

Journal of Contemporary European Research

Volume 14, Issue 2 (2018)

Research Article

Partnership with Civil Society and the Legitimacy of EU Policymaking: Exploring Actors' Normative Arguments in Four Member States

Andrey Demidov, *Central European University, Budapest*

Citation

Demidov, A. (2018). 'Partnership with Civil Society and the Legitimacy of EU Policymaking: Exploring Actors' Normative Arguments in Four Member States', *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 14(2): 169-186. <https://doi.org/10.30950/jcer.v14i2.869>

First published at: www.jcer.net

Abstract

Existing research on how the involvement of civil society actors improves EU democratic legitimacy produces controversial results. This is the outcome of a top-down analytical strategy. Scholars regularly gauge partnership practices against different concepts of legitimacy, but rarely ask how actors themselves perceive and construct partnership, let alone how these understandings relate to existing concepts of legitimacy. Utilising a bottom-up sociological perspective, this article examines how actors in four central and eastern EU member states understand the partnership principle for European Structural and Investment Funds and how these understandings relate to different conceptualisations of legitimacy. A reconstruction of actors' normative arguments shows that representatives of three groups (state officials, civil society organisations and social partners) prioritise different legitimacy effects which trigger contestation about the proper formats of partnership. While state officials focus on input legitimacy, civil society organisations insist on throughput and social partners emphasise output legitimacy. Variation across countries and within groups of actors further complicates this picture. This has implications for our understanding of Europeanization and the role of European civil society.

Keywords

Civil society; Legitimacy; EU; Partnership, Central and Eastern Europe, EU Structural and Investment Funds

The EU has declared partnership with civil society as a mechanism that can help to re-establish democracy in times of deepening alienation from its citizens, and supported it through various policy and legal instruments (Armstrong 2002; Kohler-Koch 2012; Smismans 2003). Nowadays the European Commission expects partnership, or the partnership principle in EU parlance, to be implemented across several policy areas, including cohesion policy, maritime and fisheries, agriculture and even the European Neighbourhood Policy (Batory and Cartwright 2011; Dąbrowski 2014; Scott 1998).

However, there is little agreement among scholars of European civil society about whether the involvement of civil society actors in EU policymaking processes enhances the EU's overall legitimacy. Empirical results are contradictory. Looking at how civil society actors operate within various policymaking structures in Brussels, scholars conclude that this EU expectation of greater legitimacy is naïve and overly optimistic (Jentges 2012; Kohler-Koch 2009). They argue that neither the institutional format of such involvement nor how civil society actors themselves function in terms of organisational structures or practices of decision-making, increase democratic legitimacy. The literature on the implementation of partnership echoes these conclusions. Scholars of cohesion policy claim that implementation of partnership leads to clientelism and informality, a loss of

legitimacy of cohesion policymaking, shrinking of accountability and transparency and further alienation of the EU from its citizenry (Bauer 2002; Dąbrowski 2014; Milio 2014).

At the same time, there is no paucity of studies claiming the opposite. Studies of the practice and effects of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) or 'new modes of governance' are some examples (Idema and Kelemen 2006; Smismans 2008). Many scholars convincingly demonstrate that engagement with civil society and, generally, non-state actors significantly enhances the quality of policymaking, the inclusion of a variety of citizens' views, the deliberative character of decision-making, the accountability of EU institutions, oversight and the quality of implementation of the EU policies. The same can be found in the studies of partnership in cohesion policy (Demidov 2017).

These controversies are hardly functions of empirical weaknesses in exiting studies nor of a pure 'window-dressing' and 'rubber-stamping' character of engagement with civil society in EU policymaking, although the latter argument is quite widespread. Rather, they highlight the lack of conceptual agreement about legitimacy, mechanisms and instruments of its generation in the EU context, and the role of civil society in this process (Greenwood 2007). Although scholars have discussed the contested character of the concept of legitimacy, it is surprising that there are few studies taking this contestedness as their starting point for analysis. For the case of partnership with civil society and its legitimacy-generating effects, this analytical approach would mean a shift from assessing how existing practices of partnership with civil society enhance or, conversely, erode abstractly defined legitimacy to what actors themselves make out of partnership with each other and, importantly, how their perceptions relate to different conceptualisations of legitimacy.

This article addresses the lack of bottom-up studies on actors' understandings of partnership, and how they fit into and reflect existing conceptualisations of legitimacy. It focuses on actors' perceptions and ideas of partnership in the context of cohesion policy implementation in four central and eastern European (CEE) member states. The practices of implementation of the partnership principle for the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) is an excellent case for answering the question what kinds of legitimacy the involved actors prioritise. When introducing the partnership principle, the European Commission explicitly stated that it was expected to enhance the legitimacy of cohesion policy (Bache 2010), and designed to give civil society actors space to take part and influence EU policies (Newig and Koontz 2014). Exploration of how actors themselves perceive partnership in the context of cohesion policy and what kind of legitimacy they think their cooperation should generate can enrich our knowledge of similar dynamics in other contexts.

The case of CEE member states is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, studies on CEE member states highlight the above controversy regarding the legitimising role of civil society involvement in EU policymaking in the region. Taking implementation of partnership as a manifestation of Europeanization, scholars present a plethora of both successful and unsuccessful examples (Dąbrowski 2014). The same can be seen in studies on modes of European governance in the region (Börzel and Buzogány 2010; Börzel and Fagan 2015; Buzogány 2015). Secondly, the lack of studies informed by more bottom-up analytical approaches, especially in the domain of EU policymaking and the role of civil society, is especially pronounced in the CEE case. The shift from top-down to more bottom-up approaches is only starting to take place (Jeziarska 2015; Kubik 2015). This lack of in-depth bottom-up analytical engagement with perceptions of civil society actors is highly surprising given civil society actors have historically been an important agent of democratisation in the region.

Existing literature posits that partnership with civil society can enhance legitimacy in three ways each corresponding to the elements of the triadic formula of types of legitimacy: input, output, and throughput (Scharpf 1997; Schmidt 2013). Firstly, partnership enhances input legitimacy as it ensures that the interests and constituencies affected by certain policies are represented and heard

(Smismans 2003). Secondly, partnership enhances output legitimacy through channeling and use of civil society actors' expertise. Thirdly, partnership can improve throughput legitimacy as it provides space for deliberation and discussion and, thus, leads to greater epistemic quality of decisions, transparency and overall accountability (Steffek and Ferretti 2009). Therefore the major purpose of the article is to establish how and to what extent actors' own perceptions of partnership reflect these normative expectations.

