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Poland in the face of the 2015 migration crisis

Polska w obliczu kryzysu migracyjnego 2015 roku

Summary: The issue of mass migration to the European Union, although it has been present in the public space for several years, is still topical. Following the population movements in Europe and the massive influx of migrants from the Middle East to the borders of the European Union, the accumulation of which occurred in 2015, a number of phenomena related to the so-called migration crisis have been subject to research analysis. The aim of the considerations undertaken in this case study is to present the way in which Poland's position towards the EU's proposals for solving the migration crisis has evolved. A content analysis of the literature on the subject and the legal acts provided an answer to the question of how Poland's attitude changed after the 2015 parliamentary elections. And what factors underpinned the change of approach regarding the reception of refugees.

This study uses mainly theoretical research methods such as analysis, which includes content analysis of the literature and available documents, and statistical studies on the research phenomenon. The analysis of the problem leads to the reflection that the proposal for a solution to the EU migration crisis has divided both the European Community and many other countries. In the face of a crisis, solidarity with the community and responsibility for the security of citizens were at stake.

In 2015, this issue aroused a lot of emotion during the ongoing political campaign in Poland and was part of the electoral game. The victorious party and the new government have unequivocally rejected the idea of relocation, confirming that security is their overriding priority.

Keywords: migration, refugee crisis, security

Streszczenie: Temat masowej migracji do Unii Europejskiej, choć obecny w przestrzeni publicznej od kilku lat, wciąż pozostaje aktualny. W związku z ruchami ludności w Europie i masowym napływem migrantów z Bliskiego Wschodu do granic Unii Europejskiej, których kumulacja nastąpiła w 2015 roku analizie badawczej podlega wiele zjawisk związanych z tzw. kryzysem migracyjnym. Celem podjętych w tym przypadku rozważań jest zaprezentowanie jak ewaluowało stanowisko Polski wobec unijnych propozycji rozwiązania

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kryzysu migracyjnego. Analiza treści literatury przedmiotu oraz aktów prawnych pozwoliła znaleźć odpowiedź na pytanie: jak zmieniła się postawa Polski po wyborach parlamentarnych w 2015 roku? Jakie czynniki leżały u podstaw zmiany koncepcji dotyczącej przyjmowania uchodźców?

W niniejszym opracowaniu wykorzystane zostały głównie teoretyczne metody badawcze, takie jak analiza, która obejmuje analizę treści literatury oraz dostępnych dokumentów i opracowań statystycznych dotyczących badanego zjawiska. Z przeprowadzonej analizy problemu nasuwa się refleksja, że propozycja rozwiązania unijnego kryzysu migracyjnego podzieliła zarówno Wspólnotę Europejską, jak i wiele państw. W obliczu kryzysu stawiano na szali solidarność wobec wspólnoty, a odpowiedzialność za bezpieczeństwo obywateli. Podczas trwającej w Polsce w 2015 roku kampanii politycznej temat ten wzbudzał wiele emocji i był elementem gry wyborczej. Zwycięska partia i nowy rząd jednoznacznie odrzuciły pomysł relokacji, czym potwierdziły, że naczelną wartością jest dla nich bezpieczeństwo.

Słowa kluczowe: migracja, kryzys uchodźczy, bezpieczeństwo

Introduction

In view of the increasing population movements in Europe and the massive influx of migrants from the Middle East to the borders of the European Union, the accumulation of which occurred in 2015, a number of phenomena related to the so-called migration crisis have been subject to research analysis. Around the world, migrant policy has recently been the subject of much political debate, social discussion, and media coverage. Migration policy is primarily discussed in relation to the refugee crisis and the issue of migrants entering Europe. News media images of newcomers forcing their way across the Community's borders have provoked a range of discussions and reactions from international actors (including the European Union), specific countries, and societies. The author of this article considers how the refugee crisis in Europe, which has revised and made public the issue of migration policy, thus obliging governments to define their priorities in this area, has forced Poland – due to its membership of the European Union as well as its membership of the Schengen area – to take a stance on the discussed phenomenon. The aim of the following discussion is to present how Poland's position evolved after the 2015 parliamentary elections and what factors influenced this change. The notion of a migration crisis used by the author in this study is, in a sense, a simplification adopted for the purpose of defining the global migration movements that accumulated in 2015. This study uses mainly theoretical research methods such as analysis, which includes content analysis of the literature and available documents as

well as statistical studies on the research phenomenon. The article is composed of an introduction outlining the research question and the adopted research method, a main part that attempts to answer the question of how Poland's attitude towards the problem of migrants entering Europe has evolved, and a conclusion.

1. Poland's position on attempts to solve the European migration crisis

Migration has always been a companion to humanity, with population movements determining the fate of societies and being a driving force behind history. One cannot but agree with the opinion of the Vice-Chancellor of the Catholic University of Lublin, Rev. Prof. Mirosław Kalinowski, who said that we are all potential migrants, and the human race has migration written into its nature, since already our forefathers, Adam and Eve, had to leave their homeland and look for work elsewhere. So, does it make sense, then, to say that migration presents some kind of unique challenge for the 21st century? Can we say that any of the factors motivating people to migrate have disappeared¹? However, this is the first time in many years that the subject phenomenon has taken on such a massive and uncontrolled nature. Although the European Union has been facing waves of migration of people from North Africa and the Middle East since 2011, this culminated in 2015. At that time, the international community faced a huge challenge, known as the migration crisis. Even though migration has been a phenomenon occurring since the dawn of time, the scale of the influx of migrants to Europe's borders reached its peak at that time. Professor Stolarczyk notes that given the co-occurrence of multiple crises in the EU in the second decade of the 21st century, the multi-crisis syndrome and their multifaceted nature, there has been no shortage of claims that the most serious of these is the migration and refugee crisis. Unprecedented in the history of the EU in its scale, the influx of refugees and migrants has led, by many assessments, to the EU's biggest crisis since its creation. This reached its peak in 2015; never before have so many migrants arrived in EU Member States in a sin-

1 M.S. Zięba, *Migracja wyzwanie XXI wieku*, Lublin 2008, p. 15.

gle year, seeking protection (refugees) and an improved standard of living (economic migrants)². The current refugee crisis has a primarily political and institutional dimension, not least because of the lack of unanimity among European states and societies on how to resolve it, and the accompanying inefficiency of the systemic instruments of EU immigration and asylum policy. The situation is a challenge and a test for the Member States as well as a test of the sustainability of the European project and the policy of the EU regarding regulations on foreigners.

Migration can be caused by a variety of factors, called push factors in the literature. Most often, these are armed conflict, ethnic conflict, persecution, political instability, human rights violations, or simply economic factors. Migrants migrate to improve their living conditions and so, when analysing the origins of the refugee crisis, one might be tempted to make a general statement that its origin stems from the socio-economic problems in Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East that have been unresolved for years. The wave of migration and increasing migratory pressures in Europe are the result of political and socio-economic destabilisation and the aftermath of the events dubbed the “Arab Spring”. These factors led to an accumulation of social discontent that translated into the mass protests that began in Tunisia in December 2010. Subsequently, the wave of discontent, combined with hopes for political change in the region, spilt over to other countries such as Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Jordan, and Syria³. The mass protests were led by poverty, corruption, nepotism and lack of freedom of speech. As a result of these events, a wave of migrants seeking refuge and assistance has been arriving at Europe’s borders.

