

# Building Trust in Brussels: Lobbying Strategies of Nordic Interest Groups

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## **Abstract**

In their pursuit of influencing EU institutions and decision-makers, Nordic interest groups face the choice of directly contacting the decision-makers or generating pressure indirectly through mobilizing and/or changing the public opinion. After choosing their policy issues, interest groups have to determine to either lobby alone or to join coalitions.

This thesis investigates the lobbying strategies chosen by Nordic interest groups that are registered in the EU Transparency Register. I build my theoretical argument on a prominent school of thought that claims that resource-rich interest groups are more likely to choose inside lobbying strategies compared to resource-poor groups. The argument is tested through a mixed methodological approach, combining the analyses of a built for purpose dataset that provides information about all Nordic interest groups registered in the EU Transparency register.

The empirical analyses show that a considerable fraction of the Nordic interest groups chooses inside lobbying strategies and/or outside lobbying strategies. However, the online survey answers reveal that a large majority prefers to lobby in coalitions. Additionally, it seems that Norwegian interest groups focus on outside lobbying as well as inside lobbying strategies (mostly targeting the Commission), to compensate for their lack of representation in the EU institutions. While lobbying resources and group characteristics matter to the choice of most lobbying strategies, the aspect of building reputation and trust is of importance when it comes to all lobbying strategies applied by the Nordic interest groups.

# Acknowledgements

Through European studies at the bachelor level and a study trip to Brussels, I have become very interested in Norway's relations to the European Union. I quickly realized that there are many Norwegian actors in Brussels, and I became engaged in learning more about this. The result is a master's thesis on the lobbying strategies of Nordic interest groups in Brussels.

Working on my thesis has been both an educational and challenging process. It has been exciting to combine my interest in Norway's connection to the EU and compare it with those of the other Nordic countries. This thesis is the culmination of five years of study and marks the end of this period of my life. I am now looking forward to turning the knowledge and experience I have gained during my studies into practice.

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## Abbreviations

DG	Directorate-General
EEA	European Economic Area
EC	European Commission
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
DK	Denmark/Danish
FI	Finland/Finnish
IDEI	Information about the Domestic Encompassing Interest
IEEI	Information about the European Encompassing Interest
IG	Interest group
MEP	Member of European Parliament
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NO	Norway/Norwegian
SE	Sweden/Swedish
VIF	Variance inflation factor



# 1. INTRODUCTION

Interest groups (IGs) have an important position in modern political systems and especially in the European Union (EU) (Greenwood 2017, 2). They can contribute with inputs and expertise in policy formulations and ensure that different views and opinions are made visible. Over the past three decades there has been a significant growth in lobbying in the EU and there is now a dense EU interest group system (Coen and Richardson, 2009, 3).

Norway is not a member of the EU, but is largely influenced by EU policymaking, especially as a result of the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement. The EEA Agreement includes all EU policies with the exception of Common Agriculture and Fisheries Politics, Customs Union, Common Trade Policy, Common Foreign and Security Policy, Justice and Home Affairs or the Monetary Union (EFTA 2020). Through Norway's economic and cultural closeness to Europe and agreements such as the EEA and Schengen, Norway's involvement in the EU's political, economic and legal cooperation is so extensive that it affects all policy areas and all Norwegians' everyday lives. However, the EEA Agreement does not permit Norwegian authorities to participate in the decision-making or to have representation in the EU institutions. Accordingly, Norwegian interest groups will be interested in promoting their views on EU legislation and policymaking at a European level.

In order to understand what lobbying strategies Norwegian interest groups use to influence EU policymaking, there is a comparison of Norwegian interest groups and the Nordic countries that are members of the EU: Sweden, Denmark and Finland. In this way, I am able to understand Norwegian interest groups' strategies in a comparative perspective, and at the same time attempt to grasp to what extent the non-EU membership shapes lobbying strategies deployed by interest groups. Furthermore, the Nordic states constitute a particularly interesting case. "Indeed, while these states share several socioeconomic and political characteristics, they also differ in terms of their relationships with the European Union" (Leruth 2014, ii).

The thesis aims to understand and explain the choice of lobbying strategies. Analysing lobbying strategies is important because they contribute and determine levels of lobbying success. Moreover, they provide important information about how national and sectional

interests are represented and articulated at the EU level. Because this thesis aims to understand the Nordic interest groups' strategies applied to influence EU policymaking, there are two research questions:

*(1) What lobbying strategies do Nordic interest groups employ when trying to shape EU legislation? And (2) what explains the types of lobbying strategies used to influence EU institutions and decision-makers?*

## **1.1 Why study the lobbying strategies of Nordic interest groups?**

Previous literature on lobbying in the EU has mainly focused on interest groups from EU member states. The premises for Norwegian interest groups differ as they do not have the same opportunities to directly lobby their own national representatives at the European level. This makes it interesting to comparatively examine in more detail how Norwegian interest groups are lobbying EU legislation and policymaking, compared to interest groups from the other Nordic countries that are members of the EU.

In addition to economic and practical consequences, this closeness to the EU has important constitutional implications. As Gullberg (2015, 3) points out, today Norway is almost as integrated in the EU as other EU member states. Considering that EU's policymaking affects Norway tremendously, it is rational to anticipate that Norwegian actors will try to influence it. However, despite the strong opposition to European integration observed in the Norwegian population, the relationship between Norway and the EU is by several scholars declared as special (Leruth 2014; Eliassen and Peneva 2011). Scholars argue that Norway differs from other EFTA countries because of its extraordinarily close relationship to the EU (Leruth 2014). Nonetheless, as an EEA member, Norway lacks representation in the EU institutions. Since Norwegians have voted against full EU membership, and the main reason was to protect Norway's sovereignty, it has led to what Eriksen and Fossum (2014) call the "Norwegian Paradox". The "Norwegian Paradox" is structural and cannot be solved within the frames of today. However, there are largely two ways in which Norwegian actors can try to influence EU policymaking: directly approaching Brussels or the national government (Egeberg 2003, 18).

The theoretical scope of this thesis is not only interesting to the case of Norway but could perhaps also be applicable to other countries outside the EU. Studying an EEA country highlights how countries outside the EU try to influence policymaking in the EU. Broader knowledge on alternative forms of attachment is also of importance to the EU, which is looking for models for cooperation with other states in Europe, as well as for countries seeking to join the EU, or seeking to be resolved by affiliation with the EU (Egeberg and Trondal 1999, 134). Additionally, the thesis provides insights about the Danish, Swedish and Finnish interest groups and their lobbying strategies.

Only by adopting a comparative perspective, can I understand whether the Norwegian interest groups act similarly to interest groups from EU member states or whether they act differently. “Comparison provides a basis for making statements about empirical regularities and for evaluating and interpreting cases relative to substantive and theoretical criteria” (Ragin 1987, 1). Sweden, Denmark and Finland are similar to Norway in terms of characteristics of the interest group system: all are considered corporatist states (Jahn 2016). But while Norway is not an EU member, the other three are. I want to explore whether this aspect plays a role in how Norwegian interest groups choose their strategies to lobby EU policymaking.

## **1.2 Clarifications and assumptions**

It is crucial for any research to be specific on what is studied, and to be aware of what methods are available and possible in order to study the given phenomenon (George and Bennett 2005, 74). Often this becomes clearer when clarifying what is *not* studied (Goertz 2006, 32).

Firstly, it is not the purpose of this thesis to discuss the democratic aspect of the EEA Agreement and the Norwegian paradox. The approach in this context is often that Norway and the EEA countries do not have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, thus rendering the Agreement as undemocratic (Eide et al. 2003; Emerson et al. 2002; Eriksen 2008). Lack of EU participation as a result of the EEA Agreement is, to some extent, an institutional fact that cannot be changed without active action to change the framework of the agreement or the form of association with the EU. However, the consequences of the lack of

participation can be modified with different tools – channels of interest representation being one of them. The focus of the thesis is therefore to investigate what lobbying strategies Norwegian interest groups apply and compare them to the other Nordic countries that are members of the EU.

Secondly, although Iceland is a Nordic country<sup>1</sup> and part of the EEA Agreement, it is not included in the comparison. As previously mentioned, Norway has a special connection to the EU compared to other EEA/EFTA countries and countries outside the EU. Furthermore, Iceland did not share the Nordic tradition of corporatism – which is the basis of comparison (Siaroff 1999).

Thirdly, much of the literature focuses on strategies and influence without really separating the two. There is considerable emphasis on lobbying influence (and how to measure it). As the literature reveals, measuring actual lobbying influence is very difficult and it is hard to say anything about the causal relationship (see for example Dür 2008 and Lowery 2013 for discussions on the concept and measurement of influence). Clearly, even though a policy is in line with the aim of a specific interest group, it is not feasible to see it as a direct consequence of the lobbying of that particular interest group. I am *not* seeking to measure the degree of lobbying influence of Nordic interest groups in the EU. I only identify and explain the choice of lobbying strategies. Nevertheless, an important step to understand lobbying influence is to study lobbying strategies and what explains them (Binderkrantz et al. 2015, 98)

Lastly, I assume that interest groups are boundedly rational actors. With the aim of influencing policymaking in the EU, they are rational in that they choose the best possible strategy (for them) to do so. Thus, the choice of lobbying strategy is decisive for preference attainment. However, they are boundedly rational<sup>2</sup> because they often lack information to make ideal decisions (Simon 1955; Dür and Mateo 2016, 23). Moreover, some studies include the element of influence on policymaking being a goal or not (for example Binderkrantz et al. 2015). I am not doing so, considering that I only look at interest groups registered in the EU Transparency Register. It is reasonable to assume that when interest groups are registered in the EU Transparency Register, they have the aim to shape and make their demands and preferences heard in the EU policymaking process (Bunea 2018).

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<sup>1</sup> “Nordic states” shall not be confused with “Scandinavia”, which only includes Norway, Denmark and Sweden.

<sup>2</sup> To read more about the concept of bounded rationality, see for example Simon (1995)

### 1.3 Structure of the thesis

In *Chapter 2* I present and conceptualize key concepts for the thesis: *lobbying, interest group* and *lobbying strategies*. Next I examine and discuss existing theories and literature on the choice of lobbying strategies, in addition to a brief examination of the background of the Nordic countries. Subsequently, I generate my theoretical argument and hypotheses on what lobbying strategies Nordic interest groups choose and why.

The research design of the thesis is presented and discussed in *Chapter 3*. The overall aim of the thesis is to tell the story about the lobbying strategies that Nordic interest groups deploy to influence and shape EU decision-making. To answer the research questions, I apply a mixed methodological approach, combining the analysis of qualitative and quantitative empirical evidence. *Chapter 4* consists of the analyses which are largely divided into three parts: descriptive analysis, explanatory analysis and survey analysis. At the end of this chapter there is a summary of the empirical analyses. In *Chapter 5* I provide concluding remarks, in addition to suggestions to future research on lobbying strategies of Nordic interest groups.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this chapter I lay down the theoretical framework of the thesis. I start by presenting some key concepts, before reviewing central literature on interest groups and their lobbying strategies. Lastly, I present my theoretical argument and hypotheses.

### **2.1 Conceptual framework**

#### **2.1.1 What is lobbying?**

“Lobbying” is a concept with different interpretations – also among various interest groups that in fact are lobbying, as it is defined in this thesis. In line with the EU literature, lobbying is in this thesis broadly understood as all activities with the goal of influencing EU legislation and policymaking (Gullberg 2015, 1534). Interest groups lobby the EU institutions, policy makers, the public and the media to state their preferences and to impact the policy-making process (Weiler and Brändli 2015, 2; Dür and Mateo 2016, 1). The ultimate goal of interest groups lobbying strategies is to influence and shape decision-making processes and outcomes and to bring closer to their ideal point.

Furthermore, as Bouwen (2002, 368) argues, lobbying activities in the EU should be considered as an exchange relation and not a unidirectional activity from the interest groups. Interest groups are sources of information and policy input, and the EU institutions and policymakers need this expertise and inputs in the policy formulation. Moreover, being informed by knowledgeable interest groups in the policy formulation also enhances democratic legitimacy (Schmidt 2013). The transparency of EU’s interest intermediation has increased, and the policy formulations are regarded as more accountable due to the involvement of interest groups who have knowledge and expertise on citizen support. Thus, there is an interdependent relation between the interest groups and the policymakers (institutions) – also known as “exchange theory and resource dependence” (Bouwen 2002, 368). The interest groups demand access to decision-making, in exchange for giving the policymakers the information they need – and vice versa for the institutions.

## 2.1.2 What is an interest group?

Interest groups are key actors in the design of politics and policies at the EU level. “They are widely perceived as channels of societal representation of policy demands and as key actors in effective problem-solving and implementation of EU legislation” (Bunea and Baumgartner 2014, 1). In general terms, an “interest group” may be considered a group or an organisation that seeks to influence public policy on the basis of a specific interest or concern (Eising 2008, 5). However, “the concept ‘interest group’ itself can be misleading as it refers to individuals, organisations or institutions that are associated in a body that aims at influencing public policy” (Beyers et al. 2008, 1108).

The interest group concept is defined in many different ways in the existing literature and a range of different classification schemes are employed. This complicates comparisons between different studies and their findings (Beyers et al. 2008, 1106; Baroni et al. 2014, 141). Furthermore, the concept choice is often driven by the issue area or lobbying venue under examination as well as a given author’s normative focus (Baroni et al. 2014, 143). Moreover, scholars studying interest groups skip the stage of conceptualization and rather take it for granted what falls into the category. Thus, in the existing literature, the terms used to describe this type of actors vary; everything from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to business players, public authorities and social movements organisations (Beyers et al. 2008, 1106).

According to Beyers et al. (2008, 1106) three features must be present to define an actor as an “interest group”: *organisation*, *political interests* and *informality*. *Organisation* relates to the nature of the group and excludes unorganised broad movements and waves of public opinion. For example, broad social movements (such as the women’s movement) do not have organisational structures (Klüver 2013, 5). Yet, there are organisations that qualifies as interest groups within these social movements – such as the European Women’s Lobby (Klüver 2013, 5-6). *Political interests* refer to the aim of these organisations is to influence policymaking (Beyers et al. 2008, 1106). *Informality* relates to the fact that interest groups do not normally seek public office or compete in elections but pursue their goals through frequent informal interactions with politicians and bureaucrats (Beyers et al. 2008, 1106-1107). This, however, does not rule out that important parts of state-group relations can be

heavily institutionalised (Beyers et al. 2008, 1106-1107). For example, some consider local governments as interest groups – the argument being that they are not, strictly speaking, part of government (Beyers et al. 2008, 1108-1109).

Accordingly, in this thesis “interest groups” include organisations that try to influence policymaking. Nevertheless, the thesis also considers state authorities or regional authorities to be acting as an interest group (stakeholder), when participating in EU policymaking. Thus, this thesis employs a very broad definition of interest groups in order to cover a large range of actors. In the EU there is a diverse pool of interest groups: (1) professional consultancies/law firms/self-employed consultants, (2) in-house lobbyists and trade/business/professional associations, (3) non-governmental organisations, (4) think tanks, research and academic institutions, (5) organisations representing churches and religious communities, (6) organisations representing local, regional and municipal authorities, other public and mixed entities, etc., (7) regional governments, (8) local authorities and (9) non-EU based firms, organisations and associations (Transparency Register, 2020). I use interest groups as a collective term that encompasses the aforementioned types.

### **2.1.3 Defining the dependent variable: lobbying strategies**

“The first step in measuring any phenomenon of interest to political scientists is to have a clear sense of what the concept is that we are trying to measure” (Kellstedt and Whitten 2018, 111). In their pursuit of political influence, interest groups face a choice of strategy and there are marked differences in lobbying behaviour of these actors. Lobbying strategies are roughly understood as how interest groups work to influence policy making and decision-making in the EU. The literature that studies lobbying strategies make use of a variety of labels: inside and outside (Mahoney 2008; Dür and Mateo 2016; Weiler and Brändli 2015); access and voice (Beyers 2004); administrative, parliamentary, media and mobilization strategies (Binderkrantz 2008); and judicial politics, grassroots lobbying and media strategies (Dür and Mateo 2016, 84).

However, “inside” and “outside” lobbying strategies are considered the two main routes for groups to achieve their political objectives (Weiler and Brändli 2015, 3; Binderkrantz 2005,



695). The dichotomous divide between inside and outside lobbying strategies may not necessarily capture variations in the use of different strategies. For example, “it is interesting to investigate which groups tend to rely more on approaching bureaucrats and parliamentarians and which concentrate their efforts on approaching the media and mobilizing members” (Binderkrantz 2005, 705). Nonetheless, the dichotomy may be simplistic, but it also makes empirical work easier to implement.

This thesis relies on the distinction of inside vs. outside lobbying, but also include coalition behaviour as an additional strategy. After choosing a policy issue, an interest group have to choose to either lobby alone or to join a coalition (Beyers et al. 2014, 132). Figure 2.1 on page 12 summarizes and illustrates the conceptualization of lobbying strategies, while the operationalizations are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

### **Inside vs. outside lobbying**

Inside lobbying refers to lobbying activities that are directly aimed at influencing decision-makers, and outside lobbying to lobbying activities that aim at mobilizing and/or changing public opinion (Dür and Mateo 2016, 85). The literature largely regards inside lobbying as a strategy of *gaining access* and outside lobbying as *going public/voice strategy* (Weiler and Brändli 2015, 3; Beyers 2004, 213).

Inside lobbying strategies include meetings with bureaucrats and parliamentarians, participation in consultations as well as membership in Commission expert groups. With inside lobbying, interest groups must decide on which institutions to address as well as the governmental level at which they approach public actors (Beyers et al. 2014, 132). Inside lobbying tactics entail communicating directly to policymakers. This may happen through formal lobbying (e.g. drafting legislative language and Dear Colleague letters) or informal lobbying (e.g. face-to-face meetings and cocktail parties (Mahoney 2008, 9). Furthermore, information plays a crucial part for insider lobbying (Weiler and Brändli 2015, 3). Insider strategies can be particularly useful in providing technical information and giving expert knowledge. However, such strategies and the tactics that flow from them can limit broader mobilization (Beyers et al. 2014, 132).

Outside lobbying strategies, on the other hand, take place in a public arena via indirect communication from interests to policymakers – involving the broader public or particular parts of it (Beyers et al. 2014, 132). Going public is a more indirect strategy, which aims at putting pressure on policy makers via media campaigns, or by mobilizing citizens and staging protests (Weiler and Brändli 2015, 3). Outside lobbying strategies are applied to influence policymakers through the public, mobilizing constituents with press releases and conferences, political advertisements, contacts with journalists, protests and grassroots letter-writing campaigns (Mahoney 2008, 9; de Bruycker and Beyers 2019, 59). One important outside lobbying strategy is interest groups’ attempts to get the attention of the public and political elites through media. “A prominent presence in the news media is important for interest groups” (Binderkrantz 2012, 117).

Strategies also differ as to the information that can be transmitted (Beyers et al. 2014, 132). Inside lobbying strategies can be particularly useful in providing expert knowledge; detailed operational or technical information. In contrast, outside lobbying strategies take place in a public arena to express the preferences via indirect communication from interest to policymakers (Beyers et al. 2014, 132). Thus, the distinction of inside and outside lobbying strategies is important because it tells us something about the type of information and thus the actors most likely to choose them.