The article addresses the central research question drawing on data acquired through 90 interviews with actors involved in the implementation of partnership for ESIF in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Respondents belonged to three main groups mentioned in the EU Regulations on partnership, namely state officials, social partners and civil society organisations (CSOs) (Bache 2010).

The article is organised as follows. The first and second sections review the existing academic literature and discuss the main normative arguments behind the partnership with civil society. The third section briefly discusses the research design and methods. The fourth section summarises the main empirical findings. The last section discusses the implications of the empirical findings for the scholarly debates on European civil society and its legitimising function.

THE PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLE IN THE EU CONTEXT

There is no lack of studies exploring the fate of implementation of EU requirements such as the partnership principle, and analysis of what happens when the EU rules and requirements 'hit the ground' in (prospective) member states is rich. After all, the CEE countries constitute significant cases for studies of Europeanization, including studies on the Europeanization of interest mediation (Borragán Perez-Solarzano 2004; Demidov 2017), social dialogue and industrial relations (Iankova 2004), civil society and social movements (Cisar and Vrablikova 2010; Fink-Hafner and Novak 2015) and a rich literature on Europeanization of modes of governance (Andreou and Bache 2010; Bruszt 2008; Buzogány 2015; Dobre 2010; Sotirov, Lovric and Winkel 2015). A small but growing body of literature examines the practices of partnership in greater detail (Cartwright and Batory 2012).

Existing studies of partnership are preoccupied with what makes its implementation successful. These accounts highlight a number of driving forces and impediments to successful partnership implementation. Among them are mainly structural domestic factors such as entrenched traditions of interest intermediation, the degree of centralised policymaking and, correspondingly, regionalisation as a pattern of domestic power-sharing between the central and regional actors. Bache and Olsson (2001), for instance, compare partnership implementation in Sweden and the UK and find that the Swedish tradition of corporatism led to a more successful implementation of partnership and acceptance of social partners as fully-fledged participants of cohesion policy. However, Andreou and Bache (2010) find that 'compound' character of the Slovenian polity and its corporatist tradition did not have much impact on the governance of Structural Funds. Similarly, Bauer (2002) and Batory and Cartwright (2011) reject that corporatist traditions in Germany and Austria helped partnership to become a successful practice. Several scholars claim that centralist traditions in Romania and Hungary hinder meaningful inclusion of civil society actors and social partners (Dobre 2010). The case of Poland stands out as a more regionalised and, consequently, 'friendlier' context for complex multi-actor interactions (Dąbrowski 2007), just like the Czech Republic (Bruszt 2008).

The strength and capacities of actors is another macro-structural factor that often features in accounts of partnership implementation in the CEE context. Börzel and Fagan (2015) and Buzogány

(2015) find that implementation of partnership in environmental policy is hindered by 'weak states'. Kutter and Trapman (2010) find that the chronic weakness of civil society actors stops their involvement from becoming meaningful. At the same time, scholars often differentiate between CEE countries, some of which traditionally rank high (Poland and Slovenia) and some low (Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania) in terms of civil society development (Lane 2010).

The selected cases for this study feature many of the discussed domestic factors that could potentially affect implementation of partnership and actors' perceptions of it. From the political economy literature we know that Slovenia exhibits many features of a corporatist polity and Poland, Hungary and Slovakia represent more centralised polities (Bohle and Greskovits 2012). At the same time, the literature on cohesion policy highlights that Poland is the most decentralised polity. Polish regions enjoy wide powers and engage in intensive political struggles with central actors; both levels are often willing to mobilise support from civil society actors (Bailey and De Propriis 2002; Brusis 2002). These dynamics between central and regional actors give another impulse to development of partnership practices. In this framework, Hungary and Slovenia represent rather centralised polities with Slovakia occupying a middle position. Finally, in terms of the strength of actors, both public and civil society, Slovenia and Poland traditionally score higher than Hungary and Slovakia. In any case, there is lack of studies testing these assumptions from a different analytical perspective, a challenge this contribution addresses.

PARTNERSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND LEGITIMACY: THEORETICAL EXPECTATIONS

How does the partnership with civil society help to solve the problem of low democratic legitimacy? More specifically, what are the theoretical expectations behind this nexus in the EU context? This section briefly discusses three major answers to this question found in the academic literature and proposes several operationalisable indicators for future empirical analysis. It also briefly discusses the power of these arguments vis-à-vis the empirical context of ESIF implementation.

The starting point for conceptual divisions between these arguments is the nature of legitimacy problems that the EU is facing. In thinking about the legitimising role of civil society, scholars depart from the broad conventional understanding of legitimacy as a belief in the appropriateness of a certain (political) order. The most known typology of legitimacy encompasses its input, output and throughput types (Schmidt 2013). Input legitimacy is achieved through proper citizens' participation in rule-making or participatory qualities (government of the people) whereas output legitimacy refers to 'achieving the goals that citizens collectively care about (government for the people)' (Scharpf 1997: 19). In contrast, throughput legitimacy refers to what is happening in the 'black box' of governance, 'in the space between the political input and policy output' (Schmidt 2013: 5). This is a process-oriented type of legitimacy, referring to the quality of interactions between actors busy with rule-making and producing policy outputs rather than how their political agendas come about or whether their policy products or rules have any sufficient problem-solving potential. Normatively speaking, throughput legitimacy is achieved if the process meets the criteria of transparency, inclusiveness, deliberative quality and accountability (Schmidt 2013). The European Commission never unpacks what it refers to in its policy guidelines regarding partnership and its contribution to legitimacy. Theoretically, then, one can expect partnership with civil society to enhance all three types of legitimacy.

The literature operates with several normative arguments about how this enhancement happens. They can be tentatively grouped into: 1) representation arguments, 2) functionalist arguments and

3) democratic process arguments. All of them differ along two dimensions: 1) the conceptualisation of civil society actors and their functions and 2) the institutional format of their involvement.