The first wave of refugees heading for the EU was already observed in 2011 when more than 146,000 people crossed the EU borders. However, the peak of the migration crisis came in 2015, when more than one million 800,000 migrants arrived in the European Union (according to Frontex). This is more than four times as many as in 2014 when around 200,000 people reached the Old Continent

- 2 M. Stolarczyk, *Stanowisko Polski wobec kryzysu migracyjno-uchodźczego w UE*, Cracow 2017, p. 17.
- 3 M. Dahl, *Państwa Unii Europejskiej wobec kryzysu migracyjnego z 2015 roku*, “Unia Europejska.pl” 2017, no. 3(244), p. 1.

via the same route. According to data from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), most of them crossed the EU border in Greece (685,000) or Italy (142,000). More than 60 per cent of them are refugees from civil war-stricken Syria, Eritrea, and Afghanistan. Others come from Libya, Sudan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Somalia, or Iraq⁴. Refugees have reached Europe's borders from many directions, and by numerous routes and means. Researchers Wojciech J. Janik and Edward J. Jaremczuk, on the basis of an analysis of the main migration routes, have identified the following channels for smuggling into the European Union: Vietnamese, Pakistani-Hindu, Afghan, Romanian, Russian, African, and Chinese⁵.

According to EU rules, procedures, and practice, it is the responsibility of Member States at the external borders to receive, register, and process asylum applications for migrants. It is also the responsibility of the Member States to provide them with care pending a decision on their case. Unfortunately, with the intensity of the migratory wave, the inefficiency of the Greek system, and the negligence in the application of the Dublin procedures, it has become apparent that some countries, including Greece and Italy, are unable to cope with the influx of migrants and are unable to carry out effective verification. Refugees, illegally forcing their way across the Greek or Italian external borders, are travelling onwards, through successive EU countries, to enter the European continent. Greece, unable to cope, has benefited from the assistance of Member States under the joint operations of the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the European Union. The route of this transit also led through the Balkans (in particular through Macedonia and Serbia, which are not EU Member States) to Hungary, Croatia, and Slovenia. The aforementioned countries were the second area of concentration of the migration wave in the EU, after the so-called frontline countries.

4 *Niekontrolowane migracje do Unii Europejskiej – implikacje dla Polski*, P. Sasnal (ed.), Warsaw 2015, p. 11.

5 W.J. Janik, E.J. Jaremczuk, *Artykuł wprowadzający. Niekontrolowana migracja jako zagrożenie dla Europy – polski strach przed uchodźcami*, [in:] E.J. Jaremczuk (ed.), *Migracje i kryzys uchodźczy w Europie. Rzeczywistość i wyzwania*, Poznań 2017, p. 48.

The migration crisis has become a critical moment for the European project, a crisis of values and the unity of the community itself. The massive wave of refugee-seekers has exposed gaps in European migration management, asylum law, and border management. The huge influx of people into Europe has forced the EU institutions and Member States to examine this difficult issue and develop strategies to deal with the new, complex reality. It was necessary to take appropriate action to stop the influx of refugees or possibly accepting and relocating them. As a result of the crisis, it was revealed that there was no effective EU migration, visa, and asylum policy as well as ineffective mechanisms for managing migratory pressure during an emergency situation. The crisis demanded swift, effective, and responsible action. The antidote to the wave of incoming refugees was to be their relocation on the basis of Article 78.3 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Under that provision, in the event of one or more Member States being confronted by an emergency situation characterised by a sudden inflow of nationals of third countries, the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, may adopt provisional measures for the benefit of the Member State(s) concerned⁶.

The European Commission has proposed to Member States to deploy 40,000 people among them. The suggestion from the European Commission was based on the assumption that the allocation of refugees would be calculated on the basis of the size of a Member State's population (40%), the size of GDP (40%), the level of unemployment (10%) and the average number of asylum applications accepted (10%).

It is worth mentioning in this context that Poland does not have a lot of experience in the field of migration policy, and the legal and institutional foundations of its refugee policy were created relatively recently while preparing for its accession to the European Union. By the time of its accession to the Community, being a country with a low rate of factors attracting foreigners, it had not created, probably because it was not needed, adequate instruments to help in this regard. One can also agree with Agnieszka Weiner's view that, so far, Poland has had neither the time nor the opportunity to develop a migration

6 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Official Journal of the European Union 2012/C, 326/01, Article 78.3.

policy in a natural, multi-year cycle, as other European countries have done⁷. Until the beginning of the 21st century, no doctrine had been developed in this regard.

Migration policy should be an important element and instrument for minimising losses and maximising gains resulting from international mobility. A rational, well-considered and above all comprehensive migration policy can be an important tool for promoting economic development. One cannot but agree with the authors of the paper entitled “Polska polityka migracyjna. W poszukiwaniu nowego modelu” [*Polish Migration Policy. In search of a new model*], who believe that modern states need a migration doctrine for at least three reasons. Firstly, common sense demands that immigration policy should be stable well beyond the horizon of government terms. Secondly, the networked nature of modern government does not allow for manual control of actions towards immigrants by different ministries, local authorities, and community organisations. Agreeing on a stable, clear, and overt migration doctrine would provide a common reference point for the various actors taking action in support of migrants. Thirdly and finally, immigrant issues often appear in the public debate in a negative context. Not necessarily as a result of the problems we experience in Poland, but often as an echo of integration problems, in countries such as France or the United Kingdom.

Poland, although not directly affected by the influx of irregular migrants, like other countries of the European Community, faced the challenges brought about by the migration crisis in 2015, and the events related to the wave of irregular migration revised the Polish and EU policies pursued thus far. Through the lack of unanimity on solving migration issues, this crisis has led to serious problems in the functioning of the European Union. In the political arena, governments have struggled mightily and tried to meet the new migration challenges.

The government of Prime Minister Ewa Kopacz, recognising the scale of the crisis and acting in line with EU solidarity, in July 2015, pledged to accept 2,000 refugees under the aforementioned relocation

7 A. Weinar, *Polityka migracyjna Polski w latach 1990-2003 – próba podsumowania*, “Raporty i Analizy” 2005, no. 10, p. 1.

scheme, while in September 2015, it had already agreed to more than 5,000 people. At the same time, however, it is worth pointing out that the government of Ewa Kopacz was not in favour of solving the crisis through a system of forced relocation. In her statements, she highlighted the need for community solidarity, but based, among other things, on voluntarism⁸. But the position of Poland changed after the parliamentary elections held in Poland in the autumn of 2015. Responsibility for giving direction to Polish politics in the face of new challenges rested with the victorious Law and Justice party. The measures taken by the European Union, mentioned above (i.e., refugee relocation), were aimed at dealing with the issue of incoming migrants. However, the new government in Poland did not accept these decisions and also sought support for its own ideas among the Visegrad Group. Despite declarations made by Prime Minister Kopacz, the government of Beata Szydło questioned earlier decisions and the aforementioned mandatory relocation plan. The Hungarian and Slovak authorities also disagreed with the proposed allocation and filed a complaint with the European Court of Justice.