It is also worth mentioning that choosing an outside lobbying strategy is not necessarily a last resort or a worse alternative. It has been common to assume that an interest group chooses outside lobbying strategies only if it cannot gain access to the EU institutions (Binderkrantz 2005, 695). However, it is important to focus on which strategies that the different interest groups choose, rather than focusing on the groups’ status (Binderkrantz 2005, 696; Binderkrantz and Krøyer 2012, 117). Not gaining access may not be the only reason for an interest group choosing an outside strategy. Possible explanations are further discussed in the theoretical framework.

## **Lobbying in coalitions**

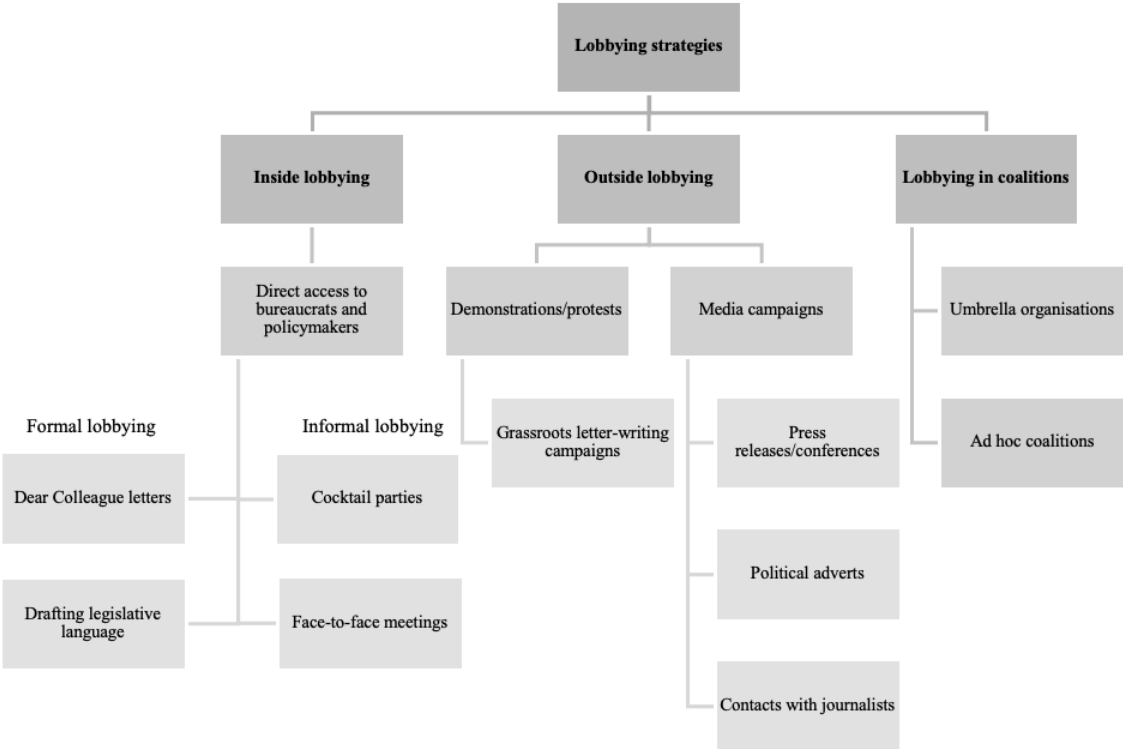
An additional lobbying strategy is to form lobbying (advocacy) coalitions (Mahoney 2008; Bunea 2015; Beyers et al. 2014). Although lobbying through coalitions is a very frequent form of collective action at EU level, there have been few systematic studies of EU lobbying coalitions (Bunea and Baumgartner 2014, 20). Strategies are not just a matter of individual organisational behaviour. After choosing a policy issue, an interest group has to choose to either lobby alone or to join a coalition. Interest groups often enter into coalitions, a behaviour that has both recognized benefits and costs (Beyers et al. 2014, 132). In short, coalition behaviour entails that various interest groups come together and collaborate on lobbying (Bouwen 2002, 373). A lobbying coalition is defined as a group of actors who share the same policy goal (Klüver 2013, 18). This can take place through umbrella organisations or through ad hoc coalitions.

Through umbrella organisations, interest groups may organise to achieve their shared goal. By lobbying together in a superior organisation, and not alone, it may be easier to attain influence in the EU institutions. Umbrella organisations can be organised at a European level or a national level (Bouwen 2002, 373; Gullberg 2010, 41). Umbrella organisations usually possess a representative mandate because they are often organised by industrial sectors and thus have a high number of members. These are permanent and almost institutionalised organisations that work together, with a mutual staff, to influence policy areas they care about (Pijnenburg 1998, 306).

Ad-hoc coalitions, on the other hand, are non-permanent collaborations of interest groups working together to reach a goal in a specific case (Mahoney 2008, 168). Typically, such coalitions dissolve after the case is resolved or if the interest groups no longer see it fit to continue the collaboration. Because ad-hoc coalitions are focused on specific cases, it is possible to concentrate resources and formulate a common stance. Furthermore, the organisation of and decision procedures in ad-hoc coalitions are less formal, which facilitates more flexible lobbying strategies (Pijnenburg 1998, 306-307).

**Lobbying strategies are not mutually exclusive**

The complexity regarding the different lobbying strategies is that they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, they may be complementary, i.e. interest groups may simultaneously rely on both inside and outside strategies (Beyers 2004; Binderkrantz 2005; Dür and Mateo 2016, 80; Weiler and Brändli 2015). Some argue that interest groups with many resources might be more likely to implement both inside and outside lobbying strategies to gain larger influence on EU policymaking, due to their abilities of investing in both strategies (Weiler and Brändli 2015, 8). There is also literature claiming that policy conflict (i.e. level of polarization of stakeholders’ preferences over outcomes) leads to competition among interest groups and thus interest groups utilize all possible channels to gain influence (Dür and Mateo 2013, 665; Weiler and Brändli 2015, 8). Moreover, Binderkrantz and Krøyer (2012, 115) argue that “the more divisible a goal a group is pursuing, the more actively it engages in all types of influence strategies”. Regardless of whether one or more strategies are applied by interest groups, there are various theories as to which factors determine the choice of strategies. In the next section I examine existing theories, research and literature on interest groups’ lobbying strategies.



**Figure 2.1:** Conceptualization of lobbying strategies. Adapted from Mahoney (2008).

## **2.2 Theories explaining the choice of lobbying strategies**

The literature discusses several factors that may explain why interest groups choose certain lobbying strategies over others. Overall, there are three clusters of factors that affect the choice of lobbying strategies: (1) interest groups' characteristics and level of lobbying resource-endowment; (2) features of the institutional setting in which lobbying takes place; (3) characteristics of the policy context in which lobbying takes place (i.e. policy area, issue salience, conflict, complexity) (Bunea 2014, 1226-1227; Dür and Mateo 2016, 8). In this part of the thesis I examine the existing literature on lobbying strategies with the intent to identify relevant hypotheses for the Nordic interest groups.

### **2.2.1 The importance of actor characteristics and resources**

The first school of thought focuses on interest group characteristics and resources. The theoretical perspective is also referred to as the "resource-based perspective" (Beyers 2004, 212). In short, the resource-based perspective argues that interest groups' choice of lobbying strategies can be explained by organisational characteristics and resources. Organisational characteristics include, organisational structure, type of interest represented and resource endowment (e.g. financial, amount of expertise, membership size). Resources are, however, not only regarded as financial means, but can be "anything that can be used to sway the specific choices or the strategies of another individual" (Dahl 1961, 226). For example, this includes material resources such as financial means, but also resources like staff, expertise and information (Dür and Mateo 2016, 29-30).

In sum, it is argued that resources and interest group characteristics are important for the interest groups' choice of lobbying strategies (Beyers 2008, 1188; Dür and Mateo 2016, 5). A large number of interest group studies in the EU have traditionally focused on this this perspective (Klüver et al. 2015a, 449).

## **Actor characteristics**

The school of thought claims that characteristics such as group type (i.e. interest type represented) and organisational form explain which lobbying strategy an interest group applies. It is argued that interest type represented is an important factor in explaining which strategies interest groups choose, and that there are significant differences between interest groups when it comes to the choice of lobbying strategies (Dür and Mateo 2016, 2; Binderkrantz 2005, 695). “Interest type represented” is meant by types such as those referred to in the conceptualization of interest groups, but can be further divided into: (1) business organisations, (2) consultancies, (3) citizen groups/NGOs, (4) trade union/professional organisations, (5) institutions, (6) public authorities and (7) other types (Bunea 2017; Greenwood and Dreger 2013; Greenwood 2017).

Business groups are often highlighted as a special interest type compared to other groups. Bunea (2017, 60) calls it the distinction of “classic ‘business vs. public interest organisations’”. Business groups are mainly reckoned to prefer inside lobbying strategies as well as to be expected to have more access than other types of groups (Bunea 2017; Bernhagen and Mitchell 2009; Boräng and Naurin 2015; Dür and Mateo 2012; 2016). The general argument is that business groups tend to be relatively better equipped with technical information – which is needed for policymakers to formulate legislation (Dür and Mateo 2016, 3).

Furthermore, the literature often distinguishes between interest groups that represent “specific interests” and “diffuse interests” to identify interest types (Eising et al. 2017, 940; Weiler and Brändli 2015, 5). Specific interests are usually those that represent a specific economic or societal sector. Business interests are normally related to specific interests because they are said to be easier to mobilise, and citizen interests to diffuse interests because they are more difficult to mobilise (Eising et al. 2017, 940). The Norwegian company, Equinor, or the Danish company, A.P. Møller – Mærsk are examples of business groups. Diffuse interests, on their part, include for example environmental interest groups or interest groups fighting for animal welfare, such as Djurskyddet Sverige. Specific interest groups represent the interests of their members, and they promote policies whose benefits accrue mostly to these members. Diffuse interest groups, on the other hand, are organisations pursuing goals in the common interest (or what they perceive as the common interest) (Weiler and Brändli 2015, 5).

The general argument and findings are that interest groups that represent diffuse interests rely on outside lobbying to get more publicity for their lobbying efforts. Furthermore, interest groups that represent diffuse interest usually have less resources. Specific interest groups on the other hand, generally have more resources, are quite technical and make use of inside lobbying strategies (e.g. Eising et al. 2017, 940; Dür and Mateo 2016, 2; Pollack 1997, 575; Bunea 2013, 3-4; Bunea 2014, 1229; Mahoney 2008, 152; Beyers 2004, 216-217; Binderkrantz et al. 2015, 108; Weiler and Brändli 2015, 5). Specific interest groups are also known to have more expert knowledge and thus focus on inside lobbying strategies, compared to diffuse interest groups (Bunea 2014, 1229).

Because interest groups may attempt to convey technical information and to lobby on more complex policy issues, they know it is more efficient to choose an inside lobbying strategy. Consequently, such interest groups lobby bureaucrats more intensively, and most likely with the EU Commission as their main target (Eising 2007, 394; Greenwood 2017, 25). Since the EU institutions need relevant information, having expert knowledge makes it more likely for interest groups to choose an inside lobbying strategy. Interest groups with diffuse interests, on the contrary, have an advantage in terms of access to information about public preferences (Eising 2007; Bouwen 2002; Dür and Mateo 2016). Such “political information” is important for the legitimacy of the EU and its policymaking. Groups pursuing general interest (diffuse interests) are found to mainly lobby the European parliament and the media (Binderkrantz and Krøyer 2012, 115).

Organisational form is also claimed to matter for the choice of lobbying strategies. Organisational form refers to two different types of organisational characteristics: membership vs. non-membership-based organisations, as well as European associations/federations, national associations or individual associations (interest groups lobbying on their own). For example, European umbrella organisations have greater resources (e.g. financial, staff size and expert knowledge) than national or individual organisations (Bunea 2013, 3-4). Hence, they are expected to most likely choose inside lobbying strategies. However, critics have argued that precisely due to overwhelming resources and memberships, it diminishes the ability of collective action (Bunea 2014, 1238; Bouwen 2002, 377; Beyers 2008, 1201). Nevertheless, Bunea’s (2014, 1238) findings maintain that European associations overcome such challenges. Bunea (2015, 294) finds that EU lobbying coordination is enabled by membership within European association. National associations

are expected to have a disadvantage of conducting inside lobbying strategies, while individual organisations should be very efficient in the provision of access goods (information) (Bouwen 2002). It remains to see whether the same arguments apply to the Nordic interest groups, considering the strong corporatist traditions.

### **Lobbying resources matter**

The resource-based perspective argues that financial endowment is an essential resource (Dür and Mateo 2016, 2). The more money an interest group has, the more resources and assets it gains access to (for example employees and information). Having financial resources makes it possible to spend more; to use more money on gathering information and/or to hire competent people in the field of interests. Additionally, more financial resources make it possible to put a greater emphasis on influencing policymakers directly through inside lobbying strategies. The argument is that financial resources secure the interest groups a larger and better qualified staff and hence they can afford having more direct meetings with policymakers (i.e., relying on an inside lobbying strategy) (Weiler and Brändli 2015, 8; Dür and Mateo 2013, 672).

In comparison, resource-poor interest groups are more likely to join coalitions. In order to mobilize for a policy debate, resource-poor groups need to find resources, but also to be restrictive once they have some. Because coalitions pool resources, and coalitions are less risky, coalition behaviour should be an attractive lobbying strategy for resource-poor interest groups. The opposite is true for resource-rich interest groups (Mahoney 2008, 172).

Staff size, Brussels office, expertise and organisational form are considered important resources and also affect the choice of lobbying strategies. Staff size, it is argued, matters in the same way as financial means: large interest groups have more resources to use on inside lobbying strategies (Bouwen 2002, 373). Furthermore, only large interest groups have enough resources to establish a representative office in Brussels (Bouwen 2002, 374). The literature indicates that having a Brussels office makes it easier to get closer to EU policymaking. “A presence in the European capital suggests a higher level in engagement in the interest community and likely significantly more informational resources” (Mahoney 2004, 452). Having a Brussels office will enable inside lobbying strategies (Mahoney 2004, 453; Bunea 2014, 1229; Bouwen 2002, 374). However, it will also be easier to engage in outside lobbying



(Mahoney 2008, 163). Having a Brussels office is an indicator of resources, and interest groups with limited financial resources will accordingly be less able to establish a Brussels office (Bunea 2014, 1229; Mahoney 2004, 452). Bouwen (2002, 374) argues that interest groups without Brussels offices should join coalitions or a third party, in order to have the opportunity to lobby at a European level.

Expertise is another resource that is especially regarded as important in the EU and has been extensively recognised in the literature (Bouwen 2002; Mahoney 2008; Beyers et al. 2014; Bernhagen et al. 2015; Weiler and Brändli 2015; Dür and Mateo 2016). Variation in interest groups' access to decision-makers is explained by different levels of endowment with different types of information. For the resource-based perspective, information is an especially important factor for the choice of lobbying strategies (Eising 2007, 387). "Well-informed groups are best positioned to provide much needed information to EU decision-makers and thus influence the EU policymaking process" (Chalmers 2013, 475). As mentioned in the conceptualization of 'lobbying', information is crucial for the EU institutions in their policy formulations. The EU institutions have small administrations and thus depend on receiving relevant knowledge from interest groups (Klüver et al. 2015a, 451).

According to Bouwen (2002, 36), information can be of different types: (1) Expert knowledge, (2) Information about the European Encompassing Interest (IEEI) and (3) Information about the Domestic Encompassing Interest (IDEI). Expert knowledge refers to expertise and technical knowledge and is crucial for EU policymaking and legislation in a particular policy area (Bouwen 2002, 369). For example, Stora Enso can provide technical expertise to help EU officials and politicians understand the particularities of renewable solutions in biomaterials. IEEI relates to needs and interest of a sector in the European economic arena, i.e. the so-called Internal Market. For example, European Banking Federation may state "the needs and interests of its members with regard to new capital adequacy rules for commercial banks" (Bouwen 2002, 369). IDEI concerns the needs and interests of a sector in the domestic market. Swedish Bankers' Association, for example, can provide information on the needs and interests of its members with regard to new capital adequacy rules of commercial banks (Bouwen 2002, 369).

These can be further distinguished into two types of information: technical information and political information (Dür and Mateo 2016, 30). Technical information reduces uncertainty about the consequences of policy choices and political information reduces uncertainty about public preferences (Dür and Mateo 2016, 30).

When it comes to EU legislation, the Commission and the national governments (EP and the Council) are generally considered to be most in need of technical information (Bouwen 2002, 379; Dür and Mateo 2016, 183). The Commission needs expertise to draw up legislative proposals and national governments require technical information to check to what extent the proposals are in line with their preferences and how they can be implemented. Both actors are also eager to gain support in implementing the proposed policies. Members of European Parliament, however, are relatively less in need of technical information than executive institutions (Bouwen 2002, 381; Dür and Mateo 2016, 184). At the same time, they are relatively more in need of political information (Coen and Richardson 2009, 9; Dür and Mateo 2016, 184). Re-election concern makes parliamentarians relatively more eager to show consideration for the interests of broad parts of society than executive institutions. Thus, having information is decisive for the choice of lobbying strategies: having resources, such as experts, make it more likely for interest groups to choose inside lobbying strategies.

### **2.2.2 The power of institutions**

As a criticism of the resource perspective, Beyers (2004, 227-228) argues that lobbying strategies cannot be systematically explained by the difference between diffuse and specific interests. His findings show that specific interest groups are more likely to use inside strategies, but that the differences relative to diffuse interest groups are not very large. Moreover, his results do not support the claim that diffuse interest groups seek more access to the European Parliament than to the European Commission, or that specific interest groups seek more access to the European Commission than do diffuse interests (Beyers 2004, 224).

Several scholars argue that lobbying behaviour cannot be fully understood from a purely rationalistic behaviour perspective (Weiler and Brändli 2015, 2). As Miard (2014, 74) points out: “in theory, interest groups can choose between all the strategies and targets; in practice,

however, there are constraints on which lobbying routes they are able to use”. Critics argue that the resource perspective does not take into account for other explanatory factors, such as institutional mechanisms (Beyers 2004, 213). Although they do not necessarily disagree that resource factors also explain lobbying strategies, they argue that resources alone cannot cover the whole story. Klüver et al. (2015a, Beyers et al. 2014; Eising et al. 2015; Klüver et al. 2015b), argue that previous research has paid considerable attention to individual interest group characteristics, and that the effect of contextual variables has largely been neglected. Contrary to the resource-based explanations, institutionalists emphasize that institutional settings lead to different incentives and constraints that again determine interest groups’ lobbying strategies (Beyers 2004, 212).

### **The EU institutions as lobbying venues**

The literature argue that institutional settings, such as the extent to which political institutions are dependent on the information provided by interest groups and the type of system of interest representation at the national level, are essential for the choice of lobbying strategies (Dür and Mateo 2016, 9-10; Beyers et al. 2014, 132). The institutional setting “sets the access points, shapes the communication channels by establishing the rules of participation and determines the needs of policymakers in their informational exchange with interest groups” (Bunea 2014, 1226-1227).

“Interest associations rarely face one monolithic government” (Beyers 2004, 212). Different institutions need and/or are interested in multiple types of resources (Dür and Mateo 2016, 9-10). As mentioned, this can be technical information (i.e. needed for details in the policy formulations) or political information (i.e. the citizen support on a specific policy). The EU consists of different arenas and offers multiple access points, which means that various institutional actors are targeted to varying degrees by different types of interest groups (Beyers 2004, 212). At the same time, the policymaking procedure of an issue affects which institutions that are targeted (Mahoney 2008, 130). Consequently, the institutional view would argue that the EU institutions and different arenas shape the lobbying behaviour and choice of strategies of interest groups. As opposed to the resource perspective, the institutional view contends that interest groups are rational actors that adjust their lobbying strategies so as to fit the informational or resource needs of institutions and policymakers they want to access and

influence. Rather, the overall argument is that the differences in informational needs between the institutions determine which interest groups the decision-makers will listen to.

