work.

1.3. Methods

The network understanding of the European Union’s policy making on the theoretical level raises the need for appropriate research methods that can capture actors involved in the policy-making process and reveal their possibilities to exert influence. To answer the question about the involvement of interest representatives from Visegrád countries in the decision-making process on the European level, network analysis is the appropriate method given its capacity to analyse relations between actors from the macro perspective, quantifying relational data and outlining the structures. The weakness of this quantitative method is its limited capacity to explain why the particular actors take different positions in the network. Thus, another type of data is needed to get the holistic view on the issue.

Deeper insights into the behaviour and attitudes of the actors from Visegrád countries have been obtained by using qualitative methods, which, again, would not explain on their own the relations between actors on European level and network structures. As a result, a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods was chosen. There
has long existed a tendency in the methodology discourse to separate exactly these
two approaches and to link them to different philosophical roots (Kelle & Erzberger
2005: 299); newer research tries to integrate both approaches and regards a method-
mix even as an advantageous approach.

Two different concepts emerge in the discussion of method integration: a two-
phase approach and a triangulation approach. The researchers with a quantitative
background (Barton & Lazarsfeld 1955; Creswell 1994) introduce the so-called
phase model in which both methods are used in separate phases (Creswell 1994:
177; Marsh & Stocker 2002: 239). Qualitative researchers present an approach of
triangulation in which the object under study is observed from different perspectives
and in different ways through quantitative and qualitative methods in order to get a
comprehensive and valid view of the object (Kelle & Erzberger 2005: 300).

For this study, I chose a two-phase approach, starting with a quantitative phase in
which a network analysis of an issue network is conducted and following with the
qualitative analysis of a subsystem of this network, i.e., a group of actors from
Visegrid countries. For a long time, this design was unusual within research using a
method-mix. In many studies using a two-phase approach (first of all originating
from quantitative research), the qualitative phase has a preparatory function: it aims
to generate hypotheses that should be verified in the quantitative phase. Here quali-
tative methods are considered to have the advantage of possibly capturing heretofore
little researched areas or phenomena in order to generate real-life based hypotheses
(Kelle & Erzberger 2005: 300f).

But there are also efforts, especially in newer research using a two-phase model,
that conduct a quantitative study first. Padgett, for example, emphasises the issue of
the temporal sequencing of this two-phase approach (Marsh & Stocker 2002: 239f).
She sees a connection between the sequence of the two phases and the aim of the
study. For example, in the first research design in which the qualitative study pre-
ceded the quantitative work, the qualitative study served an exploratory and prepara-
tory function for the later quantitative investigation. In contrast, the second research
design uses the quantitative method to provide a starting point by describing the
situation more broadly and the subsequent qualitative work to explain or analyse in
greater depth. According to Padgett (1998: 128ff), ‘Here, the view is that the statisti-
cal analysis of survey data does not allow us fully to explore the meanings that re-
spondents attach to responses or actions, whereas in-depth interviews with a sub-
sample of respondents will allow the researcher to construct a fuller explanation of
those responses/actions’. Creswell (2003: 215) calls this method-mix approach ‘se-
quential explanatory strategy’, in which the data are collected in two separate quanti-
tative and qualitative phases and the two methods are integrated during the interpre-
tation of findings.

In the case of this study, the first phase is a quantitative one, using a standardised
online questionnaire to generate data on a network of actors involved in the issue of
the Directive on Services at the European level. These data are analysed using social
network analysis and its measures. The description of the analysed parameters and
selected measures is given in chapters 5.1-5.3. The findings of the first phase lay the
foundations for a second, qualitative phase. The aim of this follow-up step in the re-
search process is to explain the findings of the first phase, since the formal social 
network analysis cannot also explain the structure. The process followed in this sec-
ond phase is described in chapter 6.1. 

Qualitative methods have a reputation of being ‘good at capturing meaning, pro-
cess and context’ (Bryman 1988; Marsh & Stocker 2002: 199). The in-depth inter-
views with selected actors provide insights into attitudes, behaviour and the wider con-
text (Marsh & Stocker 2002: 199; Kelle & Erzberger 2005: 305). Since the focus 
of this research is the behaviour of civil society organisations from Visegrád coun-
tries working on the European level, this subgroup was selected out of the whole 
network and interviewed during January-May 2006. In addition, lobbying experts 
with extensive experience in European public affairs, representatives of organisa-
tions that supported the subgroup, and representatives of organisations working in 
the same context as the subgroup were also interviewed in order to get a multi-
perspective explanation of the behaviour of organisations from Visegrád countries.4 
The criteria for selection of interview partners, the structure of the interview guide 
and evaluation of material are described in chapter 6.1, followed by the findings of 
the qualitative analysis.

The findings in a method-mix study can converge, be complementary or be con-
tradictory (Kelle & Erzberger 2005: 306). In this study the research question calls 
for a design in which the initial quantitative phase describes the structures and the 
second qualitative phase explains the behaviour of the subgroup in the structure, i.e., 
the sequential explanatory strategy as designated by Creswell (2003). So in this case 
the findings of both phases, using different methods in each of them, complement 
one another and provide a better understanding of the research object.

4 These interviews were conducted during January-May 2006 in Brussels. The interviews were 
carried out mostly in English, but some of them in French, German and Lithuanian. All the 
interviews are available from the author as audio tracks.