According to Anita Adamczyk, the new set-up of political forces in the Polish Parliament (after the autumn elections in 2015) has politicised the issue of immigration, although symptoms of this were already visible in September. The debate that took place on 16 September 2015 during the sitting of the Polish Parliament proved to be significant in this regard. Its course was dominated by the topic of the immigration crisis in the EU⁹. In addition, this issue also became the subject of an election campaign, which also influenced public mood.

The stance of the government of Prime Minister Szydło was influenced by security issues, which have become increasingly important with the influx of migrants into Europe; France was the scene of a series of terrorist attacks on 15 November 2015, when, in a series of coordinated attacks, terrorists from the Islamic State killed 130 people in several locations simultaneously. After those events, the then Prime

8 Ewa Kopacz: *Będę zabiegać o dobrowolność ws. przyjmowania uchodźców*, Polskie Radio 24, <https://polskieradio24.pl/5/3/Artykul/1442847,Ewa-Kopacz-bede-zabiegac-o-dobrowolnosc-ws-przymowania-uchodzcow> [12.09.2022].

9 A. Adamczyk, *Kryzys migracyjny w Europie a polska polityka imigracyjna*, "Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny" 2017, vol. 43, no. 1(163), p. 6.

Minister said: “The previous government agreed to accept them on a voluntary basis. We, continuing with these declarations, have agreed like the other 27 EU Member States to solve this most important EU problem today through relocation. But let me be very clear: I do not see any possibility of migrants coming to Poland at the moment”¹⁰.

The attitude of the Polish government and Prime Minister Szydło was at odds with the EU’s idea of a solution to the migration crisis and violated commitments given to the Community. The position of the Polish authorities was legitimised on 1 April 2016 in the Resolution on the Immigration Policy of Poland, which set out the opposition to the EU’s refugee relocation strategy: “The Sejm of the Republic of Poland negatively assesses the decision of the Council of the European Union of 22 September 2015 on the relocation of 120,000 refugees” and “expresses strong opposition to any attempt to establish EU permanent mechanisms for the allocation of refugees or migrants. The instruments of refugee and immigration policy should remain in the hands of the Polish state. This is particularly important given the growing social tensions caused by the excessive wave of migration from the Middle East to Europe”¹¹.

The argument on the refugee issue cited by the Polish government, both within the European Union and the Visegrad Group, was also the issue of migrants from Ukraine coming to Poland. The potential need to accept foreigners from the country was a bargaining chip in the negotiations on the European Commission’s proposed refugee quotas for participation in their resettlement and relocation process. As a result of the war in eastern Ukraine (waged since March 2014), living conditions in the country have deteriorated. Lack of security and [other] perspectives significantly influenced, increasing every year, the number of Ukrainian citizens interested in moving to Poland. According to statistics, the number of Ukrainian applications for in-

10 R. Pietruszka, *Szydło usztywnia stanowisko. Miało być 100 uchodźców, nie będzie żadnego*, Dziennik.pl, <http://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/polityka/artykuly/516410,beata-szydlo-rzad-pis-uchodzcy-imigranci-stanowisko-zamachy-bruksela-belgia.html> [27.07.2018].

11 Resolution of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland on Poland’s immigration policy of 13 April 2016, Monitor Polski, item 370.

ternational protection in the European Union increased as much as 13 times in 2014 (compared to 2013)¹².

Jakub Skiba (civil servant, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Interior and Administration from 2015 to 2017), responsible for migration policy at that time, repeatedly mentioned in interviews the need to correct the directions of Polish migration policy. In mid-December 2015, in an interview with the Polish Press Agency (PAP), he announced, among other things, an amendment to the law on repatriation and stated that “Poland’s migration policy should be oriented primarily towards the East. This is a natural direction of interest for Poland and repatriation is one part of this migration process. For Poland, opening up to the eastern direction is important, among others, for demographic and economic reasons. This is a great opportunity for us”¹³.

In the face of the growing terrorist threat in Europe and the still unresolved issue of incoming migrants, during the Law and Justice government from 2015 onwards, changes were made to the Polish legal system to improve citizen security and seal the borders. Amendments were then introduced to the Act of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland. They consisted in adding new information that can be processed in proceedings and registers of foreigners. That is, in addition to basic data on first and surname, country of origin, education or fingerprints, party, trade union or religious affiliation or information on sex life has been added (Article 8, points 16, 18a). The list of grounds constituting the refusal to grant refugee status to a foreigner was also expanded, with a provision concerning the commission of a non-political crime outside the borders of the Republic of Poland prior to the submission of the application (Article 19, paragraph 1, point 3c). Another change was the extension of the deadline for the Head of the Office for Foreigners to hold consultations with the competent authorities, in matters of protecting state security and public order, regarding foreigners scheduled for relocation or resettlement. The previous deadline of 7 days has been extended to 45 days. In particularly justified cases,

¹² *Niekontrolowane migracje do Unii Europejskiej...*, p. 37.

¹³ P. Rojek-Socha, G. Dyjak, *Wiceszef MSWiA: Wschód priorytetem polityki migracyjnej Polski*, Dzieje.pl, <https://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/wiceszef-mswia-wschod-priorytetem-polityki-migracyjnej-polski> [28.07.2022].

this deadline can be extended by a further 14, giving a total of 59 days to investigate whether the foreigner poses a threat to public order.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the time of the migration crisis, which has revealed a discrepancy in the interests of the European Union as a whole, and in the interests of individual states, has also led to migration issues in Poland becoming public. The Law and Justice government has resolutely refused to accept refugees under forced relocation, thereby building a coalition of countries opposed to the idea of relocating refugees. By contrast, since the autumn of 2015, it has pursued a policy of opening up to the East. Security appears to be at the heart of the immigration policy being pursued, as can be seen from the changes to Polish legislation. The Polish government, although firmly opposed to the forced admission of migrants, has repeatedly pointed out the need to help, either directly in a war-torn country or the countries most affected by the crisis. The issue of the migration crisis and the question of voluntary or forced admission of refugees was present in both the political debate and the social space. The challenges and threats posed by uncontrolled migration were discussed with much emotion. The stance of the government was in opposition to many NGOs, who took the position that refugees should be accepted. It is again worth emphasising that the motive behind the government's actions was to ensure the security of the state and minimise threats. Today, migratory movements are one of the biggest challenges to the country's internal and external security. Attempting to show the impact of migration on state stability is an incredibly difficult task for several reasons. Firstly, both the concepts of migration and security, and the relationship between them, are largely subjective. Both concepts are ambiguous and multifaceted, and thus difficult to define in an obvious and precise way. Secondly, the relationship between migration and security is also complex. Thus, by considering the interrelationship between these categories (using the subject criterion), one can speak of the impact of migration on the security of individuals (migrants), local communities, societies, states, and organisations (the European Union) as well as the impact of migration on international security. By the same token, it is worth remembering

that an appropriate – that is, in line with the objectives and interests of the state – migration policy can bring many benefits, and should aim at a coherent, knowledge-based migration management system that ensures security and public order, promotes economic development, and enables social cohesion.