In attempting to influence EU policymaking and legislation, the European Commission and the European Parliament are the most popular institutions for interest groups (Beyers 2004, 224). The Commission is regarded as the most important institution because it has the sole right of legislative initiative and thus responsible for drafting of legislative proposals (Coen and Richardson 2009, 20; Eising 2008, 12). The literature on lobbying strategies argues that the earlier you lobby in the process, the higher the chances to shape the agenda and decision-making process (Bouwen 2002; Eising 2008). After the legislation proposal it is sent to the European Parliament and the Council. In the decision-making phase, interest groups can lobby both the EP and the Council. Out of these two institutions, the EP is considered to be the most important institution because it is easier to access information and to make contact with its policymakers, than in the Council (Greenwood 2017, 25). Moreover, even though the Commission is regarded as the most important institution for lobbying interest groups, the EP's importance for lobbying has increased with its expanded decision powers through the treaties (Nugent 2017, 202-203).

A significant part of European legislation touches upon new areas with a quite complex character, and therefore the Commission is keen to gain expert knowledge (Beyers 2004, 219). According to this view, inside lobbying strategies are employed to influence the Commission, while outside lobbying strategies are preferred when lobbying the European Parliament (Bunea 2014, 1226-1227; Beyers 2004, 219). However, the European Parliament and its growing legislative role forces the MEPs to consider factual and technical expertise as well (Beyers 2004, 219). Nevertheless, since they are elected officials, they are expected to be sensitive to the public.

The resource perspective would argue that only resource-rich groups will try to lobby the European Commission. This has led to research arguing that the EU is biased towards EU-level groups and resource-rich groups (e.g. Eising 2007; Binderkrantz et al. 2015). However, many interest groups participate, for example, in the Commission's online consultations and present their interest directly to the Commission and European Parliament (Eising et al. 2017, 943). As Beyers (2004, 218) argues, policymakers know that interest groups lobbying specific interest are strategic, and hence also opens up for other types of interest groups – through for

example open consultations. Thus, this institutional structure facilitates mobilization of a large variety of interests (Beyers 2004, 218). Furthermore, it is not necessarily the case that specific interest groups do not seek access to the EP. On the contrary, it is likely that the mobilization of diffuse interests towards the EP forces specific interest to also increase their efforts to the EP (Beyers 2004, 219).

### **The impact of national legacy and of the national interest group system**

Another structural explanation of lobbying strategies is systems of interest representation at the national level. National interest groups frequently lobby the European institutions directly. Klüver et al. (2015a, 450-451) argue that the variation of lobbying strategies is partly explained by the systems of interest representation. The overall argument is that domestic systems of interest representation shape lobbying strategies of interest groups (Dür and Mateo 2013, 670; Marshall and Bernhagen 2017, 982; Eising et al. 2017, 942). National systems of interest representation might shape the behaviour of interest groups at supranational level because the national level is where they were lobbying traditionally and where they have established their routines. This only accounts for national associations and individual interest groups, however.

Scholars who study this have most often divided between corporatist and pluralist systems (Eising et al. 2017; Marshall and Bernhagen 2017; Dür and Mateo 2016). The difference between the two is that corporatist systems is characterized by an institutionalization of interest groups representing both capital and labour interests (Dür and Mateo 2016, 10). There have been some conflicting arguments and findings in the literature (Eising 2007, 17). Some argue that interest groups from corporatist systems have the possibilities to influence the national policymaking, and hence do not focus on EU-lobbying. Or if they do, they will largely rely on encompassing groups to represent their interests (Marshall and Bernhagen 2017, 987). The opposite is true for interest groups from pluralistic systems: because they are more excluded from the national policymaking, they will focus on EU-lobbying (Klüver et al. 2015a, 455). Similarly, it has been argued that because the EU is more or less considered a pluralistic system, interest groups from pluralist systems at the domestic level will have an advantage because they do not need to change their routines (Marshall and Bernhagen 2017, 987).

However, Bernhagen and Mitchell (2009, 171) found that there is not a difference in lobbying behaviour between interest groups from corporatist and pluralist systems. A decade later, Marshall and Bernhagen (2017, 997) find that in fact it has reversed: interest groups from pluralist systems are more likely to lobby their national government, while interest groups from corporatist systems are more likely to lobby at the EU level. It is worth mentioning, however, that these are findings based on a comparison of British and German firms. They are nonetheless good examples of pluralist and corporatist systems. Germany is one of the most corporatist countries in the world, whereas the UK is one of the most pluralist countries (Jahn 2016, 65).

There is also an argument stating that interest groups that have a weak influence over national governments, may be tempted into a “by-pass” strategy, while interests that have a privileged position in domestic policy networks may be initially reluctant to embark on EU-level strategies (Callanan 2011, 1). “However, such strategies are not static but rather evolve and change over time – there is evidence of policy learning and a trend towards ‘venue shopping’ at both national and EU levels. On the other hand, those interests that remain weak at national level may also remain weak at European level” (Callanan 2011, 1). Moreover, Dür and Mateo (2012, 973-974) argue that interest groups from small EU member states will engage in more direct lobbying than those from large member states, because their governments have less power in the Council of Ministers.

Although interest groups’ lobbying strategies are shaped by their domestic systems, findings also show that interest groups adjust to the institutional setting they are active in (Eising et al. 2017, 941-942). Interest groups from corporatist systems have been compelled to adjust their lobbying strategies in the EU. Thus, it is argued that this has in turn given them an advantage, compared to interest groups from pluralist systems, who have not needed to (at least to the same extent) adapt to supranational policy arena of the EU (Marshall and Bernhagen 2017, 997).

Bernhagen and Mitchell (2009, 158) argue that interest groups from countries with corporatist traditions put a greater emphasis on influencing or lobbying through coalitions. Berkhout (2010, 2) also argue that interest groups from corporatist systems are assumed to be more cooperative and are “valued by politicians for their representative nature and expertise”. At the same time, it is argued that interest groups from pluralist systems are assumed to compete

with each other, making them less likely to join coalitions (Berkhout 2010, 2). Furthermore, Berkhout (2010, 116) argues that interest groups from corporatist systems rely more on inside lobbying, compared to IGs from pluralist systems. This, he argues, is due to the consensus politics in corporatist systems. Given this, it seems that interest groups from corporatist systems rely more on inside lobbying and that interest groups from pluralist systems rely on outside lobbying strategies. Furthermore, IGs from corporatist systems are more likely to join coalitions, compared to IGs from pluralist systems who will more likely lobby alone. Dür and Mateo (2016, 102), however, only find a small support for the argument that interest groups from corporatist systems use inside lobbying strategies more than interest groups from pluralist systems.

### **2.2.3 The impact of policy context**

The third cluster of explanations emphasizes the importance of policy context on forming the interest groups' choice of lobbying strategies. Such contextual factors include issue-level characteristics and policy-area characteristics (Bunea 2014, 1227).

#### **Issue level characteristics**

Issue level characteristics is argued to matter for the choice of lobbying strategies. Key issue level characteristics refer to (1) issue salience, (2) the degree of conflict on the issue and (3) its complexity. Issues can be of a distributive, regulatory or redistributive type (Lowi 1964) It is argued that the policy type is important for the choice of lobbying strategies. Whether the policy is regulatory, distributive or redistributive should have considerable consequences for lobbying strategies (Klüver et al. 2015a, 451; Dür and Mateo 2016, 5). They can be more or less complex; and they can be more or less salient to the broad public. Thus, other differentiations of policy types include complex issues versus simple ones, or conflictual and salient issues (Mahoney 2008, 40-41; Eising et al. 2017, 942).

Lowi (1964) argued that policies with direct consequences for public budgets are often highly salient to the public even if they are not specifically influenced by the policy problem or its solution. Thus, much attention is likely to focus on proposed policies with funds attached and are likely to generate more organisational activity (Rasmussen et al. 2014, 6). Put differently, distributive and redistributive policies will most likely have a high salience and conflict. In contrast, regulatory policies often address a narrower set of interests. Such issues could be less salient to the general public because the direct costs of regulation are carried by the target organisations themselves (Rasmussen et al. 2014, 6). To sum up, the policy type influences and generate different levels of conflict and controversy and that in turn affect the choice of lobbying strategies.

Issues can feature high on the political agenda and gain much public attention, or they can be of concern to a handful of actors. Issue salience thus influences lobbying strategies, according to the contextual view (Klüver et al. 2015a, 451-452). High issue salience can trigger an attention cascade that motivates an ever-greater number of outsiders to get involved in the campaign. On such issues, decision-makers will feel great pressure to adopt policies in line with public opinion, which should favour the lobbying outsiders (Dür and Mateo 2016, 44). The higher issue salience, and the larger the issue, the more likely an interest group will go outside “and capitalize on the attention” (Mahoney 2008, 150; Beyers 2008; 1992; Bunea 2014, 1227).

Moreover, highly salient issues are also expected to lead to coalition behaviour (Mahoney 2008, 171; Eising et al. 2017, 942). This is because high-salience issues need broad public support and often involve costly strategies – which again incentivises to pool resources (Mahoney 2008, 171). Additionally, high salience issues may drive lobbyists to use more and a broader range of inside lobbying strategies (Mahoney 2008, 143). The argument is that the more important an issue is to the public, and the bigger the impact is on the public, drive interest groups to use inside lobbying strategies so that they can communicate their positions to policymakers who know the stakes are high (Mahoney 2008, 128).

Another issue characteristic is the degree of policy conflict. Policy conflict means the level of polarization of stakeholders’ preferences over outcomes. Issues where only a few groups pursue their interest are often highly technical and limited to one specific sector (Beyers 2008, 1992). Furthermore, for issues that hardly raise any attention, interest groups should be able to



move close to the legislative (Klüver et al. 2015a, 451-452). In the case of distributive issues, business interests and professional associations can expect little opposition from other business or professional interests, as the costs of the policy are spread thinly across a large number of actors. In such a situation, they have an incentive to focus on inside lobbying since an outside strategy may draw attention to a lobbying campaign that is best carried out covertly (Dür and Mateo 2013, 665; Eising et al. 2017, 942).

The situation changes when they lobby on regulatory issues: here the expectation is for different coalitions of business and professional interests to face each other on opposite sides of the debate (Dür and Mateo 2013, 665). Some policies are highly conflictual and divide interest groups into different sets of competing advocacy coalitions (Klüver et al. 2015a, 452). The argument is that conflict gives groups an incentive to band together to face a common threat (Mahoney 2008, 171). Furthermore, both sides then may be pushed towards an outside strategy to gain an advantage over the adversary (Dür and Mateo 2013, 665). Interest groups will therefore be likely to make use of several strategies (Weiler and Brändli 2015, 8).

It is also argued that issue complexity matters for the choice of lobbying strategies. For different types of issues, policymakers will seek and need different information. For example, some issues require expert knowledge while other need broad-based political support (Beyers 2008, 1190). Some legislative proposals are relatively simple and confined to a particular field, whereas others are highly complex, as they deal with extremely technical matters and have repercussion for multiple fields. In such instances, the EU institutions need expert knowledge (Klüver et al. 2015a, 451). As mentioned, on technical legislative proposals, interest groups prefer inside lobbying strategies (Bunea 2014, 1227). Yet, the demand for input from interest groups varies with the degree of complexity, and it can therefore be expected that interest groups choice of lobbying strategies should vary with the complexity of policy proposals (Klüver et al. 2015a, 451).

Although there are several scholars that argue that policy context matters, so far there is little evidence that issue characteristics matter for the choice of lobbying strategies (Dür and Mateo 2016, 9). For example, Mahoney (2008) and Baumgartner et al. (2009, 150) only find limited influence of issue salience on lobbying strategy choice. What matters, according to them, is whether actors defend the status quo or pursue policy change. In a study of environmental lobbying in the EU, however, Junk (2016) finds that issue characteristics matter more than

group characteristics. She concludes that outside lobbying should dominate on issues of high public salience and low complexity. Dür and Mateo (2016, 16), on the other hand, found that business groups are choosing inside lobbying strategies independently of issue salience.

### **Policy-area characteristics**

The EU's competences vary in the different policy areas. For example, trade policy is an exclusive competence of the EU, whereas the EU's role on culture is largely limited to coordination. Thus, the policy area in which interest groups are active, influences the choice of lobbying strategies (Dür and Mateo 2016, 150). There is a variance in interest group activity across policy areas because the different policy areas differ in their needs (Coen and Katsaitis 2013, 1104).

As mentioned, the Commission is regarded as the most important institution due to its power on initiating legislation. Yet, the Commission is rarely approached as a collegiate body; rather, interest groups maintain relations with one or more of its DGs that are responsible for specific policy areas (Eising 2008, 12). The Directorate-General (DG) has important influence on the content of the policy proposal. This means that the choice of lobbying strategies may depend on which DGs that are in charge of specific legislative initiatives (Klüver et al. 2015a, 453). "The DGs form stronger (informal) ties with groups that provide relevant and reliable information over time and unique interest group clusters emerge across policy types" (Coen and Katsaitis 2013, 1105). Put differently, the access is limited to interest groups that can help the DGs to formulate policy in their respective policy area (Coen and Katsaitis 2013, 1107).

Moreover, the EU can be considered a "chameleon pluralist system" (Coen and Richardson 2009, 346; Coen and Katsaitis 2013, 1104). There is variation in actors-type and patterns of participation and lobbying behaviour across different policy areas (Bunea 2014, 1231). It is argued that in policy areas in which input legitimacy plays a major role, decision-makers have a greater need of political information, making them seek out groups that have a comparative advantage in providing that information, namely citizen groups. In policy areas in which output legitimacy is more important, decision-makers need technical information, creating an incentive for them to have contacts with business interest, which have a corporative advantage in providing that type of information (Dür and Mateo 2016, 204). For example, EU social

policy is marked by a system of sectoral corporatism. For business and labour, the expanding policy agenda in EU social policy has increased the significance of having a say in the EU's decisions in this policy area. This means that policy areas such as the EU social policy, interest groups such as business and labour, play a privileged role (Coen and Richardson 2009, 256).

Interest groups mainly engage in interest representation. In doing so, they tend to be quite specialized in their fields of interest and thus lobby in policy areas that they identify as important for their activities (Dür and Mateo 2016, 83). The argument is that interest groups that are highly interested in a small number of policy areas, are also considered specialists in these policy areas. Because interest groups have this high-level of specialization, it may make them well-suited to provide decision-makers with expertise (inside lobbying strategy). Interest groups involved in many policy areas, however, may not have the same level of expertise and thus be considered generalists. For example, national associations (interest group consisting of individual organisations at the national level) have to deal with many policy issues and are therefore considered generalists rather than specialists. Like European associations, national associations therefore tend to be not very good at providing expert knowledge (Bouwen 2002, 377).

## **2.3 The Nordic case: differentiated European integration and levels of corporatism**

According to the study of Jahn (2016, 59), Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland are among the top ten countries that are ranked as corporatist countries. They are thus all characterized as corporatist countries, but at slightly different levels. Sweden is ranked as number two, Norway as number five, Finland as number seven and Denmark as number ten. Nonetheless, while these states share corporatist characteristics, they differ in terms of their relationships with the European Union (Leruth 2014, ii).

The Nordic countries became involved in the European integration at different points in time, and to dissimilar degrees. Denmark became a member of the European Union already in 1973, while Finland and Sweden joined in 1995. Finland and Sweden were neutral states in

the Cold War, but due to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Sweden and Finland could apply for EU membership. Norway, on the other hand, joined the EEA Agreement in 1994 (Egeberg 2003, 1).

Finland, Sweden and Norway all had national referendums on EU-membership in 1994. In Finland, 56.9% supported EU membership, 52.3% in Sweden, while 47.7% favoured Norwegian EU membership. This was the second time Norwegians voted against EU membership, as Norway held a referendum in 1972 as well. Egeberg (2003, 7) argues that the centre-periphery dimension is the reason why Norwegians resist membership. He points to the fact that Sweden has had an extensive centralisation policy for a long time, which might explain the difference in the referendum turnout for Norway (Egeberg 2003, 8).

Although Denmark, Finland and Sweden are all members of the EU, they differ in their integration. Firstly, Finland is considered as being close to the core of EU activity (Mouritzen and Wivel 2005, 95). Egeberg (2003, 23) argues that “the peculiar Finnish enthusiasm and involvement on all dimensions can probably only be accounted for by taking into consideration the ‘special relationship’ with the former Soviet Union during the cold war”. Sweden, however, is regarded as a “euro outsider on the inside” of the European Union (Miles 2005; Lindahl and Naurin 2005; Leruth 2014). A “euro outsider” has been defined by Miles (2005, 4) as “a country that is a full member of the EU yet remains outside the euro-area and thus has not adopted the euro”. Sweden have *de facto* opted out of the third stage of the Economic and Monetary Union (Leruth 2014, 86).

Likewise, Denmark can also be regarded a euro outsider. Through the Edinburgh Agreement, Denmark has opted out of three core EU policy areas: Economic and Monetary Union; aspects of the Common Foreign and Security Policy; as well as what was originally called the Justice and Home Affairs pillar (Leruth 2014, 2). The difference between Sweden and Denmark is that Sweden has a legal obligation to join the Eurozone, and consequently the Swedish case for differentiated integration is somewhat challenging to defend (Leruth 2014, 86). Conversely, Denmark, has operated one of the most visible and institutional forms of differentiation in the European Union (Miles 2010). Moreover, as emphasised by Egeberg and Trondal (1999, 134), Norway may be “even more sectorally penetrated or harmonized” than other EU members regarding policy harmonization. Although Norway is only part of the EEA Agreement, it still involves a great deal of integration (Egeberg 2003).

Whether the differentiated integration of Denmark, Sweden and Finland has any impact on how interest groups from these countries act when lobbying the European Union, is difficult to say. In the case of Norway, Bernhagen and Mitchell (2009) argue that Norwegian interest groups use direct lobbying strategies to make up for the fact that they do not have representation. Moreover, Dür and Mateo (2016, 110) argue that “consensus politics” in general should lead interest groups to rely more on inside lobbying. Taking into consideration the “opt-outs” among the member states and the peculiar agreements of the EEA countries, “differentiated integration (or membership)” might possibly be a more proper term than the simple “membership-non-membership dichotomy” (Stubb 1996; Egeberg and Trondal 1999; Egeberg 2003). Miard (2014), on the other hand, finds that EU membership determines how and where Norwegian companies lobby. Because Norwegian interest groups lack access, in particular to the EP and the Council, they lobby EU institutions less directly than Swedish companies.

Despite the differentiated European integration, what the Nordic countries have in common is corporatism (Jahn 2016). Because Nordic interest groups are used to participate in national policymaking, it is natural for Nordic interest groups to lobby the European Union as well (source). Moreover, and as already mentioned, interest groups from corporatist systems have been compelled to adjust their lobbying strategies in the EU. Accordingly, it is argued that this has in turn given them an advantage, compared to interest groups from pluralist systems, who have not needed to (at least to the same extent) adapt to supranational policy arena of the EU (Marshall and Bernhagen 2017, 997). It remains to be seen whether there are differences in the lobbying strategies that the Nordic interest groups choose.