In the first set of arguments, civil society actors are essentially representatives of the groups affected by a policy, often referred to as 'affected parties'. In the context of EU policymaking, the primary contribution is channeling the voices of Europeans by providing important policy input which would otherwise be overlooked or neglected (Smismans 2003). This leads to the emergence of a wide consensus on policy goals and more comprehensive, encompassing and accepted policy agendas through the incorporation of a wide variety of views, opinions, interests, needs and demands. Civil society actors channel, articulate and voice interests and oversee incorporation of their constituents' aspirations into policy programmes. Kohler-Koch (2009: 50) underlines the assumption that 'they participate in agenda-setting debates and in policy consultation but not in decision-making'. This engagement is quite institutionalised, mostly in the format of wide public consultations to which civil society actors are invited (Kohler-Koch 2009).

The second set of arguments see that involvement of civil society significantly enhances output legitimacy through the incorporation of expertise and knowledge of civil society actors. Civil society actors in this conceptualisation appear not so much as articulators but primarily as experts and providers of highly specific knowledge, skills or technologies of problem-solving that they possess (Smismans 2003). This view shifts the overall attention from how civil society actors voice demands of their constituents to what they do (functions) and, consequently, highlights their organisational capacities and knowledge. This view is closely linked to the third sector branch of the civil society scholarship. It conceptualises associations between the state and the market as clusters of experts that emerge because of failures to individually supply efficient solutions to social problems and because of their individual inflexibility, the scarce capacity to innovate and experiment or lack of resources (Salamon and Anheier 1998). Partnership with these actors thus takes the form of outsourcing implementation of policy programmes to civil society actors who become the main implementers and translate wide policy objectives into concrete projects, technologies and instruments. Importantly, this understanding of civil society engagement does not emphasise any institutionalisation of partnership with civil society actors. Interactions are rather ad hoc, and civil society actors do not enjoy access to strictly institutionalised regular fora of collaboration.

Finally, the third group of arguments conceive civil society actors as guardians of certain democratic qualities of the policymaking process such as openness and fairness. In this conceptualisation, they are every often referred to as whistleblowers, watchdogs, scrutinisers and observers of accountability. The main focus is how civil society actors improve the *process* of decision-making; not in a sense of whether it is based on hearing everyone's voices or using their expertise but in terms of deliberative qualities, transparency, fairness and accountability. By being present in (institutionalised) partnership structures and having an opportunity to argue, raise concerns and propose alternative ideas, civil society actors increase the epistemic quality of decisions; they scrutinise the transparency of negotiations, monitor their consequences for citizens and pressure to disclose documents (Steffek and Ferretti 2009). By doing this, the argument goes, they contribute to increased public scrutiny and contestation over political and policy decisions and enhance overall accountability. The institutional format of partnership matters in this conceptualisation as the space for deliberation and discussions. However, the focus here lies on its operational dynamics in terms of mechanisms and routines of opinion exchange, feedback provision, procedures of decision-making and so on, rather than access to it or its representative character. Table 1 summarises these arguments as a list of the keywords for the empirical analysis.

Table 1. Partnership with civil society: the keywords for three groups of arguments

Representation arguments	Functionalist arguments	Democratic process arguments
1. Civil society actors and their functions		
Representatives of the marginalised groups of the public; carriers/reservoirs of policy input	Problem-solvers and implementers of projects; experts and carriers of knowledge and technology	Whistleblowers, scrutinisers, observers and watchdogs over transparency; improvers of the epistemic quality of decisions
2. The institutional format		
Strictly institutionalised public consultations with regulated access	Ad hoc, problem-based interactions; the system of outsourcing/contracting out	Deliberative fora and platforms with clear, fair and transparent procedures of policy input provision and feedback exchange

How do these expectations surface in the EU conceptualisation of the partnership principle for ESIF? The literature points to a persistent vagueness of the EU's legitimacy expectations. Against the background of a plethora of interpretations about how civil society can legitimise and democratise the EU, the EU's position on the legitimacy-generating effect of the partnership principle is even more vague (Smismans 2003). EU documents and opinions on partnership expect civil society actors to enhance representation, channel the voice of marginalised groups, ensure effective allocation of funds, ensure the choice of the most appropriate instruments and ensure overall transparency and fairness of the process (European Commission, 2012). Moreover, the empirical overview of partnership implementation on the ground clearly shows that actors are very aware of this vagueness and actively contest forms and formats of partnership advancing different understandings of it (Batory and Cartwright 2011; Demidov 2017). However, existing studies still overlook this important element of the empirical reality and keep investing in measuring whether partnership practices generate one or another type of legitimacy.

The article problematises this state of affairs and argues it would be more productive to approach the reality of partnership implementation from a bottom-up and more sociological perspective. In methodological terms, this implies a move from judging whether practices of partnership generate either type of legitimacy to empirical investigation of how actors perceive those practices and how those perceptions reflect the discussed types of legitimacy.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The article analyses the structure and contents of actors' perceptions of partnership with civil society in the context of EU policymaking. The case is the implementation of the partnership principle for ESIF in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The empirical data comes from interviews and close reading of policy documents (minutes and protocols of the meetings, research reports, position papers and various reports on the implementation of partnership, produced by both governmental and societal actors). 90 semi-structured interviews were conducted between 2011 and 2014 in four countries (Poland N=21, Hungary N=22, Slovenia N=25, Slovakia N= 22) with three main groups of actors involved in partnership implementation: state officials (N=25), CSOs (N=44) and social partners (N=21). The interview sample was constructed bearing in mind the challenges and peculiarities of partnership implementation in ESIF, namely 1) three types of partnership interactions (partnership for programming, implementation or processing of money disbursement for projects and monitoring), 2) the multi-actor character or presence of actors from three main groups (state officials, social partners and CSOs), 3) multiple levels of partnership (national, regional and project) and 4) partnership implementation across policy areas. Thus, the sample includes actors from four countries, both capitals- and regions-based, representing all three main groups and involved in all three types of partnership interactions and across two major policy areas – social inclusion and environment as covered by relevant Operational Programmes (OPs).

Semi-structured and conversational interviews were chosen for uncovering actors' perceptions. Interviews were conducted in English, both in countries under scrutiny and over phone/Skype and lasted between 45 minutes and one and a half hours. Respondents were asked two groups of open-ended questions about actors' experiences with partnership (i.e. 'how is your organisation involved in partnership?'), its forms and methods, and about their views on purposes and meanings of partnership (i.e. 'what is the purpose of partnership, in your view?').