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Together or apart? Explaining cooperation patterns across the post-communist organized interests

Razem czy osobno? Wyjaśniając wpływ współpracy środkowoeuropejskich grup interesów na ich dostęp do decydentów

Summary: Interest groups constitute a specific civil society voice in democratic politics. They operate in a situation of constant friction between two main strategic goals: keeping the organization alive and exerting political influence. This article explores both topics, examining factors conditioning the group's tendency to cooperate with others as well as the degree to which such cooperation facilitates access to policy-making apparatus, exploring the post-communist environment of four selected Central Eastern Europe (CEE) countries and three policy areas: energy, healthcare and higher education policy. The authors aim to apply and examine the interest groups' cooperation patterns from the EU level to the CEE regional level. The article finds strong support for somewhat weak cooperation between interest groups in the region. However, even such moderate cooperation clearly affects the possibility of access to both the ruling parties and the parliaments. In particular, the cooperation of groups in the field of joint statements may turn out to be a form of remedy for the weaknesses of interest groups in the region.

Keywords: interest groups, access, cooperation, membership, Central Eastern Europe, CEE

Streszczenie: Grupy interesów stanowią swoisty głos społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w polityce demokratycznej. Działają one w sytuacji nieustannego tarcia między dwoma głównymi celami strategicznymi: utrzymaniem organizacji przy życiu i wywieraniem wpływu politycznego. W niniejszym artykule eksplorujemy oba te zagadnienia, badając czynniki warunkujące skłonność grupy do współpracy z innymi grupami oraz stopień, w jakim taka współpraca ułatwia dostęp do aparatu decyzyjnego. Niniejszy artykuł bada postkomunistyczne środowisko czterech wybranych krajów Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej i trzech

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polityk: energetyki, opieki zdrowotnej i szkolnictwa wyższego. Autorzy sprawdzają, czy wzorce współpracy grup interesów obecne na szczeblu unijnym mogą tłumaczyć także zasady gry na poziomach narodowych w wybranych państwach. W rezultacie dowodzą stosunkowo słabej współpracy między grupami interesów w regionie. Jednak nawet tak umiarkowana współpraca wyraźnie wpływa na możliwość dostępu zarówno do partii rządzącej, jak i parlamentu. Zwłaszcza współpraca grup w zakresie wspólnych stanowisk może okazać się swoistym remedium na słabość grup interesów w omawianym regionie.

Słowa kluczowe: grupy interesów, dostęp, współpraca, członkostwo, Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia, CEE

Introduction

The ability and will of interest groups to undertake collective action as well as their conditions have become a key focus for research on interest groups. Nevertheless, groups can also create larger – formal or informal – structures and forge *ad hoc* or more stable alliances, defending the same political position. Cooperation in a coalition is one of the most common tactics used by interest groups to achieve their goals in the political process. What makes this happen, what are the results, and finally does the ability to engage in such cooperative behaviours improve interest representation and lobbying success for groups?

This paper explains the relation between interest groups' cooperation and access to CEE (Central and Eastern Europe) policy-making processes. While most of the literature on cooperation concerns the European Union, we aim to examine whether the findings of interest group researchers carried out at this level can explain cooperation patterns in the different institutional context of CEE. Therefore, we revisit the popular belief of the positive impact of intergroup cooperation on access to decision-makers and institutions. The existing research on Western Democracies, especially the European Union, concludes that interest groups that cooperate with others enjoy higher levels of such access. The argument is that it results from the greater resources and legitimacy enjoyed by such coalitions, which are favourably received by policy-makers. Additionally, we also test the role of financial dependence on the membership in deciding whether to act together with other groups or instead separately, as many scholars argue that membership dependence is an important factor in hindering a group's propensity to form coalitions.

1 Literature review

Political access in interest group research is usually perceived as a key factor in achieving political influence or even a useful proxy while measuring influence¹. In the view of Anne S. Binderkrantz, Helene H. Pedersen, and Jan Beyers², access can be defined as the entry of an interest group into the political arena (which can be both the administration, the parliament, or the media) by overcoming the threshold controlled by adequate “guards” (officials, politicians, journalists). This is because decision-makers, institutions, and the media have limited possibilities in terms of time and resources, and they also take into account the transaction costs associated with interactions with stakeholders³. Several access models are identified in the literature. *The direct effect* model covers situations in which interest groups interact directly with the government or its institutions. *The mediated effect* model covers situations where interest groups influence public opinion in order to raise general awareness of a given issue and indirectly influence decision-makers as well. The “model of political alliance” (*the joint effect*) assumes that interest groups benefit from the support of political allies who provide them with access to institutional arenas (Tarrow, 1994).

Identifying potential allies, as well as adversaries, is one of the first steps for interest groups when dealing with an issue. It is no wonder then that cooperation or even coalition formation is recognized by both practitioners and lobbying theorists as one of the key strategies of stakeholder action⁴. It is assumed that interest group advocacy coalitions are formed to increase each group’s ability to influence policy outcomes, and coalition-building is seen as one of the key lobbying tactics⁵. Joint action brings a number of benefits, such as the allocation

1 R. Eising, *Institutional Context, Organizational Resources and Strategic Choices Explaining Interest Group Access in the European Union*, “European Union Politics” 2007, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 329-362.

2 A.S. Binderkrantz, J. Beyers, H. H. Pedersen, *What is access? a discussion of the definition and measurement of interest group access*, “European Political Science” 2017, vol. 16, pp. 306-321.

3 B.D. Jones, F.R. Baumgartner, *The Politics of Attention. How the Government Prioritizes Problems*, Chicago 2005.

4 M. Hojnacki, *Interest Groups’ Decisions to Join Alliances or Work Alone*, “American Journal of Political Science” 1997, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 61-87.

5 I. De Bruycker, J. Beyers, *Balanced or Biased? Interest Groups and Legislative Lobbying in the European News Media*, “Political Communication” 2015, vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 453-474; K. Hula, *Lobbying Together: Interest Group Coalitions in Legislative Politics*, Washington 1997.

of resources, lower lobbying costs, and greater certainty as to the stability of an ally's position. On the other hand, it also requires meeting the costs arising from the coordination of activities, sometimes difficult negotiations and compromises, and is associated with an image and identity risk to the group.

Interest groups' readiness and aversion to cooperate with other groups is conditioned by many factors, broadly explained in the literature. The first factor mentioned in the literature is the nature of the group's membership. Joining a coalition is expected to positively correlate with the viability of a single group, but carries serious risks to group identity, which may be more difficult to cultivate in a coalition⁶. It can also simultaneously weaken the position of an individual group in the eyes of society, and thus negatively affect its representativeness and legitimacy. The second factor is issue salience: it is argued that the more niche an issue, the greater the reluctance to cooperate with other groups⁷. Similarly, the heterogeneous coalitions (consisting of both business and non-business interests) at the EU level identified by Jan Beyers and Iskander De Bruycker⁸ usually operate in policy areas important for public opinion and particularly visible in the media. The next factor is institutional context and opportunity structures of a given political system. In general, for elected decision-makers, a wider coalition with a larger electorate will potentially be more attractive⁹. As Christine Mahoney pointed out in a comparative analysis of lobbying groups in the European Union and the United States, *ad hoc* coalitions are formed much more often in the United States due to the different, more pluralist structure of the political system¹⁰. Nevertheless, in another study she argued that in Washington the effectiveness of the coalition of interest groups in the field of health policy

6 M.T. Heaney, *Outside the Issue Niche: The Multidimensionality of Interest Group Identity*, "American Politics Research" 2004, vol. 32, no. 6, pp. 611-651.