## 2.4 Theoretical argument

As presented, the literature discusses several factors that may explain why interest groups choose certain lobbying strategies over others. There are three schools of thought proposing explanations to the choice of lobbying strategies: (1) interest groups' characteristics and lobbying resource-endowment; (2) features of the institutional setting in which lobbying takes place; (3) characteristics of the policy context in which lobbying takes place, i.e. policy area, issue salience, conflict, complexity (Bunea 2014, 1226-1227; Dür and Mateo 2016, 8).

I build my argument on the first school of thought and argue that organizational lobbying resources and group characteristics are key explanations of lobbying strategy choice, while the two other approaches provide alternative explanations. The Nordic countries are very much similar regarding institutional framework: all the Nordic countries have high scores in corporatism and are among the top 10 corporatist countries in the world (Jan 2016, 59). Put differently, there are not major differences between the Nordic countries when it comes to system of interest representation. This means that there is not much variation in the institutional set up when it comes to the four analysed countries and this constitutes a constant across all four countries. Furthermore, although I do not disagree that policy context may matter, this is difficult to measure empirically and should remain a task for future studies. I believe that relying on the resource and characteristics-explanation is a necessary first step in explaining lobbying strategies of Nordic interest groups.

I argue that lobbying resources seem to matter for the choice of lobbying strategies. More money/financial resources lead to better hires, more expertise and a higher ability to secure a higher number of direct meetings with a diversity of policymakers. In other words, interest groups with a large endowment of financial resources often choose to make use of inside lobbying, which they can afford and which is largely considered to be the most effective and efficient manner of influencing and shaping policymaking, especially given the technical nature of EU decision-making in which conveying technical information in consultations, meetings and face to face contact is crucial. Dür and Mateo (2013, 672) found that material resources increase business associations' and decrease citizen groups' and professional associations' reliance on inside lobbying strategies. Furthermore, resource-rich organisations rely less on outside lobbying strategies (Weiler and Brändli 2015, 5). Resource-poor interest

groups, however, will rather choose outside lobbying or join a coalition. I thus expect the same for the interest groups from the Nordic countries:

***H1: Resource-rich groups are more likely to choose inside lobbying strategies, relative to outside strategies and lobbying in coalitions than resource-poor interest groups***

***H2: Resource-poor groups are more likely to lobby through coalitions relative to inside and outside strategies than resource-rich interest groups***

As already pointed out, it is not only financial resources that are considered resources, but also expertise, staff size and whether you have a Brussels office are important resources. I therefore expect that higher staff size leads to a greater likelihood of inside lobbying strategies, similar to the fact that one has a Brussels office to do so. Hence, by resource richness I include financially rich organisations, as well as interest groups with a large staff size having a Brussels office. I consider financial resources as the most important, because it makes it possible to have a large staff size and a Brussels office. Financial resources translate into hiring experts, more lobbyists, high ability to generate expertise and technical information, as well as a high ability to professionalize the lobbying. However, staff size and Brussels office can be regarded as indicators of the financial resources of an interest group (Bouwen 2002; Mahoney 2004; Bunea 2014; Dür and Mateo 2016).

Nevertheless, as previously touched upon, information about the public is also regarded an important asset. Type of information may play a role for which institution(s) that will be targeted by lobbying interest groups. When it comes to resources, one might expect a difference between the Commission and the EP in the level of inside lobbying strategies and types of interest groups lobbying, as lobbying the EP may not be as straightforward. MEPs are elected officials and are expected to be sensitive to the public, whereas the Commission is eager to gain expert knowledge. Consequently, (financial) resources may be more important when lobbying the Commission, compared to lobbying MEPs. Notwithstanding, as already stated, the European Parliament and its growing legislative role forces the MEPs to consider factual and technical expertise as well.

Furthermore, it seems as though many scholars view inside lobbying strategies as the “best strategy”, and thereby disregard outside lobbying strategies as something an interest group

might prefer (Binderkrantz and Krøyer 2012, 117). Precisely due to this view, it has become common to explain choices of outside lobbying strategies by paying attention to an organisation's inability to engage in inside lobbying strategies. Yet, it is less rational for an interest group that represents specific interests to aim at creating a media storm, compared to, for example, an interest group with environmental interests (Mahoney 2008, 151-152).

Consequently, even though resources matter, group type also seems to determine which lobby strategies an interest group will choose. Following this argument, it is important to address the relationship between interest type represented and the level of organisational lobbying resources. Business groups are generally expected to have more resources, to be quite technical and have more expert knowledge, and hence to make use of inside lobbying strategies (Eising et al. 2017; Dür and Mateo 2016; Bunea 2013; Bunea 2014; Mahoney 2008; Beyers 2004). While on average business might be more resource rich this is not always the case. As for instance, there are NGOs that have relevant lobbying resources (e.g. the Norwegian interest group Bellona Europa). Given the considerations discussed above, I expect that:

***H3: Business organisations are more likely to choose inside lobbying strategies relative to outside strategies and coalitions than other types of groups***



### 3. DATA AND METHODS

In this chapter I present the data collection and data analysis issues, while discussing the research design adopted.

Several methodological alternatives are available to study lobbying strategies of interest groups. For example, it has been common to interview interest groups and thus go more in-depth to explain their strategies. Previous studies have frequently focused on qualitative case studies (Bunea and Baumgartner 2014, 1425). However, the research questions set guidelines for which method(s) should be applied (George and Bennett 2005, 17). I aim to establish a broad and systematic understanding of the Nordic interest groups. The overall aim of the thesis is to tell the story about the lobbying strategies that Nordic interest groups deploy to influence and shape EU decision-making.

To answer the research questions of this thesis, I apply a mixed methodological approach, combining the analysis of quantitative data and qualitative empirical evidence. I have constructed a built for purpose dataset that will provide information about all Nordic interest groups registered in the EU Transparency register. The data sources used to construct the original dataset is the EU Transparency Register, Lobbyfacts.eu; an online survey I conducted; an original dataset assembled by Adriana Bunea and Raimondas Ibenskas on meetings between IGs and MEPs based on the EP official website; and the media outlets Euractiv, Euronews and Politico.eu.

The first part is a descriptive analysis, mapping the lobbying strategies of the Nordic interest groups. In the second part, I conduct a large-N explanatory analysis of interest groups from the four Nordic countries that is built on the original dataset providing information about interest groups' characteristics, lobbying strategies and characteristics of policy context. Inside lobbying and outside lobbying is examined empirically, and my unit of observation and analysis is an interest group. In total I have 5 regression models for 5 variables that help me measure 3 dependent variables: access to the EC, access to the EP and access to media. Lobbying in coalitions is difficult to observe empirically. Thus, as an alternative data source, I have launched an online survey of Nordic interest groups identified in the Transparency Register in which I have asked them to respond to a set of questions pertinent for my research

questions. The survey answers are presented through a descriptive analysis in addition to the implementation of an explanatory analysis on the choice of lobbying in coalitions.

### 3.1 Dataset

I have constructed a built for purpose dataset that provides information about all Nordic interest groups registered in the EU Transparency register.<sup>3</sup> The data sources used to construct the original dataset is the EU Transparency Register, Lobbyfacts.eu; an online survey I conducted; an original dataset assembled by Adriana Bunea and Raimondas Ibenskas on meetings between IGs and MEPs<sup>4</sup>; and media sources such as Euractiv, Euronews and Politico.eu. Creating a built for purpose dataset makes it possible to identify exactly what I wish to study. Thus, it is important to be transparent about the operationalization of the variables in the dataset and the data sources (Kellstedt and Whitten 2018, 113).

Firstly, I have information on their organizational characteristics, gathered from the Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu. I have added data about their meetings with EC officials, membership in EC expert groups, number of passes to entry the European Parliament, resources and actor characteristics. The data from the Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu was amassed in September 2019 and later updated in January 2020 with new entries. I did not make changes to the already collected data but added information on interest groups that had been registered after September 2019. The identification is based on “Head office country” in the Transparency Register. A total of 803 interest groups from the Nordic countries were identified in the Transparency Register: 86 (10.71%) based in Norway, 186 (23.16%) in Denmark, 264 (32.88%) in Finland and 267 (33.25%) in Sweden.

The Transparency Register was created in 2008 and is a database that lists interest groups that try to influence the law-making and policy implementation process of the EU institutions. The register makes visible what interest are being pursued, by whom and with what budgets (European Commission 2020). The Transparency Register is managed by the Joint

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<sup>3</sup> To see descriptive statistics, please turn to page 40.

<sup>4</sup> This original dataset was assembled as part of their collaborative joint research project exploring the interactions between interest groups and MEPs. The dataset was collected in relation to the ERC project investigating patterns of stakeholders’ participation in consultations and the effects of consultations on policymaking in the European Union.

Transparency Register Secretariat (JTRS)' comprising staff from Parliament and the Commission (European Commission 2020). The Transparency Register is updated on a daily basis by lobbyists who submit or update their registrations every day and members of the JTRS study each single case individually. Although it is up to the interest groups to register in the Transparency Register, it is de facto mandatory to register if you want to enter the EP or the Commission (Bunea 2018, 2). As mentioned in Chapter 2, the EP and the Commission are committed to being open about the groups and organisations with which they interact, in order to increase their legitimacy. Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that when interest groups are registered in the EU Transparency Register, they have the aim to shape and make their demands and preferences heard in the EU policymaking process (Bunea 2018; Greenwood and Dreger 2013; Greenwood and Roedere-Running 2019).

### **3.1.1 Dependent variables**

This thesis aims to explain Nordic interest groups' choices of different lobbying strategies. The conceptual section identified three lobbying strategies: inside, outside and coalitions. Because the dependent variable refers to various tactics, there are multiple dependent variables. I define inside lobbying as lobbying activities that are directly aimed at influencing decision-makers. I capture inside lobbying targeting the European Commission with two measures (*IG meetings with EC high level officials* and *IG membership in EC expert groups*) and inside lobbying targeting the EP with the help of two indicators (*IG direct meetings with MEPs* and *Number of passes to access the EP premises*).

Outside lobbying is defined as lobbying activities that aim to influence policymakers through the public. This may happen through mobilizing constituents with press releases and conferences, political advertisements, contacts with journalists, protests and grassroots letter-writing campaigns (Mahoney 2008, 9; de Bruycker and Beyers 2019, 59). "What these tactics share in common is that they address policymakers indirectly and are geared at raising the awareness of a broader audience by communicating through various forms of public media" (de Bruycker and Beyers 2019, 59).

As mentioned in the conceptualization, presence in the news media is important for interest groups and media strategies are considered an essential outside strategy. Therefore, I use media appearance of an interest group (*Media access*) as an indicator of a group's attempt to use media as an outside lobbying strategy. Media strategies are one type of outside lobbying tactics; thus, media appearance (media access) alone may not necessarily equal outside lobbying. However, the media has become increasingly important both in the political process and in the strategies the interest groups pursue (Binderkrantz 2005, 695). Many scholars regard media access as part of an interest group's outside strategy, but news media coverage itself is rarely studied (de Bruycker and Beyers 2015, 453).

***IG meetings with EC high levels officials*** captures direct access to European Commission officials and decision-making and is measured as a count variable indicating the number of meetings with the European Commission. This information is gathered from LobbyFacts.eu. Not only does this variable make it possible to identify which interest groups that lobby the Commission, but also the frequency of interest groups attending EC meetings. The number of meetings includes all published meetings since the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2014. Since the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2014, the European Commission has published all meetings that commissioners, their cabinet members and the DGs have had with interest groups registered in the Transparency register (LobbyFacts.eu 2020).

Nevertheless, as LobbyFacts.eu (2020) state, there are a few important things to note: “A registrant may well have had other lobby meetings with lower-level officials in the Commission, but the only published data covers elite officials only. Secondly, the data that the Commission publishes is not perfect: there are duplications, omissions and delays. For example, a meeting attended by two separate officials can be reported twice, even though only one meeting was actually held, which can distort the figures.

***IG membership in EC expert groups*** is based on an interest group's membership of EC expert groups and assembled from the Transparency Register. This captures IG access to European Commission as an institution and to a key part of its decision-making expert groups. Expert group membership is a clear indication of EU-level activity. Most likely, an interest group only becomes a member of such a group if it is highly active with respect to EU-level lobbying in the first place – if the interest group is recognised as possessing expertise (Dür and Mateo 2016, 171). The variable is a dummy variable where 1 is interest groups with

membership in EC expert groups and 0 is interest groups that do not have membership in EC expert groups.

*IG direct meetings with MEPs* is measured as number of meetings with MEPs. This is a direct measure of access to EP legislators and the information is obtained from Bunea and Ibenskas' (2020) dataset. Not all MEPs decided to publicise information about their meetings with IGs during July 2019 – March 2020, so Bunea and Ibenskas' dataset only contains information about 200 MEPs that decided to make public information about their meetings with interest groups. However, this should be enough to identify some of the meetings of the Nordic interest groups have had with European legislators and to tells us something about the Nordic interest groups' access to the MEPs.

Similar to the *IG membership in EC expert groups* that captures access to an institution, the *Number of passes to access the EP premises* allows to capture access to the EP as an institution. The variable is coded as the respective interest groups' total number of EP passes. EP passes means accredited badges that provides unrestricted access to the EP's building. The 'EP passes' figure, collected from the Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu, is an official figure directly from the European Parliament's records which provides information on the number of accredited European Parliament passholders (LobbyFacts.eu 2020).

*Media access* is based on media appearance over the last five years (since the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014) in Euractiv, Euronews and Politico.eu – three of the most specialized EU media outlets (Luca 2019, 39-40). They are also the ones covering EU issues most comprehensively, hence IGs will most probably use these outlets to instrument and deploy outside strategies. The variable is measured as the total number of media appearances in the aforementioned news and media networks. I omitted group advertisements and Transparency Register-updates<sup>5</sup> because by only including articles, I am certain that the journalist or editor has been in control of the access (Binderkrantz et al. 2017, 313). Likewise, I excluded negative appearances as they cannot be regarded as a "group's successful entrance to an arena" (Binderkrantz et al. 2017, 313). Accordingly, constructing this variable was time consuming as I had to double check each and every article.

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<sup>5</sup> Politico.eu publishes articles on new entries of interest groups in the Transparency Register.

A sentence where the IG was mentioned was taken into account as informative. However, some exclusions were made. Some IGs names are also a brand (such as Spotify, Nokia or Volvo) that is used as a concept. For example, if Spotify was mentioned I had to make sure that the article was about the IG and not about a Spotify playlist that someone recommended. I also excluded interviews on or articles about people that are/were students at a particular university, unless the case was about the university of some sort, as for example research.

It is also worth mentioning the variation in difficulty of searching the media networks. Euractiv and Euronews were sensitive to verbatim searches and hence it was not complicated to find media appearances for the Nordic interest groups. Searching at politico.eu, on the other hand, was quite difficult. To be able to carry out verbatim searches at politico.eu, I ended up using Google instead. I searched directly in Euractiv and Euronews, but if there were “no findings” I also googled to make sure. The reason for searching directly in Euractiv and Euronews is that it gave a chronological overview of the publishing year. Furthermore, some interest group names are registered in the Transparency Register in a Nordic language. Therefore, I searched in both English and Nordic languages. This was not problematic for the Scandinavian interest groups, but it was less straight forward when it came to Finnish interest groups. In addition to searching on the IGs’ names (as they were registered in the Transparency Register), I also searched by abbreviations and replaced the specific Scandinavian vowels with digraphs or other equivalent vowels.

**Table 3.1:** Descriptive statistics on the dependent variables of inside and outside lobbying.

<b>Dependent variables</b>	<b>Minimum value</b>	<b>Maximum value</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.dev.</b>	<b>Units (N)</b>
<i>IG meetings with EC high level officials</i>	0	64	2,17	6,83	803
<i>IG membership in EC expert groups</i>	0	1	0,19	0,39	803
<i>IG direct meetings with MEPs</i>	0	1	0,15	0,35	803
<i>Number of passes to access the EP premises</i>	0	26	0,35	1,37	803
<i>Media access</i>	0	92	1,56	6,36	803

### 3.1.2 Explanatory variables

To measure resources, I have included *Financial resources*, *Staff size* and *Brussels office* – collected from the Transparency Register. *Financial resources* is measured as lobbying costs of the interest groups, that is, money spent on lobbying. The variable is recoded at an ordinal categorical scale ranging from 1 (costs less than 100,000 euros), 2 (costs between 100,000-500,000 euros), 3 (costs between 500,000-1 mill euros), 4 (costs between 1 mill and 2 mill euros) to 5 (costs more than 2 million euros). *Staff size* is measured as the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) lobbyists. It is worth mentioning that because this figure is self-declared, it means that it is also subject to over- or under-reporting. Interest groups may mistakenly declare their total staff numbers or total membership numbers, instead of their total lobbyist numbers (LobbyFacts.eu 2020). *Brussels office* is built on “Belgium office city” from the Transparency Register and is recoded into a dummy variable: 1 is interest groups that have a Brussels office and 0 are interest groups that do not.

*Interest type represented* is a categorical variable that differentiate between diverse types of interest groups and is based on the subcategories (“Subsection”) in the EU Transparency Register. The variable is recoded into six categories for a more concise variable, indicating for each interest group whether its group type corresponds to one of the following: (1) Business, (2) Consultancy, (3) NGO, (4) Trade union/Professional organisation, (5) Institution, (6) Public authority and (7) Other (Bunea 2017; Greenwood and Dreger 2013; Greenwood 2017).

### 3.1.3 Control variables

*Organisational form* is coded based on the “Subsection” and “Legal status” in the Transparency Register. If the information in those two categories was unclear, I also checked “Members” and/or the websites of the interest groups concerned. The variable is coded as a categorical variable: (1) Individual organisation (firms, NGOs, consultancies, etc.), (2) National association (includes firms or individuals as members and represents them as a national constituency, e.g. LO Norway), (3) European association (may include national organisations and/or firms from across EU member states and has a pan-European representative mandate) and (5) Other.

*MS is EU member* measures whether the interest group has its headquarters in a state that is an EU-member. The variable is coded a dummy variable where 1 is interest groups are based in Sweden, Denmark or Finland (EU-member states) and 0 is interest groups based in Norway (a non-EU member state). *Registration year* is a variable for the years the respective interest groups' registration in the EU Transparency Register. This can be used as a proxy for the amount of experience the interest groups have in lobbying the EU institutions and participation in policymaking. The variable is recoded at an ordinal scale from 1 (Year 2008) to 13 (Year 2020).

I have also included more information on the Nordic interest groups' meetings with MEPs from Bunea and Ibenskas' dataset about the interest groups' relations to the MEPs they meet with. *National vs. non-national MEPs* gives us qualitative information on how many of the MEPs that they meet with are of same nationality as where the Nordic interest groups are based.