Open coding was used for the data analysis (Charmaz 2000). This technique does not imply quick word counting as in conventional quantitative content analysis but a line-by-line scrutiny identifying the theme of a passage, paragraph, sentence and so on in an interview and its correspondence to previously identified keywords (Richards 2005; Ryan and Russel Bernard 2002). Table 1 guided the analysis. Respondents' answers were coded as reflecting on either of three arguments on their combinations or concepts/themes beyond the utilised three-fold framework.

NORMATIVE ARGUMENTS FOR PARTNERSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

This section summarises the results of a qualitative analysis of actors' perceptions of partnership with civil society and their normative underpinnings. It firstly summarises the main findings – normative convergence exemplified by the fact that actors' perceptions contain references to all three arguments yet visible normative divergence in terms of how representatives of different groups of actors prioritise different arguments. It then proceeds with a more detailed illustration of how this variation works and discusses how practices of partnership reflect these perceptions.

Normative Convergence and Divergence

The analysis of the interview data clearly points to a visible normative convergence, both across the country cases and groups of actors. All actors resort to all three normative arguments when they elaborate on the purpose of partnership and share their views on what constitutes a true and

successful or, conversely, failed partnership. Besides declarations of their commitment to the spirit of partnership, actors unflinchingly assert that partnership significantly improves quality of OPs through the inclusion of voices and interests of the affected stakeholders, leads to better project implementation through accumulation of stakeholder's expertise and knowledge and, finally, makes the process of money allocation and disbursement more transparent and accountable.

However, a more in-depth interpretive analysis shows that actors assign different weight to these arguments. The identified normative convergence, thus, represents the first layer of actors' normative preferences. A deeper look beyond this layer reveals a different pattern – actors from different groups clearly prioritise different arguments or, more precisely, organise the arguments in different hierarchies. The general trend is that while state officials perceive partnership as a tool for channeling voices of affected citizens, social partners argue that partnership is meant to make a better use of partners' expertise, and CSOs view it as a tool for ensuring greater transparency, accountability and the deliberative quality of ESIF management and distribution. In light of a larger problematic of the contribution of partnership and European civil society to the legitimacy of EU policymaking, this finding illustrates a surprising combination of both normative convergence and divergence between actors' normative preferences regarding how the legitimacy problem can be solved.

State Officials: Partnership for Channeling Citizens' Input

This group of actors across all four states is represented by the central or regional coordination authorities such as national ministries or managing authorities. Importantly, state officials act as the major 'translators' of EU regulations, including those on partnership, and in this light they are the major sources of normative argumentation around partnership.

State officials across the four countries almost uniformly refer to the first group of arguments. Partnership, in their view, is primarily a tool of generating comprehensive OPs and action plans through channeling of necessary knowledge which problems, policy fields or regions require financial interventions and special measures. In line with this argumentation is the view that civil society actors are supposed to bring in this knowledge ('there were no concrete decisions, we were given "growth and jobs"', 'we need to collect the right priorities', 'we expect them [partners] to show the fields which need to be covered and that we do not see'). This orientation may, at first sight, depict the instrumental considerations of the state officials given the novelty of cohesion policy processes ('we had no tradition of planning after transition'), the unfamiliar character of cohesion policy priorities and a mere lack of policy input in the form of concrete policy proposals. However, the interview data also illustrates how state officials link the purpose of partnership to that of cohesion policy. The latter is seen as a country development instrument, an opportunity to allocate available finances for the greater benefit of their nations and as an opportunity to satisfy the collective demands of citizens. Partnership, in turn, is the instrument of achieving this as it ensures identification and definition of cohesion policy priorities and drafting of comprehensive and all-encompassing policy documents that would reflect citizens' demands and problems. The process of programming is, naturally, seen as the main empirical manifestation of this orientation as it is at this stage when wider EU priorities are translated into more concrete measures and policies. State officials see programming as a complex process of collection of citizens' demands and suggestions about cohesion policy investment directions, and partnership is considered to be a tool of structuring this process through the less costly exercise of communicating with society's representatives.

The main challenge to the integrity of this normative orientation naturally comes from the dilemma of 'whom to involve'. Resolving this is especially problematic when it comes to CSOs due to their diversity. State officials across four countries unanimously underline the difficulty of identifying whom to talk to, especially at the stage of programming. However, the solutions to this puzzle differ across four countries, reflecting domestic dynamics. In Hungary, this dilemma was resolved through wide participation when drafts of policy programmes were discussed nation-wide through various means (online, public debates and so on). In 2007 the process of programming or the process of definition of cohesion policy priorities for the new financial period and drafting of the policy documents was organised as a country-wide participatory process when everyone, not only organised civil society actors, could submit any comments, recommendations or suggestions about potential financial interventions. Polish officials echo these arguments: 'we are seeking to reach every possible partner that can be useful for the programme and give their ideas',⁵ 'we decided not to have a hand in the selection of partners ... everyone is accepted if they are willing to participate'.⁶ However, in Poland and Slovakia, state officials opted for less participatory public consultations with selected and specially invited CSOs. This still required that state officials defined the list of the invitees which inevitably made them speculate about the criteria of selection and brought the issue of representativeness back to the table ('we had to decide which partners from that list we used in our Ministry were the most representative ones'⁷). The challenge was even stronger with the monitoring committees (MCs), the only institutional manifestations of partnership defined in EU regulations. Initially they were also open for any partner willing to participate in their work. Finally, in Slovenia, state officials from the outset refrained from nation-wide participation or purpose-specific selection and opted for consulting already-existing platforms of CSOs and social partners. Thus, although sharing the same view on how involvement of civil society should be managed, state officials in the four countries opted for slightly different institutional solutions: 'super wide' involvement in Hungary, 'limited involvement' with selected actors in Poland and Slovakia and 'corporatist involvement' in Slovenia.