7 M. Hojnacki, *Interest Groups' Decisions to Join Alliances or Work Alone*, "American Journal of Political Science" 1997, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 61-87.

8 J. Beyers, I. De Bruycker, *Lobbying Makes (Strange) Bedfellows: Explaining the Formation and Composition of Lobbying Coalitions in EU Legislative Politics*, "Political Studies" 2018, vol. 66, no. 4, pp. 959-984.

9 J. Beyers, C. Braun, *Ties that Count. Explaining Interest Group Access to Policymakers*, "Journal of Public Policy" 2014, vol. 34, pp. 93-121.

10 C. Mahoney, *Networking vs. Allying: The Decision of Interest Groups to Join Coalitions in the US and the EU*, "Journal of European Public Policy" 2014, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 366-383.

is inversely proportional, even reducing the chances of players being able to achieve their goals¹¹.

Interest groups operate in a situation of constant friction between two strategic goals: keeping the group alive and exerting political influence. The literature emphasizes the role of dependency on the membership as a factor that actively hinders the tendency of groups to cooperate with others. A group can be more effective and professional if it abandons some democratic practices and becomes less dependent on the will of its members, for example by developing strong leadership¹². Strong dependence on members impairs the group's ability to be efficiently active in line with the Olsonian paradox of *collective action*. Research by McGee Young in the United States (2010) has shown that the organizational structure and leadership established during the formation of a group affect its ability to change position in response to changing political circumstances. Jan Beyers also pointed out that broad membership, although ensuring greater legitimacy of the group, may itself reduce the internal steering and decision-making in the group, making it difficult to formulate common positions and thus to negotiate and cooperate with other organizations¹³.

In this paper we distinguish between the four forms of intergroup cooperation: in fundraising, in representation in advisory bodies, in joint statements, and in development of joint political strategies. We aim to examine which one of those translates into the group's access to decision-making processes to the greatest extent. Regarding the first dimension – cooperation in fundraising – it involves collecting money together, but not necessarily jointly conducting advocacy activities and campaigns. Existing research on the European Union confirms that financial resources may facilitate interest groups to achieve their access goals¹⁴. Some other empirical studies prove that financial re-

11 C. Mahoney, F.R. Baumgartner, *Partners in Advocacy: Lobbyists and Government Officials in Washington*, "Journal of Politics" 2015, vol. 77, no. 1, pp. 202-215.

12 See M.N. Zald, J.D. McCarthy, *Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory*, [in:] *Social Movements in an Organizational Society: Collected Essays*, M.N. Zald, J.D. McCarthy, W.A. Gamson (eds.), New York 1987.

13 J. Beyers, *Policy Issues, Organisational Format and the Political Strategies of Interest Organisations*, "West European Politics" 2015, vol. 31, pp. 1188-1211.

14 A. Dür, G. Mateo, *The Europeanization of interest groups: Group type, resources and policy area*, "European Union Politics" 2014, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 572-594.

sources matter, but only if the issue is moderately present in the media¹⁵. The second dimension – cooperation in joint representation in advisory bodies – relates to the possibility of institutional participation in advisory bodies provided within the framework of social dialogue. It assumes that groups must enjoy at least some degree of “insiderness” status. Provision of information and political support to decision-makers, under a resource exchange approach, can strengthen interest groups’ positions, and as Heike Klüver has proved, this effect is even stronger the greater the number of groups that choose to collaborate¹⁶. The third dimension – cooperation in joint statements – speaks of the ability to participate in substantive cooperation. Despite the popular distinction between business and social interests in the literature, research shows that that business and social interest groups are just as eager to establish substantive alliances as they compete with each other¹⁷. The last dimension – cooperation in development of joint political strategies – includes a component of stronger, long-term cooperation, as opposed to *ad hoc* coalitions.

2. Working hypotheses

2. The first hypothesis explores the strength of causal mechanisms between the ability and the level of groups’ cooperation and success in accessing decision-making processes. The extant literature on coalition emphasizes that cooperation between interest groups generally improves their access to decision-makers, who expect cooperative behaviour from such groups as it better legitimizes their positions and decisions¹⁸. In line with that, empirical research carried out in the Netherlands by Jan Beyers and Caelesta Braun has shown that a group’s position and reputation, and especially its links with other groups in advocacy coalitions and intergroup networks, are the most

15 M.K. Rasmussen, *The battle for influence: the politics of business lobbying in the European Parliament*, “JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies” 2014, vol. 53, no. 2, pp. 365-382.

16 H. Klüver, *Lobbying in the European Union: Interest Groups, Lobbying Coalitions, and Policy Change*, Oxford 2013.

17 F. Stevens, I. De Bruycker, *Influence, affluence and media salience: Economic resources and lobbying influence in the European Union*, “European Union Politics” 2020, vol. 21, pp. 1-23.

18 L. Sorurbakhsh, *Interest group coalitions and lobbying environments: toward a new theoretical perspective*, “Interest Groups & Advocacy” 2016, vol. 5, pp. 200-223.

important factors for the probability of gaining access to decision-makers¹⁹. However, this is not an equivalent value for all decision-makers: elected politicians are much more accessible to groups occupying a central position in an advocacy coalition, while officials operating within institutions are easier to access for groups belonging to different coalitions, often representing opposing interests. What is more, as mentioned before, the bigger the coalition, the greater chances for lobbying success²⁰. Investigating the implications of the participation of interest groups in several coalitions on their ability to influence the political process, Michael T. Heaney and Geoffrey Lorentz introduced the concept of a “coalition portfolio”, meaning a set of all coalitions in a given area of public policy in which a group can participate at any given time. They found that having a broad coalition portfolio improves a group’s overall online position as well as its influence on the political process. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: Interest groups that cooperate with others enjoy higher levels of access to decision-making processes.

Our second hypothesis relates to the nature of a group’s membership as a factor conditioning willingness to cooperate. The role of membership is quite ambiguous, as some scientists underline the important role of members in building a group’s capacity to act as *transmission belt* and provide legitimacy²¹, while the others rather present it as a factor that actively hinders the group’s ability to cooperate. Focusing on stakeholders active in Brussels, Jan Beyers and Iskander De Bruycker (2018) argue that NGOs, which are relatively less dependent on the support of their members, are more likely to cooperate with other groups within coalitions²². This is also confirmed by recent research conducted among stakeholders operating at the European Union level by Laila Sorurbakhsh (2016), which proves that with an increase in the influence of members on a group’s political decisions, the prob-

19 J. Beyers, C. Braun, *Ties that Count. Explaining Interest Group Access to Policymakers*, “Journal of Public Policy” 2014, vol. 34, pp. 93-121.

20 H. Klüver, op. cit.

21 A. Albareda, *Prioritizing professionals? How the democratic and professionalized nature of interest groups shapes their degree of access to EU officials*, “European Political Science Review” 2020, vol. 12, pp. 485-501.

22 J. Beyers, I. De Bruycker, op. cit., pp. 959-984.

ability of joining a coalition decreases²³. As a result, we control for the membership variable, assuming that:

Hypothesis 2: Interest groups financed by their members are less likely to cooperate with other groups.