### 3.1.4 Descriptive statistics: inside and outside lobbying strategies

**Table 3.2:** Descriptive statistics of original dataset used to examine inside and outside lobbying strategies.

Variables	Minimum value	Maximum value	Mean	Std.dev.	Units (N)
<b>Dependent variables</b>					
<i>IG meetings with EC high level officials</i>	0	64	2,17	6,83	803
<i>IG membership in EC expert groups</i>	0	1	0,19	0,39	803
<i>IG direct meetings with MEPs</i>	0	1	0,15	0,35	803
<i>Number of passes to access the EP premises</i>	0	26	0,35	1,37	803
<i>Media access</i>	0	92	1,56	6,36	803
<b>Explanatory variables</b>					
<i>Interest type represented</i>	1	7	2,59	1,81	803
<i>Financial resources</i>	1	5	1,44	0,72	645
<i>Staff size</i>	0,25	40	1,73	3,04	803
<i>Brussels office</i>	0	1	0,18	0,38	803
<b>Control variables</b>					
<i>Organisational form</i>	1	4	1,36	0,66	803
<i>MS is EU member</i>	0	1	0,89	0,31	803
<i>Registration year</i>	1	13	8,38	2,82	803
<i>National vs. non-national MEPs</i>	-	-	-	-	-



## 3.2 Measuring unobservable concepts

In brief, more or less all concepts are unobservable, and measurement is the process of translating them into observable, empirically grounded indicators (Gerring 2012b, 157). The ambition is for the relationship between the measures to mirror the relationship between the concepts. Evidently it is possible to observe that interest groups meet with bureaucrats and European parliamentarians – such as in the Transparency Register and at LobbyFacts.eu. However, that an interest group has not gained access (i.e. had meetings with bureaucrats or policymakers) does not truly exclude the fact that this interest group might have an inside lobbying strategy. Put differently, *access* is somewhere between lobbying strategy and lobbying influence (Binderkrantz et al. 2017, 310). The benefit of moving from strategy to access is that access is observable. However, as Binderkrantz et al. (2017, 320) argue, it is problematic because access is controlled by relevant gatekeepers (i.e. media or policymakers) and not solely by the interest groups. Nonetheless, the observable implication of stakeholders pursuing an inside lobbying strategy is that we see that IGs are meeting with bureaucrats and legislators. As previously mentioned, gaining access to decision-makers *is* an inside lobbying strategy that is an exchange relation of two dimensions: (1) interest groups that seek access to decision-makers and (2) decision-makers give them access to them (Bouwen 2002).

## 3.3 The online survey

I have carried out an online survey with interest groups from the Nordic countries: Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland. As mentioned, it has been particularly common to conduct qualitative methods to get an in-dept understanding of interest groups' lobbying strategies. Yet, because I aim to establish a broad and systematic understanding of the 803 Nordic interest groups registered in the Transparency Register, conducting interviews will not make that possible. A survey makes it possible to ask questions on which strategies interest groups are focusing on, which institutions are most important to them, what they regard as the most valuable means to reach their goal(s) and more.

Nevertheless, conducting a survey is not always straightforward, as is discussed shortly. For example, there is a risk of not getting enough respondents to be able to make any

generalizations. An online survey can therefore serve as an affirmative or dismissive addition to the findings in the explanatory analysis of the original dataset. Here it is important to make it known that the online survey does not exist to illustrate the findings: in fact, it was prepared before an explanatory analysis with the original dataset was conducted. Besides, questions in the survey were asked because it is difficult to find out otherwise.

The creation of the survey and the gathering of data were conducted in the electronic tool, SurveyXact by Ramboll – Scandinavia's leading survey tool. The online survey was distributed by e-mail and the interest groups invited to participate the online survey are the same interest groups included in the data set in this thesis. A total of 787 interest groups were invited to participate. A total of 143 participated in the online survey which means 18% of those that were invited. 17 out of 82 IGs from Norway, 29 out of 181 from Denmark, 58 out of 263 from Sweden and 39 out of 261 from Finland participated. The data collection was submitted to and approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD).

### **3.3.1 The development of the online survey**

An online survey was created in the aim of reaching as many interest groups as possible. Other qualitative methods could have reduced the access to respondents, and/or taken unnecessary amount of time (Lohr 1999, 16). When collecting original data through a survey, it is important to be cautious of human error. This is reduced by conducting the survey electronically: the registration of data avoids human errors. However, the internal validity may be threatened as it is not guaranteed that the survey actually measures what it is supposed to. For example, measurement errors can occur if a respondent answers incorrectly – intentional or not. The respondents might not tell the entire truth, or they do not understand the questions (Lohr 1999, 9; Groves et al. 2004, 44).

Moreover, question wording and order have a large effect on the answers, and certain words mean different things to different people (Lohr 1999, 9). The number of questions and their complexity are important: you do not want too many questions or for the survey to take a long time to answer, as it may affect measurement errors of the data (Peytchev and Peytcheva 2017). If the survey takes too long, respondents might lose interest and stop answering. It is

thus important that the questionnaire and the design of the online survey is thoroughly developed.

To supplement the dataset with information from the Transparency Register, the questions were based on the variables from the original dataset. Some of the questions and choice options were also built based on Dür and Mateo (2016). The final version contained 13 questions. The questions were specific questions and the online survey should not take longer than 5 to 10 minutes.<sup>6</sup> I decided to use closed questions (multiple choice) but added a final question where the respondents could share any additional insights. In a closed question, the respondent chooses from a set of categories. A closed question may prompt the respondent to remember responses that might otherwise be forgotten and is in accordance with the principle that specific questions are better than general ones (Lohr 1999, 12). Nevertheless, if using a closed question, Lohr (1999, 13) argues that one should always have an “other” category. I present below the outline of my online survey, which consists of 12 closed ended questions and 1 open ended question.

The survey was distributed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February through e-mail to the interest groups. The e-mail addresses were collected through the interest groups’ websites: preferably the head of EU affairs. In that way I could be sure that the survey was sent to a person who could answer for the interest group. Nonetheless, if the interest group did not have contact information available through the website, I contacted either the general contact email or to the head of the interest group. I found 788 e-mails out of 804, and thus 16 interest groups did not get the invitation to participate.

In the invitation e-mail I asked the respondents to kindly answer the survey by the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March. I sent out a reminder on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February. Until the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March there were 139 interest groups who had participated. Due to fewer responses than desired, I extended the deadline to the 15<sup>th</sup> of March and sent out a final reminder on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March. One of the reasons for doing this was that it had been winter holidays in the Nordic countries, and thus I expected to receive more responses if I extended the deadline. Due to the corona virus it is hard to say if there could have been more, but 8 interest groups participated after the final reminder.

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<sup>6</sup> According to the details in SurveyXact, no interest group spent more than 10 minutes to answer the survey.

### 3.3.2 The questionnaire

1) What is the name of your organisation?

\_\_\_\_\_

2) What is the type of interest by your organisation?

- Business
- Consultancy
- Public interest org./NGO
- Professional org.
- Trade union
- Public authority
- Other (if yes, please indicate which) \_\_\_\_\_

3) What is your organisation's country of origin?

\_\_\_\_\_

4) Does your organisation have an office in Brussels?

- Yes
- No

5) How often does your organisation use the following strategies to participate in and influence EU decision-making and legislation?

	Once a year	About 2-5 times a year	About 6-9 times a year	About 10-15 times a year	On a weekly basis
Direct contacts with policymakers and/or public officials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participating in the European Commission's open consultations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Distributing a press release	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using social media campaigns (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6) What is your organisation's main approach to lobby EU institutions and policymaking?

- Work alone
- Lobby as part of a European federation
- Lobby as part of ad hoc coalitions
- Lobby with the help of a public consultancy firm
- Other (if yes, please indicate how) \_\_\_\_\_

7) When attempting to shape EU legislation and decision-making, where is your organisation most likely to lobby?

- At national level, targeting/talking to national governments and/or responsible ministries
- In Brussels, targeting/talking to the national permanent representation
- In Brussels, targeting the EU institutions
- Other (if yes, please indicate where) \_\_\_\_\_

**8) Please indicate which of the following EU institutions is the main target of your organisation's attempt to communicate with EU decision-makers**

- European Commission
- European Parliament
- European Council
- Regulatory agencies
- The Committee of Regions
- Economic and Social committee
- Other (if yes, please indicate which) \_\_\_\_\_

**9) Please rank the following three institutions based on their importance for your attempts to shape EU legislation:**

	Not important at all	Moderately important	Highly important
European Commission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
European Parliament	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
European Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**10) How difficult do you find it to approach the following EU institution?**

	Very difficult	Somewhat difficult	Easy
European Commission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
European Parliament	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
European Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**11) Which of the following organisational resources inform and determine your choice of lobbying strategies targeting EU institutions and decision-making?**

- Financial resources
- Staff resources
- Processing the right information and policy expertise
- Other organisational resources, please name \_\_\_\_\_

**12) Which lobbying strategy is in your view most likely to lead to lobbying success and policy influence when attempting to shape EU decision-making?**

- Direct contacts with policymakers and/or public officials
- Participating in the European Commission's open consultations
- Distributing a press release
- Using social media campaigns (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)
- Other (please indicate which) \_\_\_\_\_

**13) Please let me know if you would like to share any additional insights about your experience of participating in EU policymaking and engaging with EU decisionmakers. I would be grateful for your insights about your organisation's lobbying experience targeting the EU institutions and decision-makers.**

---

### 3.3.3 Reflections and limitations of the online survey

In hindsight, there are some changes I would like to have made in the questionnaire. Firstly, question number five asking “How often does your organisation use the following strategies to participate in and influence EU decision-making and legislation?”. It was initially the plan to have a “never”-option, but somewhere in the process I decided to remove it. The reason for this was that people tend to press “never” because they are in a rush or do not remember. As the respondents may hurry through the survey and answer incorrectly, it may lead to low internal validity for the survey answers. Nevertheless, it should have been included a “not applicable”-option.

I received an e-mail from one of the respondents who told me that this question was not applicable for them and that because they had to answer the question they had to choose “once a year”. Luckily, I received this e-mail shortly after the distribution and up until that point, no one besides this specific interest group had chosen “once a year”. I adjusted the settings and made it possible to choose not to answer the question and/or alternatives at all. However, I am not sure how visible this was. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that “once a year” can also mean less or never. Fortunately, it is not a decisive problem to convert “once a year” into “once a year or less” in the thesis.

A potential problem of distributing the survey through e-mail is that some interest groups may not have received the invitation to participate. Some e-mails may have not made it through due to spam filters. Or it could be the opposite: the interest groups receive too many similar requests and therefore do not wish to participate. Another potential setback is that some interest groups argue that they do not engage in lobbying activities and thus do not wish to participate in the survey. As briefly mentioned in the conceptualization part of the thesis, there are confusions on the concept of lobbying. Some interest groups (that do lobby according to the definition applied in the thesis) do not want to be associated with this term. There may also be other confusions that led to not participating. Lastly, and probably the most reasonable, is that people forget to participate or do not have the time.

### 3.3.4 Descriptive statistics: lobbying in coalitions

As previously mentioned, lobbying in coalitions is difficult to observe empirically. Question 6 in the online survey was asked to see whether Nordic interest groups largely work alone, part of coalitions (either European federations or ad hoc coalitions) or with the help of consultancies. The results are discussed in chapter 4 through both a descriptive and explanatory analysis. The explanatory analysis consists of Lobbying in coalitions as the dependent variable, in addition to the same explanatory and control variables from the original dataset.

*Lobbying in coalitions* is a dummy variable where 1 is interest groups who answered that lobbying coalitions is their main approach to lobby the EU institutions and policymaking. *Lobbying in coalitions* include lobbying as part of European federations and/or ad hoc coalitions. Interest groups who work alone, with the help of consultancies or other approaches that is not considered coalition behaviour, are measured as 0. Table 3.3 shows the descriptive statistics for the dataset used to explain why interest groups lobby in coalitions.

**Table 3.3:** Descriptive statistics of original dataset used to examine the strategy of lobbying in coalitions.

Variables	Minimum value	Maximum value	Mean	Std.dev.	Units (N)
<b>Dependent variables</b>					
<i>Lobbying in coalitions</i>	0	1	0,75	0,44	143
<b>Explanatory variables</b>					
<i>Interest type represented</i>	1	7	3,50	1,75	143
<i>Staff size</i>	0,25	30	2,51	4,18	143
<i>Brussels office</i>	0	1	0,29	0,46	143
<b>Control variables</b>					
<i>Organisational form</i>	1	4	1,52	0,74	143
<i>EU-membership</i>	0	1	0,88	0,32	143
<i>Registration year</i>	1	7	7,60	3,10	143

### 3.4 Descriptive analysis

The overall theme and research questions are formulated in a way that emphasize descriptive analysis in addition to establish whether there are causal relationships. The literature on interest groups in Brussels have largely been descriptive studies (Bunea and Baumgartner 2014, 1425). First and foremost, there is no complete mapping of all Nordic interest groups trying to influence EU policymaking - and descriptive statistics are well suited when mapping unknown information. Therefore, the first part of the thesis identifies these groups: how many are they, what are they interested in and what types of interest groups are they? This information is obtained via the Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu.

A descriptive argument aims to answer *what* questions, and, by contrast, causal arguments attempt to answer *why* questions (Gerring 2012a, 723). Gerring (2012a) argues that causality and description are intimately related; one cannot be understood without the other. His perspective is that the terms causal and descriptive should be understood as *forms of argumentation*, not as characterizations of the sort of evidence available for causal inference (Gerring 2012a, 724).

Over the last decades, there has been an increasingly focus on causal analysis and less on description (Gerring 2012a, 730; Kellstedt and Whitten 2018, 56). Gerring (2012a, 733) argues that if description only happens in the quest for causal inference, the causal motivation of researchers may mitigate both the quality and the quantity of descriptive inferences. “We will know less about the world (descriptively) and what we know will be less precise, less reliable and perhaps subject to systematic bias – generated by scholar’s motivation to uncover a causal relationship” (Gerring 2012a, 733).

Nevertheless, description may be of little importance if it is not linked to causal relationships. Similarly, we cannot construct good causal explanations without solid descriptions (King, Keohane and Verba 1994, 34). Therefore, identifying the underlying factors for the interest groups' choice of lobbying strategies is also important and complements the descriptive part. Furthermore, King, Keohane and Verba (1994, 37) argue for the importance of understanding the subject under investigation: only through an understanding of a subject can one ask the



right questions and hypotheses. The conceptualization of key concepts and review on existing theories and empirical findings have resulted in the hypotheses in Chapter 2.

### 3.5 Mixed methods

The aim of the study determines the choice of method: whether it is to generalize, explain the extent to which something affects an outcome or explain why something happens. Here, different methods have different assumptions - and as Curry (2017, 114) argues "different approaches can yield different insights".

If the goal is to generalize and be able to say something about how much an independent variable influences an outcome (dependent variable), a quantitative method is better suited. On the other hand, if one wants to go deeper into a case and explain why it happened, some would reason that qualitative method is better suited. Whichever method one chooses, there will be strengths and weaknesses. Qualitative methods make it possible to search deeply into one or several cases and to understand why something is happening. However, it can be difficult to generalize to a population. James Johnson (2006), though, argues that it is not necessarily a weakness, because the goal will not always be to generalize. Quantitative methods, on the other hand, make it possible to estimate the effect of a cause and to generalize to the population. At the same time, measurement errors can occur, and one cannot really say *why* a particular effect is the way it is. Because there are both strengths and weaknesses in both methods, several researchers have paved the way for multiple methods to be used simultaneously.

The use of mixed methods has increased in social science research (Lieberman 2005). The term is a general term in nature and applies to multiple and different methods that have been used to answer a research question (Goertz 2016, 4). Properly used, several methods can both triangulate the findings as well as to bring new information to the analysis (Rohlfing 2008, 1493; Lieberman 2015, 240). As Ragin (1987) argues, the use of a multi-method design should make it possible to complement the strengths of the different methods and thus make up for any weaknesses. Nonetheless, some would rather say it is easier said than done. Rohlfing (2008) points out that it is difficult to do just one method correctly, so using multiple

methods can be difficult. Therefore, to avoid as much bias as possible, it is important to be transparent (Kellstedt and Whitten 2018, 113).

I intend to get a broad perspective on Nordic interest groups' lobbying strategies.

Nevertheless, I am open to alternative explanations that I cannot account for in the analysis with my built for purpose dataset. Additional data and analysis might make up for that. The advantage of using two methods to gather data is that the combination of both forms of data provides a better understanding of the phenomenon that is studied by providing more detailed and specific information than using a quantitative or qualitative method alone.

### **3.6 Data analysis methods**

Because the dependent variables are measured differently, separate methods are required to analyse the data. More precisely, the three count variables require negative binomial regression and the three dummy variables demand logistic regression. Below I present and discuss these methods.

#### **3.6.1 Negative binomial regression**

Three of the dependent variables are numeric count variables: *IG meetings with EC high level officials*, *Number of passes to access the EP premises* and *Media access*. Count variables are usually overdispersed, which means that the variance is greater than the mean and that the distribution of count outcomes is skewed (Hilbe 2014, 9). All three count variables in this thesis are overdispersed. There are many zeros for the three variables: for example, there are many zeros for *IG meetings with EC high level officials*, strictly because many interest groups do not meet with EC high level officials. At the same time, one interest group has had 64 meetings with EC high level officials. This indicates that the variance exceeds the conditional mean. The respective variances are several times the mean for all the three count variables. Since the standard errors in a linear regression are based on the assumption that the variance is equal to the mean, this creates a problem. It is therefore appropriate to apply a method that takes count data and overdispersion into account. A common method for dealing with count data and overdispersion is the negative binomial regression model (Hilbe 2014, 10).

Because there is a high number of zero counts on the dependent variables, an option would be to use a zero-inflated negative binomial model which changes the mean structure by allowing zeros to be generated by two distinct processes (Rasmussen and Alexandrova 2012, 620).

Despite the high number of zeros in the dataset, I rely on a negative binomial model for the regressions with these three dependent variables. It is not theoretically clear which substantive factor(s) predict whether an IG always (or sometimes) has the value of zero. For example, although there is theory arguing that there are specific factors that matter for inside lobbying strategy (and thus why some IGs do *not* rely on inside strategies), it does not mean that inside lobbying strategy equals meetings with the EC high level officials. Meetings with EC high level officials represents one *type* of inside lobbying strategy. There might be interest groups that rely on inside lobbying strategies other than meetings with the EC high level officials.

“Negative binomial regression is similar to regular multiple regression except that the dependent (Y) variable is an observed count that follows the negative binomial distribution. Thus, the possible values of Y are the nonnegative integers: 0, 1, 2, 3, and so on” (NCSS Statistical Software 2020). Negative binomial regression can be considered a generalization of Poisson regression (NCSS Statistical Software 2020). Poisson regression is often used for modelling count data, while negative binomial regression is useful for count data that are overdispersed. Negative binomial regression has the same mean structure as Poisson regression, but it has an extra parameter to model the overdispersion: it loosens the restrictive assumption that the variance is equal to the mean made by the Poisson model (NCSS Statistical Software 2020; Hilbe 2014, 129). If the conditional distribution of the outcome variable is overdispersed, the confidence intervals for the negative binomial regression are likely to be narrower as compared to those from a Poisson regression model. Negative binomial regression thus takes care of overdispersion by predicting that there will be unexplained variability between entities with the same predicted value (Hilbe 2014, 10-11).

### **3.6.2 Logistic regression**

The three remaining dependent variables are dummy variables: *IG membership in EC expert groups*, *IG direct meetings with MEPs* and *Lobbying in coalitions*. Because the variables are dichotomous and thus non-linear, I apply logistic regression in the analysis (Skog 2015, 352).

Logistic regression, also called a logit model, is most often used to model dichotomous outcome variables. “In the log odds of the outcome is modelled as a linear combination of the predictor variables” (IDRE 2020).