However, regardless of how this dilemma was resolved, state officials' view on these interactions is one of a certain type of communication 'so partners can tell us what they want to do in the OPs, how they want to be included'.⁸ This orientation pervades how these actors see solutions to other dilemmas, not only the one partners choose, but also the procedural side of partnership and deciding about whose and what comments and remarks count. For instance, this influences their view on decision-making rules, especially in the MCs, with a strong preference for majority voting and strong opposition to consensual decision-making ('we cannot put a loaded gun into someone's hands, we are in the end responsible for following the rules and overall implementation'⁹). Interestingly, there are also some country differences in how state officials responded to this challenge. In Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the principle of majority-voting in the MCs became the main decision-making practice, thus producing a lot of struggles and coalition-building within the MCs. Interestingly, in Hungary, according to the national regulations, decision-making should be based on consensus. Despite this, state officials across all four countries shared the view that procedurally partnership should not be organised through majority voting. On the contrary, the power of decision-making should be vested with them since cohesion policy is a matter of shared management between the European Commission and the member states. In line with this argumentation, state officials conceptualise their own role as collectors of input and demands, as arbiters and as mediators between various interests and visions. Thus, when it comes to what comments, suggestions or remarks should be taken into account, partners are expected to channel a certain type of input which state officials defined as 'strategic' as opposed to 'narrow', one that reflects the interests of a particular organisation ('in order to ensure a balanced policy and they should not be so super-occupied with their narrow views',¹⁰ 'partners should have the ability to see the linkages within the policy'¹¹).

Two other normative orientations are also present in respondents' elaborations, yet to a much lesser extent. In particular, these orientations are more relevant for other stages of the partnership, such as implementation, and reveal some intra-group divergence. State officials directly dealing with issues such as project selection and project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, stick to these arguments. Respondents from this sub-group emphasise the issue of transparency as something that they intend to increase through the partnership or that partners are major applicants and, consequently, implementers. However, even for these state officials, these considerations give way to ones related to the collection of input and ensuring equal access and balanced representation. Descriptions of concrete practices of interactions, given by the respondents from this group and especially strongly corroborated by societal partners, reveal that even in narrower circles of actors brought together by the task to monitor and select projects, the dominant dynamic is one-way traffic of collecting opinions and input and informing rather than deliberation. The working methods of the MCs are the clearest illustration that state officials approach them as platforms for informing partners about the technical details related to progress of implementation, available funds, the speed of absorption, changes in budget lines and so on, rather than platforms of deliberation about spending or policy priorities.

In sum, state officials across the four countries perceive partnership as a good opportunity to factor citizens' interests and demands into OPs, action plans and calls for proposals. Continuously referring to the argument about centrality of the EU rules and their responsibility to follow them, state officials equate partnership with consultations with the most representative partners, the purpose of which is 'listening', 'collecting remarks and suggestions' and 'informing' partners about policy developments.

CSOs: True Partnership as Deliberation and Scrutiny

The population of partners defined and approached by both EU and domestic state officials as CSOs is very diverse in all four countries due to the cross-cutting nature of cohesion policy that attracts a wide variety of actors. CSOs are represented not only by traditional advocacy groups such as those working on environmental issues or human rights but also by social service providers, associations working on gender, ethnic, poverty and social inclusion issues and professional associations. Additionally, these partners are extremely diverse in terms of types of organisations and includes large umbrella associations or nation-wide non-governmental organisations (NGOs), recourse centres like CNVOs or OFOP in Slovenia and Poland, smaller grass-roots organisations, loosely organised national horizontal networks of various CSOs and single big associations.

Despite this diversity, actors' perceptions of partnership are structured around one easily recognisable theme. When asked to elaborate on what they see as the main rationales for partnership or how they see a successful/failed partnership, respondents from CSOs largely refer to the third group arguments. There are three key sub-themes to this larger frame. Firstly, when reflecting on what they see as the major reason why they are invited as partners into partnership structures, be it for programming or as members of the MCs, respondents from all four countries explicitly referred to exercising scrutiny over public spending and control over potential money abuse ('our main topic has always been the meaningful use of the public funds and finances',¹² 'we are interested in monitoring the public procurement and awarding the grants',¹³ 'we are in partnership because here in Hungary we have a really serious problem with the use of the money that the EU is giving'¹⁴). As put by one Hungarian respondent, 'partnership should be a watchdog function at all levels'.¹⁵ This is echoed by counterparts from other countries who elaborate how CSOs successfully prevent the abuse of some funds, prevent non-transparent project tendering and

money awards or the re-allocation of money from one priority to another. In their view, CSOs often ascribe to themselves a guardianship role over the EU interest and translators of the EU principles of cohesion. Their primary task, as frequently stated by the respondents, is to ensure that money allocations correspond EU goals. Interestingly, in CSOs' eyes, assuming this role brings CSOs closer to the European Commission and erases the differences between them ('NGOs function as a watchdog, and the Commission tries to serve similar function, and their interests are the same'¹⁶).

Secondly, respondents from CSOs link exercising control and scrutiny to another main rationale for partnership: ensuring incorporation of alternative policy input. Respondents directly equate successful partnership with incorporation of their suggestions and policy proposals. The opposite is a situation when the state officials compose OPs by themselves ('implementation of partnership is very formal – most of the suggestions are not taken into consideration',¹⁷ 'we can only comment, and there is no legal obligation to actually take our comments into account'¹⁸). Importantly, CSOs argue that state officials should almost automatically incorporate their input. In their eyes, this input is valuable due to the expertise they can offer ('they do not see us as experts but as amateurs who meddle with their work'¹⁹, 'they [the state officials] should be interested in getting expert guidance on how to set the agenda'²⁰, 'partnership is when everyone has the right to participate but the real professionals should be contacted'²¹). This point of view is noticeably different from that shared by state officials who insist that such default acceptance of input is not an option. Finally, incorporation of their suggestions is equated by CSOs with transparency and signifies that the process of money allocation is open and honest.

Thirdly, another sub-theme that is also closely linked to scrutiny and incorporation of input is that of deliberation and discussion. In fact, incorporation of input and deliberation are simultaneously the purposes of partnership that make the process of money allocation transparent and democratic. The majority of respondents agree that deliberation about the content of policy programmes based on an exchange of facts, expertise and knowledge is a crucial feature of a true partnership. Sometimes this exchange may not necessarily lead to a change in content, but deliberation is nevertheless valued ('the authorities explained their positions, provided the data to back up their arguments, showed us where our propositions could or could not work'²²). Basically, CSOs praise partnership for being an opportunity to instill deliberation where it never previously occurred in the process of allocating money for development. For this reason, respondents are especially vocal when they received no comments or feedback on how their input has been processed and what became of their policy proposals. They equate them with a failed partnership and a failure of public participation.