Here we operationalize the importance of a group's membership as financial dependence on membership fees.

2. Research design and methods

In this study we rely on quantitative research (N=405) in the form of a survey dataset developed within a project entitled “The Missing Link: Examining organized interests in post-communist policy-making” conducted from 2018 to 2020 by a German-Polish Team in four different CEE countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia. The survey was conducted online (via the Lime Survey platform) on a representative sample of interest groups operating in three policy areas: energy, healthcare, and higher education. It included numerous questions on membership structures, interest group resources, the degree of professionalization, and interactions of organized interests with different political venues. Our analysis consists of descriptive statistics, Spearman's rank correlation analysis as well as regression analysis.

In order to measure different forms of cooperation (fundraising cooperation, advisory board cooperation, joint statement cooperation, and joint political strategy cooperation) as independent variables, organizations received a set of questions if they cooperated in relevant fields to which they answered using an ordinal scale from 1 to 3, where 1 means never, 2 – occasionally, and 3 – frequently.

We asked for the frequency of:

- Cooperation with other interest organizations in fundraising.
- Cooperation with other interest organizations in representation on advisory boards.
- Cooperation with other interest organizations in joint statements.

23 L. Sorurbakhsh, op. cit.

- Cooperation with other interest organizations in joint political strategies.
- Our dependent variable was access to the two types of decision-making bodies: governing party and parliament.

We asked:

- How difficult is it to access governing parties? (*1 – extremely difficult, 2 – difficult, 3 – sometimes possible, 4 – easy, 5 – very easy*)
- How would you describe your level of participation in parliamentary hearings/parliamentary committees? (*1 – no participation, 2 – low participation, 3 – occasional participation, 4 – high participation, 5 – very high participation*)
- The other dependent variable measured in the study was “membership fees”, previously measured on a nominal scale and recorded to on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) due to their nominal value (membership fees with less than 20% were coded as 1, between 21 and 40% as 2, 41-60% as 3, 61-80% as 4, and more than 81% as 5).

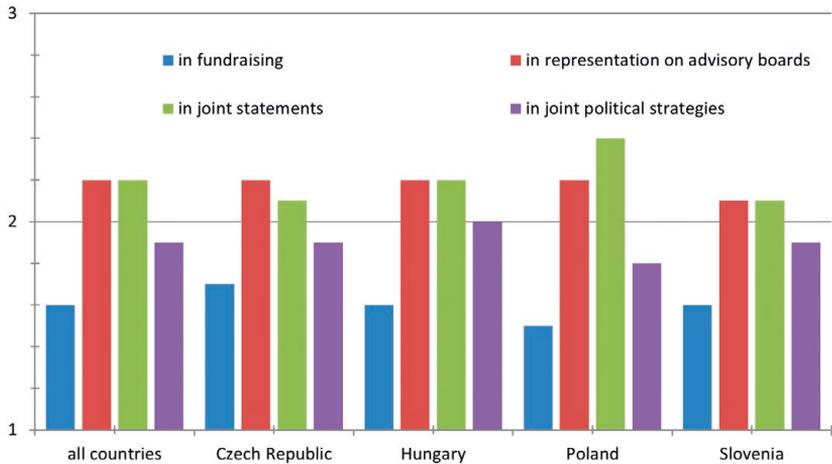
We asked:

- Please indicate the approximate proportion of these sources of funding in your entire budget [member fees] (*indicated in %*)
- We also measured whether the nature of the groups, concentrated or diffuse, may play a role in accessing relevant political bodies. In our models we also tested if there is any country-related variance by adding country category variable and policy fields.

3. Data analysis & results

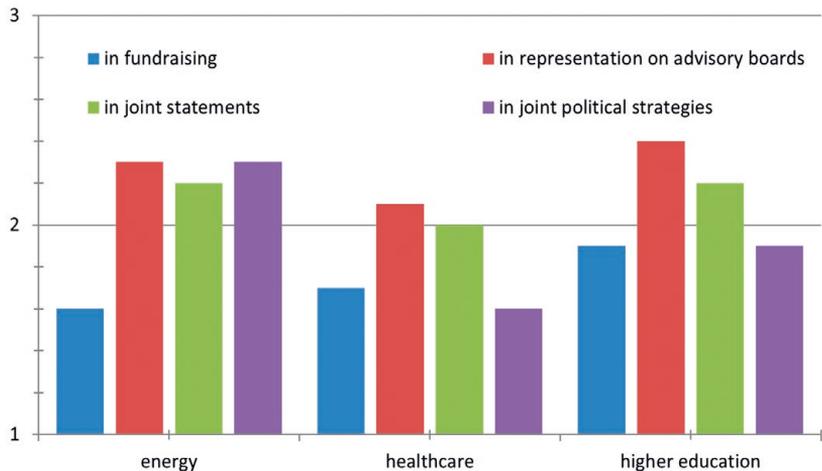
We started our analysis with an overview of descriptive statistics. First, we checked to what extent interest groups are willing to engage in different kinds of cooperation with others. Generally, patterns are similar across all selected post-communist countries, with the lowest rate for cooperation in fundraising and the greatest rate for cooperation in joint statements (with the exception of the Czech Republic) and, to a lesser extent (but still more than “occasionally”), for cooperation in representation on advisory boards.

Figure 1. Frequency of interest groups' cooperation across countries (all politics, N=405)
(1 – never, 2 – occasionally, 3 – frequently)



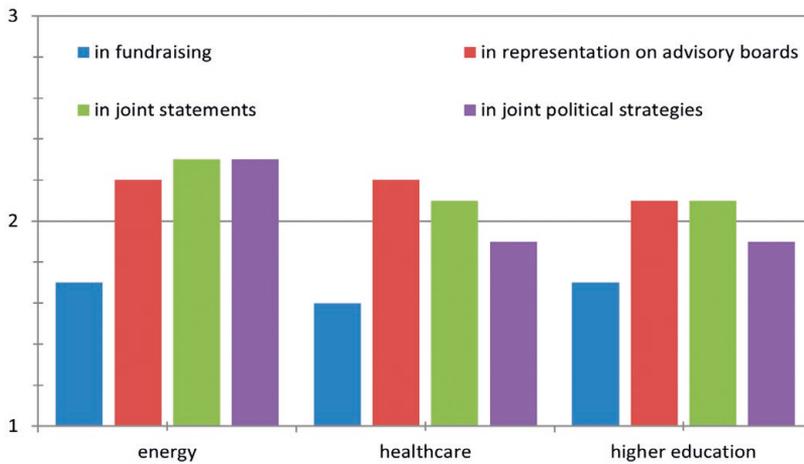
As for the Czech Republic, we see the highest cooperative capacity among groups specializing in higher education policy. Overall, the three types of cooperation seem to be higher than “occasional” for energy policy.