An assumption of logistic regression is that the binary outcome has a curvilinear S-shaped relationship (Skog 2015, 354;380). The form of the regression curve can be calculated statistically by using the Hosmer Lemeshow test. A significant test means that there are significant differences between actual and predicted values, and that the model is not S-shaped (Skog 2015, 381). The curvilinear regression assumption is fulfilled as none of the binary variables in this thesis have a significant Hosmer Lemeshow test.

### **3.6.3 Addressing multicollinearity**

Another important assumption that is important for both negative binomial regression and logistic regression is absence of multicollinearity – i.e. independent variables are not correlated with each other. High multicollinearity makes it difficult to calculate the size of the individual coefficients (Midtbø 2012, 128).

*Financial resources* is highly correlated with *Staff Size* (corr: 0,55  $p < 0,05$ ). Because there are only 645 observations for Financial resources, I find it appropriate to only rely on Staff size and Brussels office to measure material resources in my models. Nevertheless, one could argue that Financial resources captures the notion of Staff size as material resources (Dür and Mateo 2013, 684).

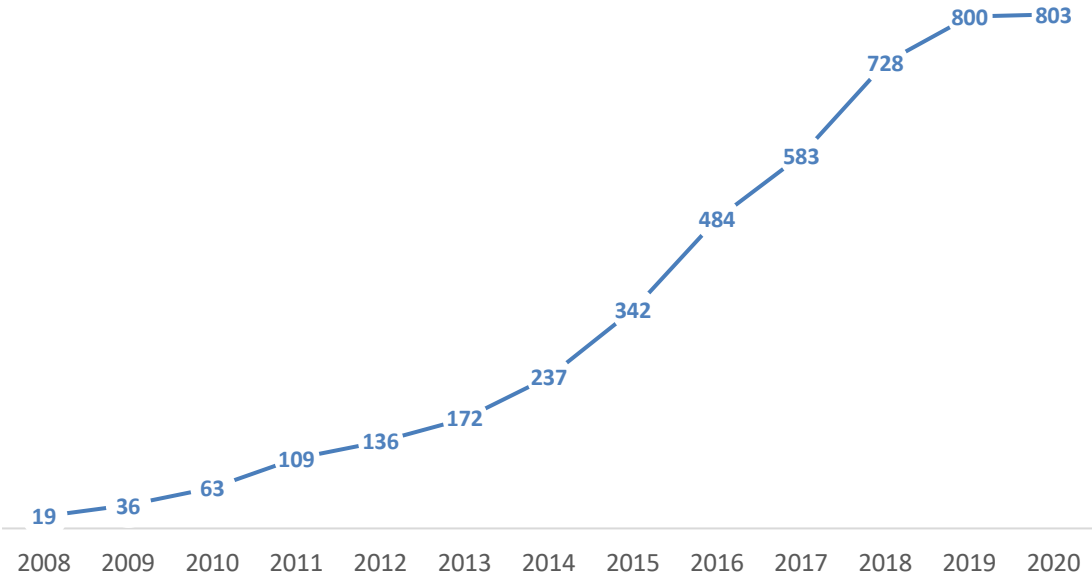
After running the regressions, I checked for multicollinearity with a variance inflation factor (VIF) test. VIF scores above 10 are often considered problematic (Midtbø 2012, 129). For all models, all variables have values between 1 and 2, which is well below the tolerance level of 10. Accordingly, there does not seem to be a violation of this assumption.

# 4. ANALYSES

In this chapter I present the empirical analyses. The first part of the chapter is a descriptive analysis, mapping the lobbying strategies of the Nordic interest groups identified in the Transparency Register. In the second part, I conduct a large-N explanatory analysis on inside and outside lobbying strategies of interest groups from the four Nordic countries by examining the original dataset providing information about interest groups’ characteristics, lobbying strategies and characteristics of policy context. As an additional data source, I have gathered data through an online survey, where Nordic interest groups identified in the EU Transparency Register responded to a set of questions pertinent to my research questions. I analyse the data from the online survey employing both descriptive and explanatory analyses.

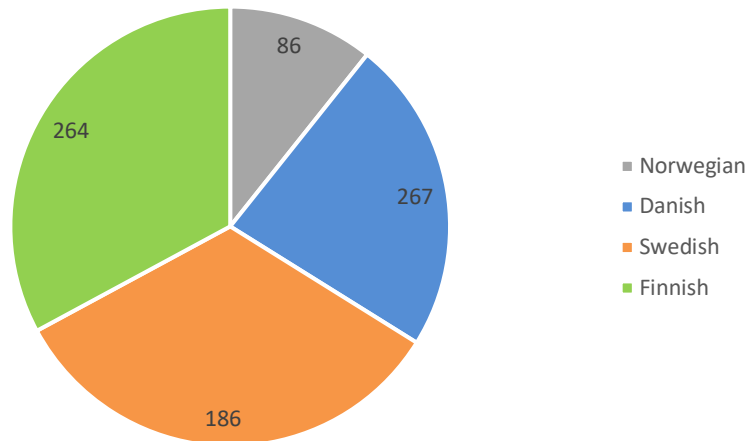
## 4.1 Descriptive analysis of the Nordic interest groups

The Transparency Register was created in 2008 and is a database that lists interest groups that participate and try to shape the decision-making processes in the EU institutions. Figure 4.1 shows that in 2008 there were only 19 Nordic interest groups registered, but that the number of registrations has increased steadily, particularly since 2014.



**Figure 4.1:** Annual increase in number of registered interest groups in the Transparency Register. Sources: The Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu.

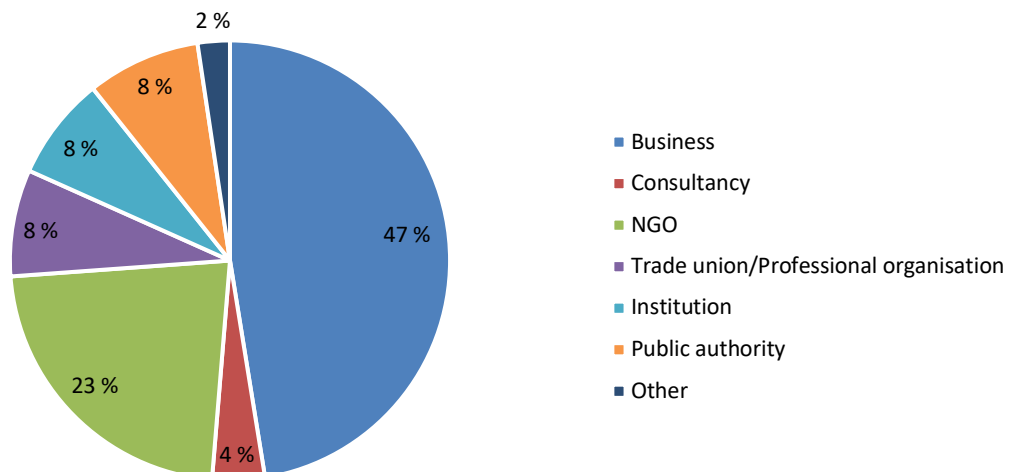
A total of 803 Nordic interest groups were identified in the Transparency Register between September 2019 when I started the data collection and March 2020 when I ended the data collection for my research. Nordic interest groups are interest groups with head offices in Norway, Denmark, Sweden or Finland. As shown in Figure 4.2, there are 86 (10.71%) interest groups based in Norway, 186 (23.16%) in Denmark, 264 (32.88%) in Finland and 267 (33.25%) in Sweden.



**Figure 4.2:** Nordic interest groups registered in the EU Transparency Register, by nationality. Sources: The Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu.

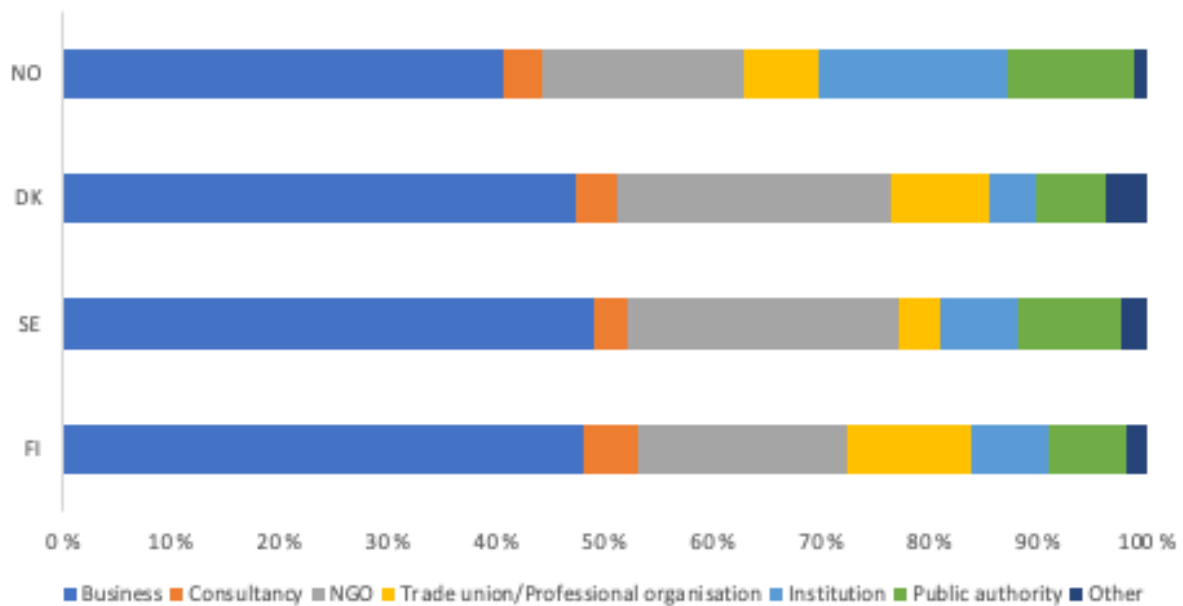
### 4.1.1 Organisational characteristics

These interest groups represent various interests. Nevertheless, Figure 4.3 shows that almost half of all Nordic interest groups (47%) represent business. NGOs are the second largest interest type represented and amount to 23% of all Nordic interest groups.



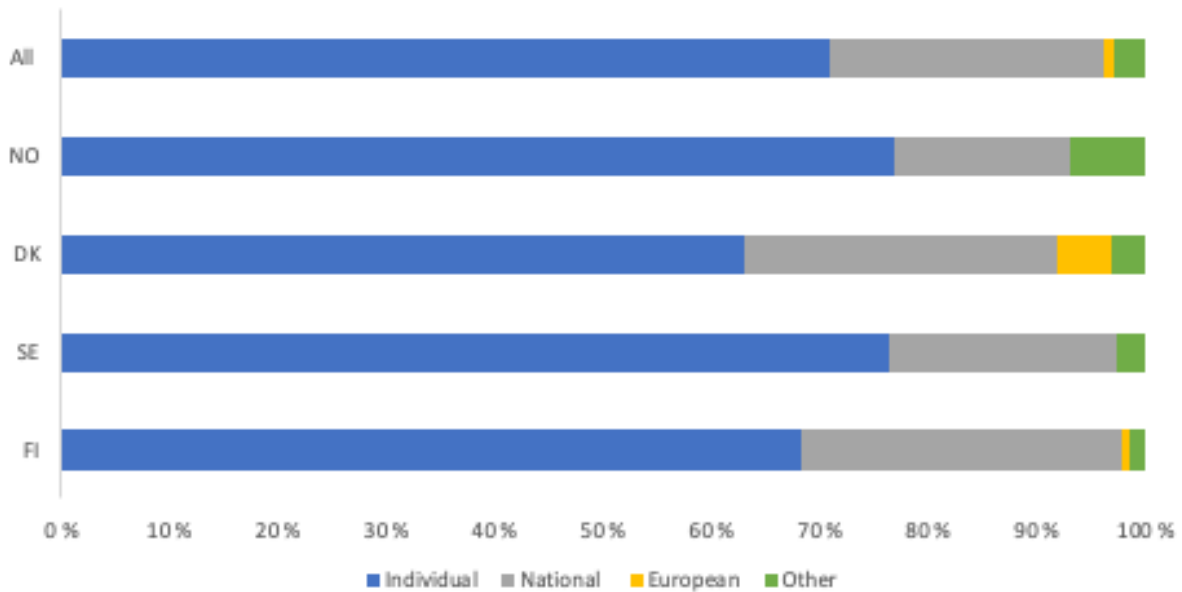
**Figure 4.3:** Interest types represented by Nordic interest groups. Sources: The Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu.

Figure 4.4 shows that the same pattern describes the individual country profile in terms of type of interest groups joining the Transparency Register. Business actors are the most numerous among all the Nordic interest groups, whereas NGOs the second most present category. Arbitrary examples of Nordic business actors registered in the Transparency Register include Agder Energi, Asetek, Elekta AB and the Enevo Oy. Forbrukerrådet (NCC), Det Økologiske Råd (Ecocouncil), Barncancerfonden and Finnish Beekeepers' Association (SML) are all examples of Nordic NGOs identified in the Transparency Register.



**Figure 4.4:** Frequency distribution of interest type represented by Nordic interest groups, per country. Sources: The Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu.

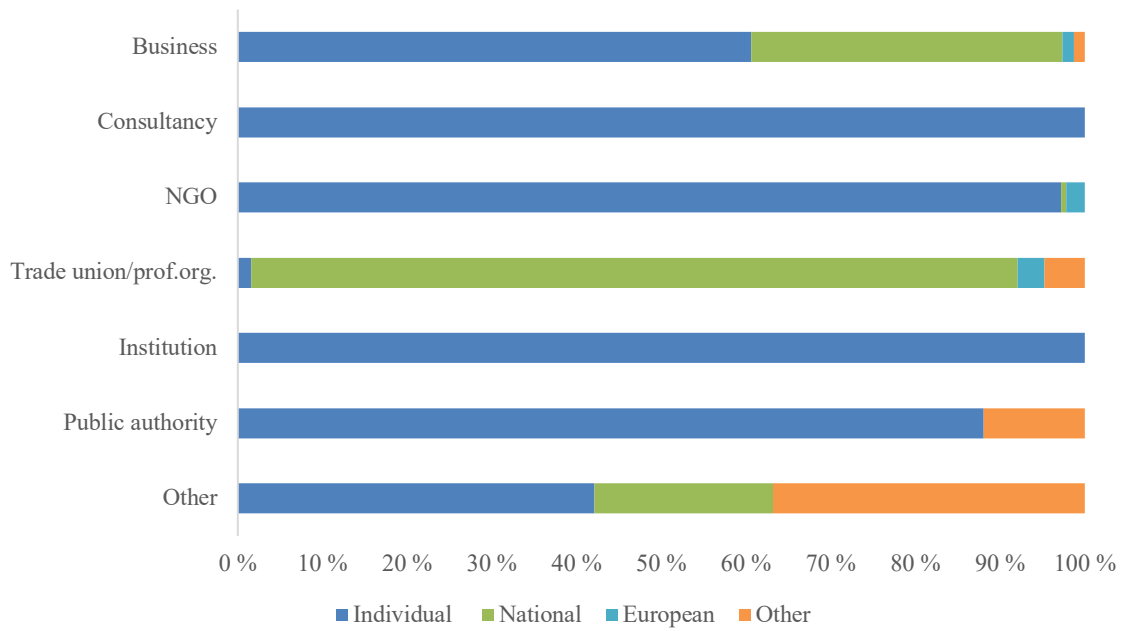
The figure reveals, however, some differences between the interest groups located in the four Nordic countries. Firstly, the Swedish, Danish and Finnish interest groups are relatively homogenous – with some minor differences in the percentage proportion of the various interest types represented. For example, Finnish and Danish interest groups consist of more trade unions/professional organisations than Swedish interest groups. Furthermore, the figure indicates that the constellation of Norwegian interest groups participating in the EU policymaking is somewhat different: the percentage of public authorities and institutions are larger for Norwegian interest groups, compared to the other Nordic countries. This is not necessarily crucial when comparing the Nordic countries, as the total number of Norwegian interest groups in the Transparency Register is considerably lower. It is nevertheless of significance that a distinctive proportion of Norwegian interest groups are institutions (e.g. Norwegian University of Sciences and Technology) and public authorities (e.g. Osloregionen).



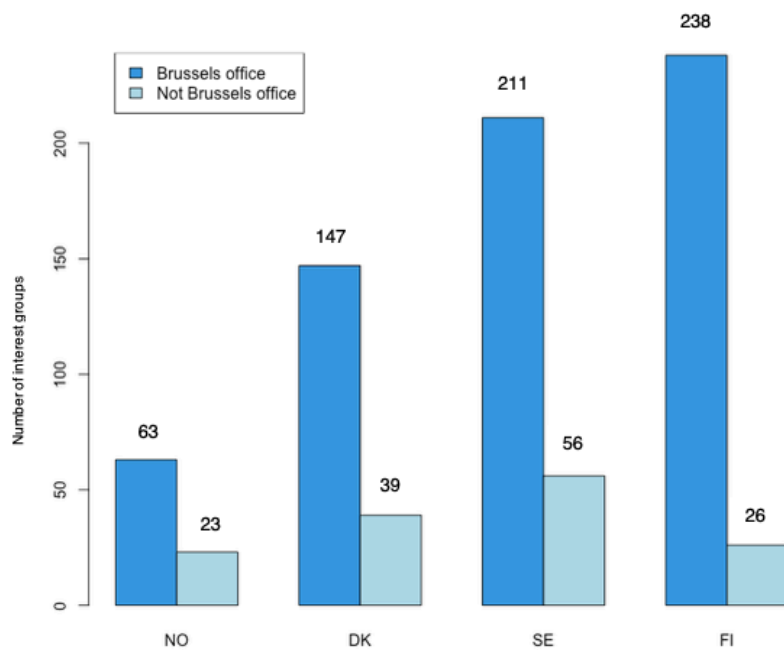
**Figure 4.5:** Frequency distribution of organisational form of the Nordic interest groups.  
Sources: The Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu.

Figure 4.5 presents the frequency distribution of interest groups by organisational form across all Nordic interest groups per country. It shows that 71% of the Nordic interest groups are individual organisations. As expected, there are very few European associations based in the Nordic countries (e.g. European forest Nurseries Association and Europe’s People’s Forum), and 25% are national associations. The fact that 25% of the Nordic interest groups are national associations is not surprising, given the corporatist background of the countries. It is also evident that a higher percentage of interest groups from Denmark and Finland are national associations, compared to the Norwegian and Swedish interest groups. Moreover, as shown in Figure 4.6, the majority of the national associations represent business. As a matter of fact, 140 out of 381 business groups are national associations (e.g. Danske Maritime and the Norwegian Wind Energy Association). Additionally, 57 out of 63 trade unions/professional organisations are national associations (e.g. The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions SAK).





**Figure 4.6:** Frequency distribution of organisational form of the Nordic interest groups, by interest type represented. Sources: The Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu.



**Figure 4.7:** Nordic interest groups having a Brussels office. Sources: The Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu.

Figure 4.7 gives an overview of the amount of interest groups that have an office in Brussels. In total, 659 out of 803 Nordic interest groups (82%) have Brussels offices. Having a Brussels office is an indicator of resources, and the literature suggests that being situated in Brussels enhances the chances of getting close to EU policymaking (Mahoney 2004, 453; Bunea 2014, 1229; Bouwen 2002, 374). That so many Nordic interest groups have Brussels offices is therefore quite noteworthy, though, expected from interest groups that is registered in the Transparency Register. It is expected because we assume that interest groups registered in the Transparency Register, are actively aiming to influence the EU policymaking process, and thus have a Brussels office to increase their chances of influence. Furthermore, taking the differentiated integration of the Nordic countries into account, the distinctions in the percentages per country are also as expected: 73% of the Norwegian interest groups have a Brussels office, 79% of the Danish and Swedish interest groups have Brussels offices, whereas as much as 90% of the Finnish interest groups have a Brussels office.