Importantly, when describing imaginary successful partnerships, respondents stress the presence of certain procedural elements, which also reveals their normative orientation. In particular, CSOs equate partnership with free, timely and open access to policy documents, clear and transparent rules of providing feedback to CSOs' input and, importantly, fairness of decision-making in terms of equal representation of various parties ('the decision system in the MCs based on majority voting and state institutions have majority in those MCs which does not allow NGOs to get their ideas met'²³). Taken together, all these measures (deliberation and clear procedures of interactions) constitute a true partnership and are the primary purposes of its implementation for CSOs.

Overall, these themes indicate that in their normative orientations CSOs are closer to the third group of arguments or the idea that partnership with civil society is meant to increase transparency and accountability of the policy process and its deliberative quality through allowing for alternative voices. Interestingly, there is one noticeable difference between the countries. CSOs in Slovenia are less vocal about scrutiny and oversight, a matter of utmost importance for their Polish, Hungarian or

Slovak counterparts, but prioritise access to the process and deliberation. In the Visegrad countries, CSOs primarily define their role in partnership as watchdogs, a finding that reveals peculiarities of civil society development across the CEE countries.

There is a functionalist argumentation in CSOs' accounts of partnership. In all four countries, a group of respondents define outsourcing of money allocation, awarding grants and implementation of policy priorities by CSOs as the primary purpose and feature of partnership. Most frequently, though, this will be related to implementation of the 'strengthening of civil society' priority present in OPs across all four countries. The European Commission insisted on inclusion of this priority almost everywhere in the CEE countries, and CSOs naturally see themselves as the ones who should be entrusted with its implementation, both as primary decision-makers on which projects should be supported and the principal implementers of those projects. It is also important to note that the functionalist argumentation is not found in its pure form as normally CSOs are busy with both advocacy and service provision, and the boundary between these functions gets blurred. Furthermore, this argument is used by a narrow group of CSOs, predominantly by the so-called social CSOs who normally position themselves as service providers.

Social Partners: Partnership for Better Implementation

Social partners, represented by confederations of trade unions, employers' associations and associations of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), also make claims about partnership and its proper functioning. Although they are latecomers in this process, as they rarely expressed any interest in partnership until recently, they also get increasingly involved in politics around the partnership.

The interview data, however, shows that, unlike CSOs, social partners depart from different normative orientations in their representations of partnership. More specifically, they stick to the functionalist argument and view the main purpose of partnership and their role in it as the provision of highly specific expertise for better allocation of ESIF and, importantly, as implementers of the projects. Several themes in their elaborations make such normative underpinning especially visible.

Firstly, social partners position themselves as carriers of highly specific knowledge. Representatives of both labour and capital make strong claims they possess necessary information and knowledge about the needs, conditions and aspirations of their members. Involvement in partnership is thus seen as the main instrument of supplying the decision-making, project selection and implementation processes, with necessary and much-needed data on these needs and conditions, for instance during the debates about project selection criteria. Importantly, this is not similar to articulating the interests of their members, be it employees or member associations. Social partners never question that these interests are taken into account when it comes to cohesion policy spending on labour market measures, health and safety at work, life-long learning, skills training, infrastructure building or the introduction of environmental protection measures in various industries. Neither do they normally face the type of exclusion that CSOs complain about. Social partners are obligatory participants of all partnership arrangements, and this secured position is guaranteed by EU regulations on social dialogue. What they question is the evidence, data and information that these decisions are based on. Their involvement in the partnership is justified from the perspective that they possess this expertise.

Secondly, social partners view partnership as their direct involvement in implementation ('we want to implement our policies! Why would we not want our projects if we know the issues on the

ground?',²⁴ 'my organisation is seeking for a new task in this system, we do not want to be consulted, we want to be responsible for some tasks'²⁵). The latter view is especially widely shared by Polish and Slovenian partners that have traditionally been stronger and more developed, unlike their Hungarian and Slovak counterparts. In respondents' view, partnership is essentially a practice of social partners implementing concrete projects in their area of expertise. In other words, they claim they should be project applicants and implementers. Neither do social partners make a secret out of their intention to utilise the funds for the benefit of their members ('we are making it easier for the farmer to apply for the money',²⁶ 'we want to have concrete influence on different procedures of applications for the Funds for SMEs, this is what a good partnership is'²⁷).

Interestingly, social partners rarely resort to any representation-related argumentation to endorse their claims about their role and the goal of partnership. They systematically circumvent the issue of programming as composing and drafting of policy documents and do not see collection of all possible policy input with a view to make the OPs as comprehensive or balanced as possible as the purpose of partnership. Their 'kind' of input is maximally concrete and specific, like knowledge of the capacities of their members to utilise the funds, project selection criteria or measures that need to be funded, rather than general sketches and road maps of how the funds should be spent ('for example, we evaluate project selection criteria, we propose them, we can change what the administration offers'²⁸). In their view the purpose of partnership does not lie in 'asking partners what they want'²⁹ in order to accommodate various interests, a framing endorsed and imposed by state officials, but rather in making the OPs work as in implementing the defined policy priorities. In this light, social partners hardly link partnership with normative issues of wider public participation, let alone the democratisation of cohesion policy through this inclusion. The major normative justification for partnership, their inclusion and cohesion policy in general is proper allocation of the funds for tackling real-life problems of their constituents.

Social partners also express dissatisfaction with the procedural side of the partnership. They mention the same procedural pitfalls of existing interactions, similar to those mentioned by CSOs ('meeting agendas are far too extensive, the thematic variety of discussed issues is too wide, and the domination of the administrative side among members is obvious'³⁰) and show their disappointment with the deliberative quality ('everything has been decided before and the members of the MCs who are not involved in the daily process, they can only say "yes, we agree or we don't"³¹). They also point to a well-known range of problems with the partnership, such as excessive formalism, a lack of communication in the form of non-existent or, at best, disrupted flows of information about developments in cohesion policy and continuous neglect of partners' attempts to communicate and discuss these problems. These pitfalls, in their opinion, inevitably nullify the democratising potential of partnership as they undermine the transparency of the process and leave state officials unaccountable. However, the issues of transparency and accountability are of utmost importance for CSOs and are the core reasons why partnership should exist, social partners are openly less concerned with issues of corruption, money abuse and the exercise of oversight and scrutiny. Procedural failures of the partnership are seen as disrupting the proper organisation of the process of evidence and expertise provision. A way out of that is, in their opinion, a stricter institutionalisation of interactions through adoption and consistent application of legal rules ('there is no proper institutional format, these consultations are not formalised'³², 'we need a playground which is legally and formally structured'³³).