Figure 2. Frequency of Czech interest groups' cooperation in all policy areas (N=109)
(1 – never, 2 – occasionally, 3 – frequently)



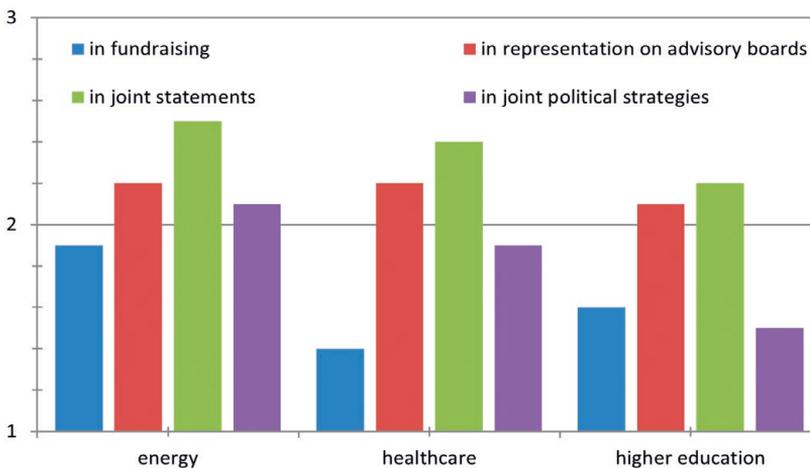
For Hungarian interest groups, we see that the most cooperative organizations are energy interest groups.

Figure 3. Frequency of Hungarian interest groups' cooperation in all policy areas (N=92)
(1 – never, 2 – occasionally, 3 – frequently)



For Polish organizations, again we see the highest cooperative capacity among groups specializing in energy policy, especially in the development of joint statements. On the other hand, cooperation in the field of fundraising in healthcare policy is extremely low.

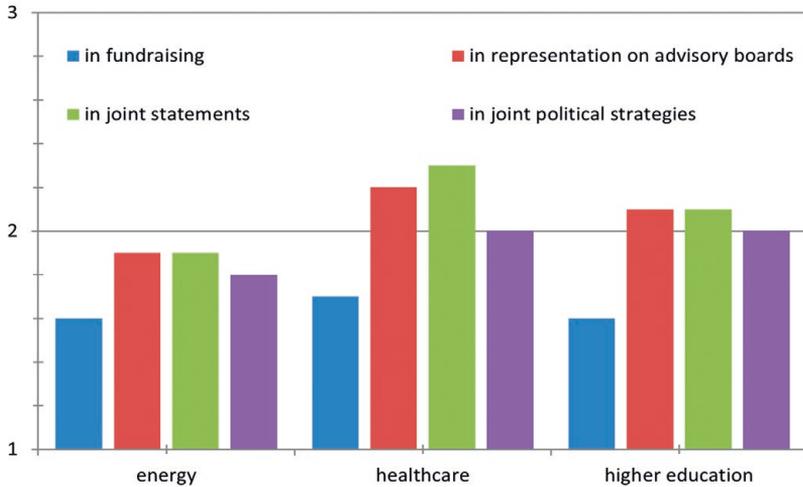
Figure 4. Frequency of Polish interest groups' cooperation in all policy areas (N=91)
(1 – never, 2 – occasionally, 3 – frequently)



In Slovenia, it is clear that energy policy organizations tend to avoid cooperation. In contrast, Slovenian healthcare interest groups

are the most cooperative against the background of other healthcare groups across the analyzed post-communist countries.

Figure 5. Frequency of Slovenian interest groups' cooperation in all policy areas (N=113) (1 – never, 2 – occasionally, 3 – frequently)



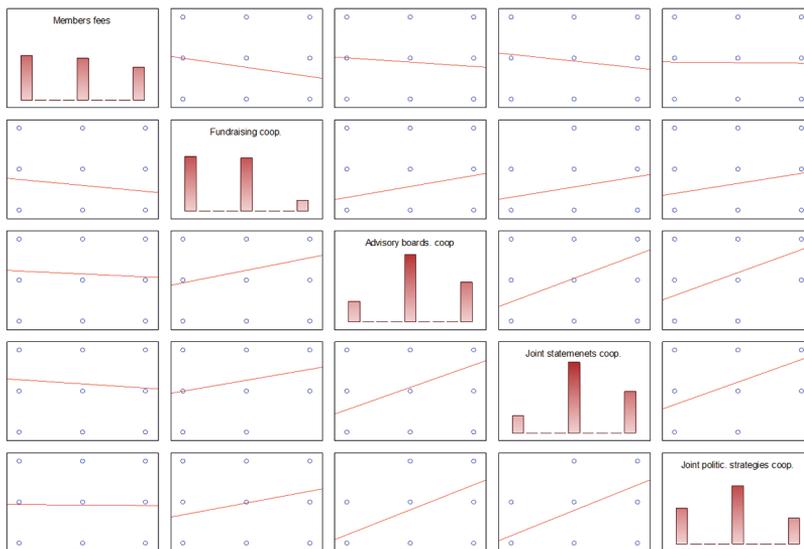
To check whether there is a correlation between membership fees in the organizations and their cooperation abilities, as we hypothesized (H2) that interest groups dependent on their members are less likely to cooperate with other groups, we first used Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient to measure statistical dependence between variables using a monotonic function. Spearman R assumes that the variables under consideration were measured on at least an ordinal (rank order) scale, that is, that the individual observations can be ranked into ordered series. Spearman R can be thought of as the regular Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, that is, in terms of proportion of variability accounted for, except that Spearman R is computed from ranks.

Table 1. Spearman’s rank correlations

| Pair of variables | Valid N | Spearman R | P value |
|----------------------------------|---------|------------|---------|
| Membership fees | | | |
| Fundraising coop. | 405 | -0.164* | p<0.005 |
| Joint political strategies coop. | 405 | -0.015 | |
| Joint statements coop. | 405 | -0.125* | p<0.005 |
| Advisory boards coop. | 405 | -0.085 | |

As shown in Table 1 and Diagram 1, membership fees strongly and negatively correlated with different forms of cooperation. Our results show that organizations that are more dependent on their membership fees cooperate less often with other organizations. In two analysed cases, in fundraising (-0.164 $p < 0.005$) and joint statements (-0.125 , $p < 0.005$), we found statistically significant, negative correlation between two ordinal variables. We also found out that indicators for cooperation on advisory boards and joint political strategies are also negative, however there is no statistical significance.

Diagram 1. Spearman's rank correlations



As a next step we conducted ordinal regression analysis. Regarding our two dependent variables, both previously measured on a 5-point Likert scale, they were recorded on a 3-point scales from 1 – (extremely) difficult, 2 – sometimes possible and 3 – (extremely) easy, to facilitate our interpretation. As independent variables, we tested the role of different types of cooperation for each organization to determine whether intergroup cooperation may be the key to gaining access to parliaments and governing parties.

To test our hypothesis, we conducted two ordinal regressions that contains 7 models each (Tables 2 and 3). Collinearity was tested using the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient exhibiting no major collin-

earity issues among independent variables. Firstly, we found that both types of access, i.e. access to governing parties and access to parliaments, requires different types of cooperation. In accessing a governing party, we found that cooperation on advisory boards, joint political strategies and statements between the groups are important factors in gaining access to policy-makers. In our models (Table 3), advisory board cooperation (0.516^{***}), joint political statements (0.537^{**}), and joint strategies (0.678) turned out to be statistically significant. Our results show that our cooperation variables take positive values and turn out to be statistically significant, confirming that cooperation plays an important role in accessing governments. However, in models where other variables are added, including membership fees, our estimate parameter takes lower values, and only joint strategy cooperation keeps its significance. We also found that membership fees are a factor decreasing the level of access to governments. In terms of the group type, our data shows that group type is a less important factor in gaining access to governments. Indeed, there are existing differences between concentrated and diffuse groups; however, our data are not statistically significant.