Having financial resources is important for interest groups: monetary assets lead to better hires and expertise, and a higher ability to secure a greater number of direct meetings with a diversity of policymakers. As stated in Chapter 3, the Financial resources-variable is perhaps not the most indicative measure of financial resources, as it actually measures lobbying expenses (i.e. how much they invest in lobbying activities) and not budget. Nonetheless, lobbying costs provide useful information. The variable exhibits that 430 interest groups, which constitute more than half of the Nordic interest groups, spend less than 100,000 euros on lobbying activities. 160 interest groups spend between 100,000-500,000 euros, and 42 interest groups spend between 500,000 euros and 1 million. Only 11 interest groups spend more than 1 million euros and only two interest groups spend over 2 million. The same pattern is also true when looking at staff size: most interest groups are small in size (the mean of FTE is 1.73). This is also the case when examining the individual countries. Consequently, regarding financial resources and staff size, the data reveal that most of the Nordic interest groups are small and financially resource-poor organisations. Still, there are some interest groups that stand out with their high lobbying expenses.

**Table 4.1:** The Nordic interest groups (IGs) identified in the Transparency Register that spends the most on lobbying activities.

	Norwegian IGs	Danish IGs	Swedish IGs	Finnish IGs
<b>Lobbying expenses in euros</b>				
Lobbying costs over 5 million	Equinor		Kreab	
Lobbying costs over 2 million		Confederation of Danish Industry (DI)	Ericsson	Finnish Energy - Energiyhteisö ry (ET)
		Finance Denmark (FiDa)	Reform Society i Stockholm AB (Reform Society)	Toimihenkilökeskusjärjestö STTK (STTK)
		Greater Copenhagen EU Office (GCPHEU)	Coompanion Sverige ekonomisk förening (Coompanion)	Pro-tukipiste ry
			Skane Lans Landsting (Region Skåne)	
			Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)	

Sources: Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu.

Table 4.1 gives an overview of the interest groups from the Nordic countries lobbying in Brussels that spend the most on lobbying activities. These interest groups use over 2 million euros on lobbying activities, and Equinor and Kreab spend more than 5 million euros. Six of them are business groups (Equinor, DI, FiDa, Reform Society, Ericsson and Finnish Energy), whereas Coompanion and Pro-tukipiste ry are NGOs, SALAR, Region Skåne and GCPHEU are public authorities, STTK is a trade union/professional organisation and Kreab is a consultancy. Most of them are individual organisations, while four of them are national associations (DI, Finance Denmark, Finnish Energy, STTK). Moreover, 10 out of 13 have a Brussels office – only Reform Society, Coompanion and STTK do not have a Brussels office. Regarding staff size, most of the groups have a large staff size (the mean of FTE is 12). These are thus large interest groups with considerable resources, and regarding H1, one should expect that they directly lobby bureaucrats and/or legislators. However, considering that they represent different interest types, it is unclear whether interest type represented matter for inside lobbying – which is what H3 proposes.

## 4.1.2 Lobbying strategies

### Inside lobbying targeting the European Commission

Inside lobbying strategies entail communicating directly to bureaucrats and/or legislators (Mahoney 2008, 9). It is of particular interest to identify which lobbying strategies the interest groups choose, given the organisational characteristics of the Nordic interest groups described above. The dataset reveals that 258 of 803 interest groups (32%) have had one or more meetings with the Commission and thus employed an inside lobbying strategy aimed at the European executive. Still, the majority of the Nordic interest groups have never had such meetings. As shown in Table 4.2, the maximum number of meetings with EC high level officials is 64, but the average number of meetings is 2.2 for all the Nordic interest groups. However, the median is 0 for all Nordic interest groups together, as well as for each individual country. This implies that the number of interest groups that meet with EC high level officials, in addition to the number of meetings, are quite skewed among the Nordic interest groups. Only a few Nordic interest groups have frequent meetings with EC high level officials. See Appendix A for an overview of the ten interest groups per Nordic country that most frequently meet with EC high level officials.

The dataset indicates that, respectively, 28% of the Danish and Swedish interest groups have had meetings with EC high level officials. For example, Danish Energy has had 8 meetings and Lantbrukarnas Riksförbund (LRF) has had 12 meetings. The maximum number of meetings with EC high level officials for the Danish interest groups is 27, while the maximum number for Swedish interest groups is 59. Likewise, the average number of meetings for Swedish interest groups is 2.0, whereas the average number of meetings is 1,6 for Danish interest groups. This means that Swedish interest groups meet more frequently with EC high level officials than Danish interest groups. Yet, the standard deviation of 7.4 tells us that there are only a few Swedish interest groups that have many meetings, whereas the standard deviation for Danish interest groups is only 4.1.

Moreover, 20 of the 86 Norwegian interest groups (23%) have had meetings with EC high level officials. Moreover, there are some Norwegian interest groups that have had several meetings with EC high level officials. For instance, Statnett, NTNU and Confederation of

Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) all have had 12 meetings each. Nonetheless, the average number of meetings with EC high level officials is 1.8 for Norwegian interest groups. This could have implied that Norwegian interest groups meet more frequently with EC high level officials compared to Danish interest groups. However, the average is influenced by an outlier: Equinor has had 46 meetings with EC high level officials.

A total of 42% of the Finnish interest groups have had meetings with EC high level officials – a high percentage compared to the other Nordic interest groups. Furthermore, the maximum number of meetings is 64 and the average number of meetings is 2.8. This means that many Finnish interest groups meet frequently with EC high level officials, compared to the other Nordic interest groups. This is expected, though, given that Finland is considered as being close to the core of EU activity (Mouritzen and Wivel 2005, 95). Notwithstanding, the standard deviation is 7.9, which tells us that there are some Finnish interest groups that meet a lot more frequently than other Finnish interest groups.

**Table 4.2:** Univariate summary statistics for IG meetings with EC high level officials.

	All Nordic IGs	Norwegian IGs	Danish IGs	Swedish IGs	Finnish IGs
Min	0	0	0	0	0
Max	64	46	27	59	64
Average	2.2	1.8	1.6	2.0	2.8
Median	0	0	0	0	0
St. dev.	6.8	5.9	4.1	7.4	7.9
N	803	86	186	267	264

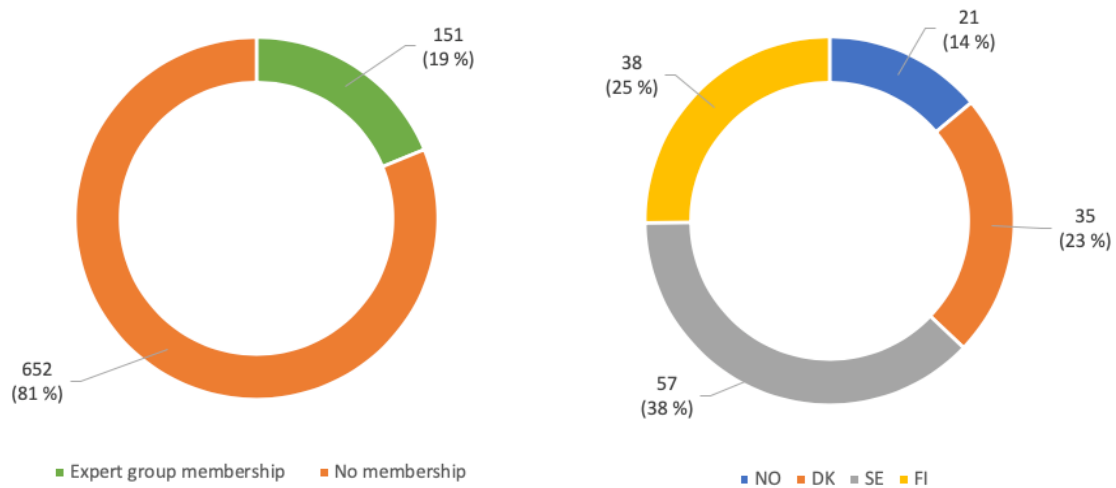
79 of the Nordic interest groups have had more than 5 meetings (i.e. less than 10% of the total number of Nordic interest groups identified in the Transparency Register). Fewer have had more than 20 meetings: more specifically, only 19 interest groups have had more than 20 meetings with EC high level officials. 8 of them are Finnish interest groups, 7 of them Swedish, 3 of them Danish and 1 of them Norwegian.

Equinor has had 46 meetings with EC high level officials, and is the only Norwegian interest group that has had over 20 meetings. Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) and Landbrug & Fødevarer – Danish Agriculture and Food Council (DAFC) are the two among Danish interest

groups with the most meetings with EC high level officials, respectively 27 and 20 meetings. The two Finnish interest groups with the highest number of meetings with EC high level officials are Confederation of Finnish Industries EK (EK), who has had 64 meetings, and Nokia who has had 55 meetings. Kream and Spotify AB are the two Swedish interest groups with most frequent meetings with EC high level officials, individually 59 and 55 meetings.

The shared trait of the 19 interest groups exceeding 20 meetings is that they largely represent business, as 16 out of 19 are business groups. One is consultancy, another is a trade union/public organisation and the last one is an institution. Furthermore, six of them are national associations and the rest individual organisations. When it comes to resources, 8 of them spend more than 500,000 euros in lobbying expenses; 11 out of 19 interest groups have more than 3 in FTE; and 14 out of 19 have a Brussels office. In other words, what characterises interest groups with 20 meetings or more with EC high level officials, is that they are business groups and resource-rich. Interest groups with no meetings are characterised by small staff sizes, no Brussels offices, lobbying expenses under 100,000 euros and a variety of group types and organisational forms. With H1 and H3 in mind, it does seem that especially business groups, that are also resource-rich groups, rely on inside lobbying strategies – which in this case is direct meetings with EC high level officials.

Another inside lobbying strategy targeting the Commission is membership in EC expert groups. A total of 151 out of 803 of the Nordic interest groups (19%) are members of various EC expert groups. For example, Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise, Confederation of Danish Industry (DI), Confederation of Finnish Industries EK and Confederation of Swedish Enterprise have memberships. As presented in Figure 4.8. Swedish interest groups have the highest number of organisations that are members in expert groups with a percentage of 38, followed by the Finnish (25%) and Danish (23%) interest groups from the total of interest groups analysed in this thesis. A particular interesting finding is that Norwegian interest groups constitute 21 of the total number (14%). This means that 21 out of 86 of the Norwegian interest groups (24%) have membership in EC expert groups. As shown in the Figure 4.8, this percentage is larger compared to the other Nordic countries. See Appendix B for a full list of Norwegian interest groups with membership in EC expert groups and which EC expert groups they are members in.



**Figure 4.8:** Nordic interest groups with EC expert group membership. Total distribution to the left and distribution of membership per country to the right. Sources: The Transparency Register and

The fact that 24% of Norwegian interest groups are members of EC expert groups, tells us that many of the Norwegian interest groups are very active in lobbying in Brussels (Dür and Mateo, 171). This is also to be expected when they are registered in the Transparency Register. Regardless, the participation of numerous Norwegian interest groups is crucial as bureaucrats and politicians rely heavily on technical issues in the early stages of the policymaking process (Chalmers 2014, 976). Bernhagen and Mitchell (2009) argue that Norwegian companies compensate for lack of representation in EU institutions by inside lobbying in Brussels. This looks to be the case for Norwegian interest groups in general, both when it comes to meetings with EC high level officials and memberships in EC expert groups.

The characteristics of the interest groups that have membership in EC expert groups are diverse. Firstly, the vast majority constitutes individual organisations. Secondly, 44% of them are business groups, 23% of them are NGOs, 13% are institutions, 11% are trade unions/professional organisations, 6% are public authorities and consultancies and other make up the rest of the 3%. This indicates that interest groups with membership in EC expert groups do not exclusively compose of business groups, but other types as well. Although most of the interest groups that have memberships are business groups, they also constitute a larger number in total in the Transparency Register. Therefore, it is not clear whether business groups are more likely to have EC expert group memberships.

Furthermore, it does not look like financial resources matter when it comes to EC expert group membership. For example, only 8 out of the 19 interest groups having had 20 meetings or more with EC high level officials, have membership in EC expert groups. The vast majority of the Nordic interest groups that are members of EC expert groups spend less than 100,000 euros on lobbying activities. Regarding staff size it is very diverse: some have a large FTE, while others do not. What is most surprising, however, is that most of the interest groups with membership in EC expert groups do not have a Brussels office. In fact, almost 80% of the interest groups that have memberships in EC expert groups do not have Brussels offices. Consequently, it remains unclear whether resource-rich groups actually are more likely to have EC expert group memberships. According to this, it is difficult to tell whether H1 and H3 are supported when it comes to EC expert group membership.

### **Inside lobbying strategies targeting the European Parliament**

To analyse inside lobbying strategies targeting the European Parliament, I look at the number of passes to access the EP premises and whether interest groups have had direct meetings with MEPs or not. The data discloses that not many interest groups have EP passes: only 109 of 803 Nordic interest groups (14%) applied for and were issued passes to enter the EP premises. Most interest groups have only one pass, but there are also some with several passes. For example, Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO), Danish Shipping, Swedish Forest Industries Federation and Elisa Oyj all have 3 EP passes each. Only nine interest groups have five or more passes. For instance, the Norwegian interest group Bellona Europe has 6 EP passes, Faglig Fælles Forbund (3F) has 5 EP passes, the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise has 5 EP passes and Chemical Industry Federation of Finland (Kemiantollisuus ry) (CIFF) has 9 EP passes.

According to Table 4.3, 14% of all the Norwegian interest groups have passes. Given that Norway is not a member of the EU, there is actually a quite high percentage of Norwegian interest groups that have EP passes, compared to the other interest groups. Respectively, 17 and 18% of Danish and Swedish interest groups have EP passes, while only 9,8% of Finnish interest groups have passes.

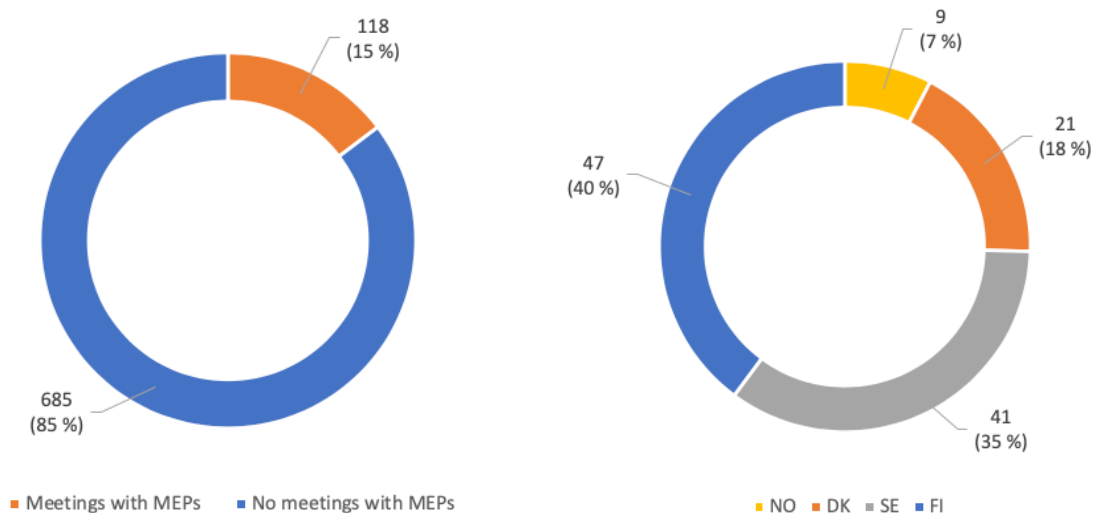


**Table 4.3:** Frequency distribution of interest groups with EP passes, per country

Number of EP passes	Norwegian IGs	Danish IGs	Swedish IGs	Finnish IGs
0	74	155	227	238
1	6	13	16	10
2	2	4	10	6
3	3	6	5	5
4		4	6	4
5		2	1	
6	1	1		
9		1	1	1
26			1	
Total number of interest groups	86	186	267	264
Interest groups with EP passes	12	31	40	26
Percentage with EP passes	14%	17%	18%	9,8%

Sources: The Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu.

What characterises the Nordic interest groups that have EP passes is that the large majority constitutes of business groups. Moreover, almost 60% of the interest groups with EP passes have a Brussels office. The interest group with the most EP passes, however, is the Swedish interest group Kreab. Kreab has 26 EP passes, is a consultancy, has an FTE of 30, spends over 2 million euros in lobbying expenses and has a Brussels office. Though the correlation between resources and number of EP passes seem to be evident when it comes to Kreab, this is not the case for the three interest groups that have 9 EP passes (the second largest number of EP passes). The Swedish interest group SKF, the Danish interest group Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) and the Finnish interest group Chemical Industry Federation of Finland (Kemianteollisuus ry) (CIFF) all have 9 EP passes each. SKF and the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) have a Brussels office, while Chemical Industry Federation of Finland (Kemianteollisuus ry) (CIFF) does not. Furthermore, Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) spends over 1 million euros in lobbying expenses, while the two other interest groups spend less than 100,000 euros. They also differ quite a bit in staff size. What they have in common, however, is that they all represent business. With the hypotheses in mind, it thus seems that H3 is supported, but it remains to be seen if H1 is true when it comes to EP passes.



**Figure 4.9:** Number of interest groups that have had meetings with MEPs. Total frequency to the left and per country to the right. Sources: Adriana Bunea and Raimondas Ibenskas’ original dataset on meetings between IGs and MEPs based on the EP official website.

Figure 4.9 shows that there are slightly more interest groups that have had meetings with MEPs, than interest groups that have EP passes. 118 out of 803 Nordic interest groups (15%) have met with MEPs. It is evident that Finnish IGs lobby through meetings with MEPs: as many as 40% of Finnish interest groups registered in the Transparency Register have had meetings with MEPs. The same is applicable to the Swedish interest groups where 35% have met with MEPs. Danish interest groups meet MEPs less frequently, only 18% of all Danish groups analysed have met with MEPs. Moreover, 9 Norwegian interest groups have had meetings with MEPs – which accounts for only 7% of the Norwegian interest groups. These nine Norwegian interest groups include Norsk Hydro, Statkraft AS, Landsorganisasjonen i Norge (LO-Norway), Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO), Energi Norge (Energy Norway), Equinor ASA (EQNR), North Norway European Office (NNEO), Schibsted ASA, as well as European Huntington Association, a European association based in Norway.

Similarly to interest groups with EP passes, what characterises the Nordic interest groups that have had direct meetings with MEPs is that they largely comprise of business groups. 60% of interest groups that have had direct meetings with MEPs are business groups, while 14% are NGOs. Trade unions, institutions and public authorities constitute about 7-8% each, while consultancies and “other” the last 4%. Approximately 62% of the Nordic interest groups that have had direct meetings with MEPs are individual organisations, whereas 35% are national associations. Only 45% that have had meetings have a Brussels office. However, it appears that the larger staff size the interest groups have, the more likely they are to have direct

meetings with MEPs. Furthermore, the large majority of the interest groups that have had meetings spend more than 500,000 euros on lobbying activities. Hence, it seems as though H1 and H3 are true when it comes to direct meetings with MEPs: having resources is important for directly meeting MEPs, and particularly business groups gain access to the legislators.