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of actors' understandings of partnership and how they reflect existing conceptualisations of legitimacy highlights several interesting points. Firstly, different groups of actors, when making claims about successful or failed partnership, appeal to different aspects of a complex phenomenon of legitimacy and prioritise its different dimensions. The larger pattern is the divergence of actors' perceptions between state officials, CSOs and social partners. In a nutshell, state officials prioritise input legitimacy, CSOs refer to throughput legitimacy and social partners prioritise output legitimacy. This picture is complicated by noticeable cross-country and intra-group variation. The difference between how state officials in the four countries resolve the dilemma of partners' selection or how CSOs across four countries prioritise scrutiny, oversight or deliberation as necessary elements of partnership practices are just a few examples of this variation. Analysis of what factors contribute to this divergence, whether it is domestic administrative traditions or institutional setups, as for the state officials, or trajectories of civil society development, as for CSOs, is a matter of a separate empirical analysis.

Secondly, from an analytical perspective, this study demonstrates that changing the analytical approach and moving to engage more closely with actors' perceptions and understandings rather than preconceive them, yields results which can challenge the dominant assumptions found in the literature. First and foremost, adopting a more bottom-up analytical perspective can nuance and potentially refute strong statements about failed or successful Europeanization, entrenchment of new modes of governance in the CEE region or weak civil society. Moreover, it opens up analysis to embracing the fact that Europeanization is a highly contentious process where outcomes cannot be simply defined as 'successes' or 'failures'. For the discussion about European civil society and its role in enhancing legitimacy of the EU, the findings also indicate that this role is a matter of constant renegotiation and contestation. The puzzle is less about whether civil society involvement increases or erodes legitimacy than what element/dimension of legitimacy becomes the pole of consensus among actors as a result of this process of contestation, and under which conditions these poles of consensus alter. The contribution highlights the importance of these considerations for both the EU institutions that try to forge consensus among actors in the member states about the meaning of their requirements and the actors themselves busy with implementing them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the editors of the *Journal of Contemporary European Research* and two anonymous reviewers for their valuable feedback and comments. The author is also grateful for generous financial and intellectual support of academic staff of the CEU Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy and International Relations and the ACCESS EUROPE (Amsterdam Center for Contemporary European Studies).

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS

Andrey Demidov, Institute for Advanced Study, Central European University, 1054 Budapest, Hungary [demidova@ceu.edu].

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Interviewee, state official (SO) Hungary, 26 March 2013.
- ² Interviewee, SO, Slovenia, 5 April 2012.
- ³ Interviewee, SO, Slovenia, 9 September 2012.
- ⁴ Interviewee, SO, Hungary, 26 March 2013.
- ⁵ Interviewee, SO, Poland, 11 September 2012.
- ⁶ Interviewee, SO, Poland, 14 June 2013.
- ⁷ Interviewee, SO, Slovakia, 12 July 2012.
- ⁸ Interviewee, SO Slovenia, 4 September 2012.
- ⁹ Interviewee, SO, Hungary, 29 April 2013.
- ¹⁰ Interviewee, SO, Slovenia, 5 April 2012.
- ¹¹ Interviewee, SO, Slovakia, 12 July 2012.
- ¹² Interviewee, CSO, Slovakia, 16 November 2012.
- ¹³ Interviewee, CSO, Slovakia, 23 November 2012.
- ¹⁴ Interviewee, CSO, Hungary, 20 April 2011.
- ¹⁵ Interviewee, CSO, Hungary, 20 April 2011.
- ¹⁶ Interviewee, CSO, Slovakia, 29 April 2011.
- ¹⁷ Interviewee, CSO, Slovakia, 14 November 2012.
- ¹⁸ Interviewee, CSO, Slovenia, 29 September 2011.
- ¹⁹ Interviewee, CSO, Slovakia, 16 September 2012.
- ²⁰ Interviewee, CSO, Slovenia, 29 September 2012.
- ²¹ Interviewee, CSO, Hungary, 4 April 2013.
- ²² Interviewee, CSO, Poland, 7 October 2013.
- ²³ Interviewee, CSO, Slovakia, 6 November 2012.
- ²⁴ Interviewee, economic and social partner (ESP), Slovenia, 5 September 2012.
- ²⁵ Interviewee, ESP, Poland, 1 October 2013.
- ²⁶ Interviewee, ESP, Hungary, 5 October 2011.
- ²⁷ Interviewee, ESP, Poland, 19 November 2013.
- ²⁸ Interviews, ESP, Poland, 1 October 2013.
- ²⁹ Interviewee, SO, Slovenia, 30 September 2011.
- ³⁰ Interviewee, ESP, Slovakia, 12 November 2013.
- ³¹ Interviewee, ESP, Slovenia, 4 April 2012.
- ³² Interviewee, ESP, Hungary, 27 November 2013.
- ³³ Interviewee, ESP, Slovakia, 12 November 2013.

REFERENCES

- Andreou, G. and Bache, I. (2010). 'Europeanization and Multi-Level Governance in Slovenia'. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 10(1): 29-43.
- Armstrong, K.A. (2002). 'Rediscovering Civil Society: the European Union and the White Paper on Governance'. *European Law Journal*, 8(1): 102-132.
- Bache, I. (2010). 'Partnership as an EU Policy Instrument: a Political History'. *West European Politics*, 33(1): 58-74.
- Bache, I. and Olsson, J. (2001). 'Legitimacy through Partnership? EU Policy Diffusion in Britain and Sweden'. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 24(3): 215-237.
- Bailey, D. and De Propris, L. (2002). 'EU Structural Funds, Regional Capabilities and Enlargement: towards Multi-Level Governance'. *Journal of European Integration*, 24(4): 303-324.
- Batory, A. and Cartwright, A. (2011). 'Revisiting the Partnership Principle in Cohesion Policy: the Role of Civil Society Organizations in Structural Funds Monitoring'. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 49(4): 697-717.
- Bauer, M.W. (2002). 'The EU 'Partnership Principle': Still a Sustainable Governance Device across Multiple Administrative Arenas?'. *Public Administration*, 80(4): 769-789.
- Bohle, D. and Greskovits, B. (2012). *Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