In terms of access to parliaments, we found that advisory board cooperation, joint political strategies and statements are statistically significant factors in the process of gaining access to parliaments. Again, cooperation seems to play an important role for interest groups in gaining access to political bodies. However, in the model with added variables measured together, the coefficient takes lower values. Considering the effect of cooperation on access, we found positive and significant association with access to parliament among Polish interest groups. Also, of particular importance is that the usage of different forms of cooperation lowers the access of concentrated interest groups.

Table 2. Access to governing parties. Levels of significance: * = 5%, ** = 1%, and * = 0.1% significance**

| | Model I | | Model II | | Model III | | Model IV | | Model V | | Model VI | | Model VII | |
|--------------------------------------|----------|---------|----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Concentrated IG | -0.353 | 0.244 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Health Care | -1.275 | 0.321 | -1.015 | 0.325 | -0.994 | 0.323 | -1.004*** | 0.325 | -0.978*** | 0.331 | -0.960*** | 0.367 | -0.490 | 0.332 |
| Energy | -0.443 | 0.332 | -0.242 | 0.355 | -0.293 | 0.350 | -0.377 | 0.347 | -0.437 | 0.362 | -0.190 | 0.393 | -1.138** | 0.421 |
| Higher Education (ref.) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | -0.285 | 0.452 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| The Czech Republic | 0.210 | 0.295 | 0.202 | 0.323 | -0.152 | 0.311 | 0.215 | 0.309 | 0.254 | 0.332 | 0.465 | 0.322 | 0.578 | 0.393 |
| Poland | 0.416 | 0.318 | 0.258 | 0.343 | -0.036 | 0.343 | -0.084 | 0.341 | 0.089 | 0.350 | 0.240 | 0.370 | 0.207 | 0.445 |
| Hungary | -0.098 | 0.357 | -0.250 | 0.375 | -0.315 | 0.370 | -0.372 | 0.381 | -0.264 | 0.382 | -0.020 | 0.377 | -0.253 | 0.457 |
| Slovenia (ref. cat.) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Fundraising Cooperation | | | 0.158 | 0.196 | | | | | | | | | -0.101 | 0.251 |
| Advisory Board Cooperation | | | | | 0.516*** | 0.191 | | | | | | | 0.133 | 0.267 |
| Joint Statement Cooperation | | | | | | | 0.537*** | 0.193 | | | | | 0.166 | 0.274 |
| Joint Political Strategy Cooperation | | | | | | | | | 0.678*** | 0.180 | | | 0.566* | 0.290 |
| Membership fees | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | 0.300 | 0.165 | 0.144 | 0.197 |
| cut1 | -0.129** | 0.341 | -0.643 | 0.445 | 0.125 | 0.504 | 0.155 | 0.498 | 0.372 | 0.462 | -0.779 | 0.491 | 0.917 | 0.872 |
| cut2 | 0.198 | 0.331 | 0.837 | 0.446 | 1.548*** | 0.514 | 1.613*** | 0.002 | 1.893*** | 0.478 | 0.805 | 0.491 | 2.609 | 0.895 |
| Observations | | 405 | | 405 | | 405 | | 405 | | 405 | | 405 | | 405 |
| Nagelkerke's pseudo R | | 0.085 | | 0.064 | | 0.094 | | 0.093 | | 0.120 | | 0.069 | | 0.175 |
| Log Likelihood | | 148,645 | | 170,578 | | 174,791 | | 178,103 | | 174,140 | | 169,426 | | 325,500 |

Table 3. Access to parliaments. Levels of significance: * = 5%, ** = 1%, and *** = 0,1% significance

| | Model I | Model II | Model III | Model IV | Model V | Model VI | Model VII |
|--|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Concentrated IG | -0.342 | - | - | - | - | - | -0.703* |
| Health Care | 0.181 | 0.059 | 0.200 | 0.341 | 0.263 | 0.364 | 0.067 |
| Energy | 0.433 | 0.040 | 0.353 | 0.467 | 0.196 | 0.617 | 0.201 |
| Higher Education (ref.) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| The Czech Republic | 0.513 | 0.267 | 0.414 | 0.339 | 0.552 | 0.583 | 0.714 |
| Poland | 1.624*** | 1.620*** | 1.566*** | 1.253*** | 1.810*** | 1.662*** | 2.075*** |
| Hungary | -0.461 | -0.700 | -0.827** | -1.216*** | -0.696 | -0.438 | -0.868 |
| Slovenia (ref. cat.) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Fundraising Cooperation | - | 0.386 | - | - | - | - | -0.235 |
| Advisory Boards Cooperation | - | - | 1.072*** | - | - | - | 0.791** |
| Joint Statements Cooperation | - | - | - | 1.010*** | - | - | 0.540 |
| Joint Political Strategies Cooperation | - | - | - | - | 0.997*** | - | 0.422 |
| Membership fees | - | - | - | - | - | 0.099 | 0.445* |
| cut 1 | 1,028*** | 1,529*** | 3,310*** | 3,268*** | 3,058*** | 1,574** | 4,987*** |
| cut 2 | 2,623 | 3,093*** | 5,091*** | 4,965*** | 4,183*** | 3,129*** | 6,620*** |
| Observations | 405 | 405 | 405 | 405 | 405 | 405 | 405 |
| Nagelkerke's pseudo R | 0.162 | 0.174 | 0.259 | 0.258 | 0.263 | 0.159 | 0.366 |
| Log Likelihood | 155.690 | 150.818 | 156.328 | 157.053 | 162.579 | 175.062 | 292.194 |

Conclusion

This article finds strong support for somewhat weak cooperation between CEE interest groups as they declare to do it “occasionally”. The article gives a unique insight into the distinction between different types of cooperation, pointing to the greatest influence of cooperation as being on the development of joint statements by groups. This type of cooperation is also the most frequently performed by the groups, while cooperation in fundraising is the rarest and at the same time the least profitable. When it comes to politics, groups active in energy policy are the most willing to cooperate among the three analysed policy areas. The exception is Slovenia, where the most closely cooperating groups are those concerned with health policy. Meanwhile, both hypotheses presented in the article were confirmed, proving that the patterns of cooperation between the CEE interest groups are not so distant from those observed in Western democracies. Even such moderate cooperation between the groups clearly affects the possibility of access to both ruling parties and parliaments. What is different from Western European countries is that elected parliamentarians do not seem to pay more attention to the voice of groups cooperating with others. Poland represents an interesting exception compared to other analysed countries, as there a clear relationship has been demonstrated between cooperation and the access of groups to parliament. The authors also find evidence for the weakening of the role of strong membership dependence in a group’s ability to cooperate: organizations that are more financially dependent on their membership fees cooperate less with other groups, especially on joint statements. The results also suggest that cooperation may be a more important factor for organizations representing idealistic goals than for professional business groups.

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Disclosure statement

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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