- Borragán Perez-Solarzano, N. (2004). 'EU Accession and Interest Politics in Central and Eastern Europe'. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 5(2): 243-272.
- Börzel, T. and Buzogány, A. (2010). Environmental Organisations and the Europeanisation of Public Policy in Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Biodiversity Governance'. *Environmental Politics*, 19(5): 708-735.
- Börzel, T. and Fagan, A. (2015). 'Environmental Governance in South East Europe/Western Balkans: Reassessing the Transformative Power of Europe'. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 33(5): 885-900.
- Brusis, M. (2002). 'Between EU Requirements, Competitive Politics and National Traditions: Re-Creating Regions in the Accession Countries of Central and Eastern Europe'. *Governance*, 15(4): 531-559.
- Bruszt, L. (2008). 'Multi-Level Governance – the Eastern Versions: Emerging Patterns of Regional Developmental Governance in the New Member States'. *Regional and Federal Studies*, 18(5): 607-627.
- Buzogány, A. (2015). 'Building Governance on Fragile Grounds: Lessons from Romania'. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 33: 901-918.
- Cartwright, A. and Batory, A. (2012). 'Monitoring Committee in Cohesion Policy: Overseeing the Distribution of Structural Funds in Hungary and Slovakia'. *Journal of European Integration*, 34(4): 323-340.
- Charmaz, K. (2000). 'Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Method'. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks: Sage: 509-536.
- Cisar, O. and Vrablikova, K. (2010). 'The Europeanization of Social Movements in the Czech Republic: the EU and Local Women's Groups'. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 43(2): 109-219.
- Dąbrowski, M. (2014). 'EU Cohesion Policy, Horizontal Partnership and the Patterns of Sub-National Governance: Insights from Central and Eastern Europe'. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 21(4): 364-383.
- Dąbrowski, M. (2007). 'Implementing Structural Funds in Poland: Institutional Change and Participation of the Civil Society'. *Political Perspectives*, 2(5): 1-21.
- Demidov, A. (2017). 'Europeanization of Interest Intermediation in the Central and Eastern European Member States: Contours of a Mixed Model'. *East European Politics*, 33(2): 233-252.
- Dobre, M. (2010). 'Europeanization and the New Patterns of Multi-Level Governance in Romania'. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 10(1): 59-70.
- European Commission (2012). *Staff working document: The Partnership Principle in the Implementation of the Common Strategic Framework Funds - Elements for a European Code of Conduct on Partnership*. Brussels: European Commission.
- Fink-Hafner, D. and Novak, M. (2015). 'Europeanization as a Factor of National Interest Group Political-Cultural Change: The Case of Interest Groups in Slovenia'. *East European Politics and Societies*, 29(1): 287-305.
- Greenwood, J. (2007). 'Organized Civil Society and Democratic Legitimacy in the European Union'. *British Journal of Political Science*, 37(2): 333-357.
- Iankova, E. (2004). 'Building the New Europe: Western and Eastern Roads to Social Partnership'. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 35(1): 76-92.
- Idema, T. and Kelleman, D. (2006). 'New Modes of Governance, Open Method of Co-Ordination and Other Fashionable Red Herring'. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 7(1): 108-123.
- Jentges, E. (2012). 'Unelected Representatives in the Europolitical Field: CSOs between Berlin and Brussels'. In D. Friedrich and S. Kröger (eds), *The Challenge of Democratic Representation in the European Union*. Basingstoke, Hants: Palgrave Macmillan: 156-172.
- Jeziarska, K. (2015). 'Moral Blueprint or Neoliberal Gobbledygook? Civil Society Frames among Polish Think Tanks'. *East European Politics and Societies*, 29(4): 831-849.

- Kohler-Koch, B. (2012). 'Post-Maastricht Civil Society and Participatory Democracy'. *Journal of European Integration*, 34(7): 809-824.
- Kohler-Koch, B. (2009). 'The Three Worlds of European Civil society—What Role for Civil Society for What Kind of Europe?'. *Policy and Society*, 28(1): 47-57.
- Kubik, J. (2015). 'Between Contextualization and Comparison: a Thorny Relationship between East European Studies and Disciplinary Mainstreams'. *East European Politics and Societies*, 29(2): 352-365.
- Lane, D. (2010). 'Civil Society in the Old and New Member States'. *European Societies*, 12(3): 293-315.
- Millio, S. (2014). 'The Conflicting Effects of Multi-Level Governance and the Partnership Principle: Evidence from the Italian Experience'. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 21(4): 384-397.
- Newig, J. and Koontz, T.M. (2014). 'Multi-Level Governance, Policy Implementation and Participation: The EU's Mandated Participatory Planning Approach to Implementing Environmental Policy'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 21(2): 248-267.
- Richards, L. (2005). *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide*. London: Sage.
- Ryan, G. W. and Bernard, H.R. (2002). 'Techniques to Identify Themes'. *Field Methods*, 15(1): 85-109.
- Salamon, L. and Anheier, H. (1998). 'Social Origins of Civil Society: Explaining the Nonprofit Sector Cross-Nationally'. *VOLUNTAS*, 9(3): 218-248.
- Scharpf, F. (1997). 'Economic Integration, Democracy and the Welfare State'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 4(1): 18-36.
- Schmidt, V. (2013). 'Democracy and Legitimacy in the European Union Revisited: Input, Output and Throughput'. *Political Studies*, 61(1): 2-22.
- Scott, J. (1998). 'Law, Legitimacy and EC Governance: Prospects for Partnership'. *Journal of Common and Market Studies*, 36(2): 175-194.
- Sotirov, M., Lovric, M. and Winkel, G. (2015). 'Symbolic Transformation of Environmental Governance: Implementation of EU Biodiversity Policy in Bulgaria and Croatia between Europeanization and Domestic Politics'. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 33(5): 986-1004.
- Smismans, S. (2008). 'New Modes of Governance and the Participatory Myth New Modes of Governance and the Participatory Myth'. *West European Politics*, 31(5): 847-895.
- Smismans, S. (2003). 'European Civil Society: Shaped by Discourses and Institutional Interests'. *European Law Journal*, 9(4): 473-495.
- Steffek, J. and Ferretti, M.P. (2009). 'Accountability or 'Good Decisions'? The Competing Goals of Civil Society Participation in International Governance'. *Global Society*, 23(1): 37-57.