The fact that relatively few Norwegian interest groups have had meetings with MEPs might not be surprising, since Norway is not a member of the EU and consequently has no elected representatives in the EP. At least one would assume that interest groups would meet with MEPs from their own country. Table 4.4 presents a more nuanced pattern.<sup>7</sup> Finnish interest groups, in particular, meet MEPs from Finland. As many as 41 out of 47 meetings with MEPs were only with national MEPs, 5 with national and/or Nordic and others, while only 1 meeting was with others. This also applies to Swedish interest groups, but in addition they have had several meetings with MEPs of other nationalities. Danish interest groups do not meet as often with only national MEPs, neither do they meet equally frequently with MEPs, compared to the Finnish and Swedish interest groups. The table shows that Norwegian interest groups meet as often with Nordic MEPs as with others. However, like the Danish, Norwegian interest groups do not frequently meet with MEPs. See Appendix C to see the names and nationalities of the MEPs that the Nordic IGs have had meetings with.

**Table 4.4:** The Nordic interest groups’ direct meetings with MEPs, based on the nationality of the MEPs involved in the meetings.

Nationality of MEPs	Norwegian IGs	Danish IGs	Swedish IGs	Finnish IGs
Same nationality	NA	9	25	41
Same nationality/Nordic	NA	NA	3	2
Same nationality/Other	NA	NA	2	3
Nordic	4	1	4	NA
Nordic/Other	1	2	1	NA
Other	4	8	6	1
All	NA	1	NA	NA
<b>Total number of meetings</b>	9	21	41	47

Sources: Adriana Bunea and Raimondas Ibenskas’ original dataset on meetings between IGs and MEPs based on the EP official website. Notes: IGs = interest groups.

<sup>7</sup> To be clear, meetings with MEPs may include one or several MEPs at once – hence the subdivision of nationalities in Table 4.4.

## Outside lobbying strategies – media access

A total of 194 of the 803 Nordic interest groups (24%) have been mentioned in Euractiv, Euronews and/or Politico.eu. 55 interest groups are mentioned more than five times and only a few interest groups are mentioned more than 20 times. See Appendix D for an overview of the ten interest groups per Nordic country that appear in the media most frequently. For example, the Norwegian interest group Equinor<sup>8</sup> was mentioned 18 times, while the Danish interest group A.P. Møller – Mærsk A/S was mentioned 54 times, the Swedish Ericsson was mentioned 62 times and the Finnish Nokia was mentioned 92 times. Nokia has the maximum number of media appearance among the Nordic interest groups. The percentage of interest groups mentioned is quite similar among Danish, Swedish and Finnish interest groups: around 20-24% of these interest groups are mentioned in the media.

As many as 37% of the Norwegian interest groups appear in the three media outlets, a fairly high percentage compared to the other Nordic interest groups. Appendix D shows that the Nordic interest groups that appear in the media most frequently are institutions or resource-rich business groups. As Table 4.5 on the following page shows, the maximum number of mentions are not as high as for interest groups from the other Nordic countries. Nonetheless, Table 4.5 also indicates that, on average, Norwegian interest groups are mentioned as frequently as Swedish interest groups.

Interest groups with the highest number of media appearances have in common that they are all individual business groups and also quite resource-rich groups. They have larger staff sizes compared to those IGs not mentioned. However, it is worth mentioning that the staff sizes are not considerably large, but it seems to be the case that those IGs who are most often mentioned also have the greatest staff sizes. The majority of the interest groups with media access do not spend much on lobbying activities, which is consistent with the argument stating that resource-poor groups rely on outside lobbying strategies and thus supportive of H1. Nonetheless, 70% of interest groups that have been mentioned in media have a Brussels office. Moreover, it is apparent that the higher lobbying expenses, the more mentions in media. For instance, the interest groups mentioned above are also among the Nordic interest

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<sup>8</sup> The number is actually higher, as Equinor changed its name from Statoil in 2018. Because I do not have this knowledge of other Nordic interest groups, it would have been biased to include mentions of Statoil.

groups that spend the most on lobbying activities. This supports the notion that resource-rich interest groups are more likely to implement both inside and outside lobbying strategies to gain larger influence on EU policymaking, due to their abilities of investing in both (Weiler and Brändli 2015, 8).

**Table 4.5:** Univariate summary statistics for Media access.

	All Nordic IGs	Norwegian IGs	Danish IGs	Swedish IGs	Finnish IGs
Min	0	0	0	0	0
Max	92	18	54	62	92
Average	1,6	1,7	2,0	1,7	1,1
Median	0	0	0	0	0
St. dev.	6,4	3,8	6,7	6,9	6,1
N	803	86	186	267	264

### 4.1.3 What explains the choice of lobbying strategies?

A total of 32% of the Nordic interest groups have had one or several meetings with the EC high level officials. This is consistent with the hypothesis proposing that business groups are more likely to choose inside strategies, considering that 47% of the Nordic interest groups represent business. Furthermore, the descriptive analysis shows that 82% of the Nordic interest groups have a Brussels office: a resource that according to the literature should make it easier to get close to EU policymaking. However, the analysis also shows that most of the Nordic interest groups are small and financially resource-poor, which may be the reason why the percentage of interest groups meeting the Commission is not higher. 19% of the Nordic interest groups are members of EC expert groups, 14% have EP passes and 15% have had meetings with MEPs. Regarding meetings with MEPs, there are some differences between the Nordic countries. The Swedish and Finnish interest groups have had more meetings compared to the Danish and Norwegian interest groups, and also more frequently meet with MEPs compared to the Danish ones. 24% of the Nordic interest groups are mentioned in Euractiv, Euronews and/or Politico.eu. It is apparent that Nordic interest groups rely on both inside and outside lobbying strategies, and it remains to see what explains the types of lobbying strategies used to influence EU institutions and decision-makers.

## **4.2 Explanatory analysis: inside and outside lobbying strategies**

The first hypothesis of this thesis posits that resource-rich groups are more likely to choose inside lobbying strategies, relative to outside strategies and lobbying in coalitions than resource-poor interest groups. Building on this, the second hypothesis proposes that resource-poor groups are more likely to lobby through coalitions relative to inside and outside strategies than resource-rich interest groups. The third hypothesis sets forth that business organisations are more likely to choose inside lobbying strategies relative to outside strategies and coalitions than other types of groups. In the following analysis, the first and the third hypothesis are answered, while the second hypothesis is addressed when analysing the online survey data.

Inside lobbying and outside lobbying is thus examined empirically, and my unit of observation and analysis is an interest group. In total I have five regression models for five variables that enables me to measure the three dependent variables: access to the EC, access to the EP and access to media. Recall that since the dependent variables are measured differently, separate methods are necessary to analyse the data. The three count variables require negative binomial regression and the two dummy variables demand logistic regression.

### **4.2.1 Negative binomial regression: explaining inside and outside lobbying strategies**

Table 4.6 presents the results of the negative binomial regressions for the three count variables: IG meetings with EC high level officials, Number of passes to access the EP premises and Media access. The raw coefficients in a negative binomial regression represent the change in the logarithm of the dependent variables (count variables) for a one-unit change in the independent variable (NCSS Statistical Software 2020). Trying to explain coefficients in logged form is not particularly straightforward, and alternatives would be to compute marginal effects or exponentiating these coefficients (incidence rate ratio). I present the results in incidence rate ratio (IRR) instead, which are exponentiated coefficients and can be interpreted as the marginal factor change in the dependent variable for one-unit change in the independent variable (Hilbe 2011, 20; Hilbe 2014, 64). In general, the IRR can be interpreted

as follows: if it is 1 or close to 1, it suggests no or little difference; an IRR larger than 1 means an increased probability; while an IRR below 1 suggests a reduced likelihood. For dummies and categorical variables with more than two categories, the IRR is the ratio of the expressed category to the reference category (Hilbe 2011, 19).

**Table 4.6:** Negative binomial regression: inside and outside lobbying strategies.

		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
		DV: IG meetings with EC high level officials	DV: Number of passes to access the EP premises	DV: Media access
		IRR	IRR	IRR
<b>Interest type represented</b>	<i>Business groups</i>	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	<i>Consultancies</i>	0.469* (0.192)	1.433 (0.750)	0.180*** (0.104)
	<i>NGOs</i>	0.138*** (0.271)	0.552* (0.180)	0.175*** (0.050)
	<i>Trade unions/Prof.org.</i>	0.875 (0.282)	0.853 (0.334)	0.402* (0.207)
	<i>Institutions</i>	0.504*** (0.155)	0.543 (0.170)	1.794 (0.658)
	<i>Public authorities</i>	0.320*** (0.100)	0.210*** (0.101)	0.265*** (0.103)
	<i>Other</i>	0.343* (0.210)	0.536 (0.490)	0.412 (0.304)
	<b>Resources</b>	<i>Staff size</i>	1.028 (0.025)	1.090*** (0.027)
<i>Brussels office</i>		3.360*** (0.652)	6.414*** (1.501)	2.505*** (0.671)
<b>Control variables</b>				
<b>Organisational form</b>	<i>Individual organisations</i>	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	<i>National associations</i>	0.290*** (0.063)	1.156 (0.324)	0.131*** (0.040)
	<i>European associations</i>	0.158*** (0.020)	1.172 (0.950)	0.056** (0.075)
	<i>Other</i>	0.425 (0.233)	1.804 (1.266)	0.981 (0.633)
<b>MS is EU member</b>	2.860*** (0.787)	1.850* (0.675)	1.042 (0.333)	
<b>Registration year</b>	0.722*** (0.021)	0.822*** (0.030)	0.870*** (0.034)	
<b>Constant</b>	9,439*** (3.426)	0,324** (0.156)	4.572*** (2.150)	
<b>N</b>	803	803	803	

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*p<0.001 \*\*p<0.05 \*0.01.

## **IG meetings with EC high level officials**

Model 1 presents the results of the negative binomial regression for the dependent variable *IG meetings with EC high level officials*. As expected, the reported results for the variable *Interest type represented* show that business groups are more likely to meet with EC high level officials. The IRR for Consultancies is 0.47 times the incidence rate for the reference group (Business groups), significant at a 0.1-level. Likewise, the IRR for NGOs is 0.14 times the IRR for the reference group holding the other variables constant - significant at a 0.01-level. The IRR for Trade unions/professional organisations is 0,86 times the IRR for Business groups, but it is not statistically significant. Institutions and Public authorities are both significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), and the respective IRRs are 0.50 and 0.32 times the incidence rate for business groups. Other is significant ( $p < 0.1$ ) and the IRR is 0.34 times the incidence rate for business groups. The part of the third hypothesis that argues that business groups are more likely to choose inside lobbying strategies, compared to other group types, is therefore supported.

The IRR for the variable Staff size shows a 2.8% greater likelihood for meeting with EC high level officials, but the effect is not statistically significant. It looks like having a Brussels office matters, however. The variable Brussels office shows that interest groups with a Brussels office are 3.36 times more likely to have meetings with EC high level officials, compared to interest groups that do not have a Brussels office ( $p < 0.01$ ). It thus looks like resource-rich interest groups are more likely to choose inside lobbying strategies, compared to resource-poor groups.

Control variables are also included, and the variable *Organisational form* shows that individual organisations are more likely to meet with EC high level officials, compared to the other organisational forms. The IRR for National associations and European associations are, respectively, 0.30 and 0.16 times more than the IRR for Individual organisations – both significant at a 0.001-level. The IRR for Other is 0.425 times the IRR for Individual organisations, but it is not statistically significant. The estimate for the control variable, MS is EU member, is significant at a 0.001-level and the incidence rate ratio shows that interest groups based in EU member countries are 2.86 times more likely to have meetings with EC high level officials, compared to interest groups based in Norway. For the Registration Year-variable the incidence rate ratio of the dependent variable decreases by a factor of 0.72 –



significant at a 0.001-level as well. This indicates that the more recently an IG has registered in the Transparency Register, the less likely it is to meet with the EC high level officials.

### **Number of passes to access the EP premises**

Model 2 presents the results of the negative binomial regression for the dependent variable *Number of passes to access the EP premises*. The case is a bit different when it comes to number of passes to access the EP premises. The results show that business groups are not necessarily more likely to have passes, as the IRR for consultancies is 1.43. This is not statistically significant, however, and in fact only the features of being an NGO or a public authority has a significant effect. They are less likely to have EP passes, compared to Business groups: NGOs have an IRR of 0.18 more than IRR for Business groups ( $p < 0.01$ ), while Public authorities have an IRR of 0.21 more than IRR for Business groups ( $p < 0.001$ ). Consequently, H3 cannot be supported when it comes to EP passes.

Staff size and having a Brussels office matter. The IRR for Staff size shows a 9% greater likelihood for an IG having passes to access the EP premises for unit increase in staff size. Interest groups with a Brussels office are 6.41 times more likely to have EP passes, as opposed to interest groups without. Both the effect of Staff size and Brussels office are significant at a 0.001-level. As a result, H1 is supported: resources seem to matter for the number of passes to access the EP premises.

The variable Organisational form shows that Other are the most likely to have EP passes, followed by European associations in second, national associations in third and individual organisations the last. However, the variable does not have a significant effect on the dependent variable. The variable MS is EU member shows 85% greater likelihood for interest groups from the Nordic countries that are members of the EU to have more passes to access the EP premises, compared to interest groups from Norway ( $p < 0.01$ ). For Registration Year the incidence rate ratio of the dependent variable decreases by a factor of 0.82 and is significant at a 0.001-level. This means that, like for EC meetings, the earlier an interest group was registered in the Transparency Register, the greater probability for having EP passes.

## Media access

Model 3 presents the results of the negative binomial regression for the dependent variable *Media access*. The variable *Interest type represented* shows that institutions are more likely than business groups to have appear in the media. They have an IRR of 1.794, however the effect is not statistically significant. The rest of the interest type represented are less likely to be mentioned in the media, compared to business groups. The IRR for both consultancies and NGOs is 0.18 times the incidence rate for business groups, significant at a 0.001-level. The IRR for trade unions/professional organisations is 0.4 times the IRR for business groups and significant at a 0.1-level. Public authorities is significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) and the IRR is 0.27 times the incidence rate for business groups. Other is 0.41 times the IRR for business groups, but it is not statistically significant. Consequently, there is only partial support for H3, because business groups are *not* less likely to choose outside lobbying strategies than other interest types.

The variables Staff size and Brussels office matter for media access – both significant at a 0.001-level. The IRR for Staff size shows a 14% greater likelihood for an IG to appear in the media. Interest groups with a Brussels office are 2.51 times more likely to have media access, compared to interest groups without. It is apparent that the bigger and more resourceful the group, the greater the chance of being mentioned in the media. As discovered in the descriptive analysis: the interest groups most frequently appearing in the media are all large and resource-rich interest groups. Accordingly, organisational resources are important for outside lobbying strategies as well.

The organisational form of an interest group also seems to matter as individual organisations are more likely to appear in media, compared to other organisational forms. The IRR for National associations is 0.13 times more than the incidence rate for Individual organisations and significant at a 0.01-level. The IRR for European associations is 0.06 times more than the IRR for Individual organisations – significant at a 0.5-level. The IRR for Other is 1.0 times the IRR for Individual organisations, but it is not statistically significant. The variable MS is EU Member shows a 4.2% greater likelihood for interest groups based in the Nordic countries that are EU members to appear in media, compared to interest groups from Norway. However, the effect is not statistically significant and nonetheless a weak effect. For Registration Year the incidence rate ratio of the dependent variable decreases by a factor of

0.87 and is significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). It thus seems that how established an interest group is in Brussels matters regardless of strategy. Hence, interest groups with several years of experience in lobbying the EU, are more likely to be mentioned in the media. This also seems to be the case of IG direct meetings MEPs and IG membership in EC expert groups.

## 4.2.2 Logistic regression: explaining inside lobbying strategies

**Table 4.7:** Logistic regression: inside lobbying strategies.

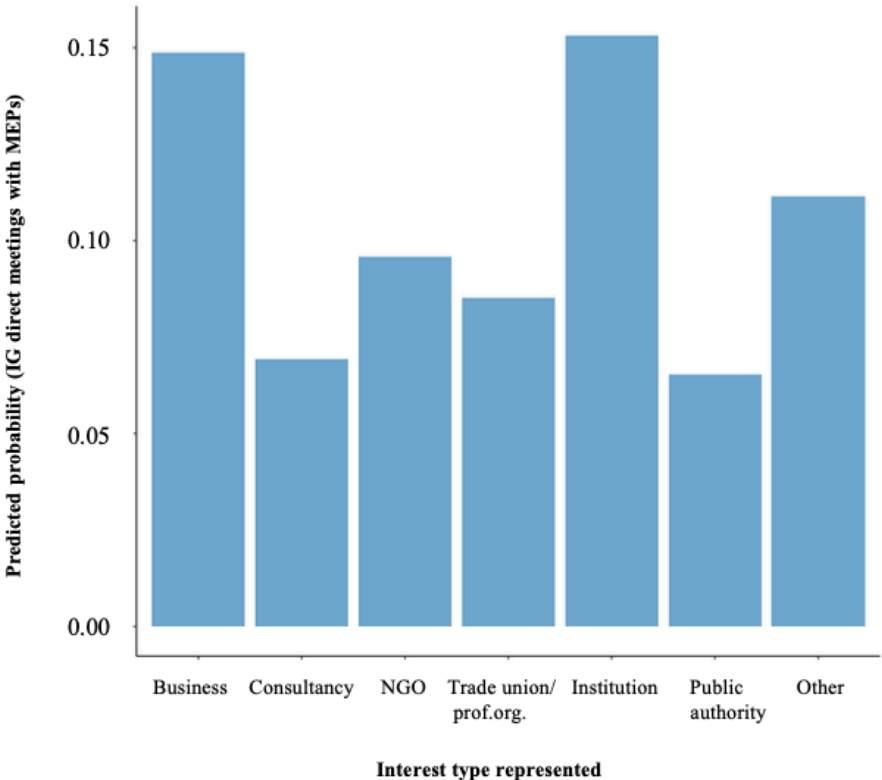
		Model 4	Model 5
		DV: IG direct meetings with MEPs	DV: IG membership in EC expert groups
		Log odds	Log odds
<b>Interest type represented</b>	<i>Business groups</i>	Ref.	Ref.
	<i>Consultancies</i>	-0.772 (0.745)	-1.042 (0.765)
	<i>NGOs</i>	-0.423 (0.328)	0.094 (0.259)
	<i>Trade unions/Prof.org</i>	-0.724 (0.452)	0.784*** (0.375)
	<i>Institutions</i>	0.108 (0.436)	0.963*** (0.333)
	<i>Public authorities</i>	-0.799* (0.448)	-0.298 (0.401)
	<i>Other</i>	-0.144 (0.818)	-0.168 (0.708)
	<b>Resources</b>	<i>Staff size</i>	0.092*** (0.030)
	<i>Brussels office</i>	1.501*** (0.251)	-0.039 (0.255)
<b>Control variables</b>			
<b>Organisational form</b>	<i>Individual organisations</i>	Ref.	Ref.
	<i>National associations</i>	0.384 (0.292)	-0.541* (0.294)
	<i>European associations</i>	0.362 (0.825)	1.072* (0.644)
	<i>Other</i>	0.098 (0.827)	0.556 (0.559)
<b>EU member</b>		0.721* (0.400)	-0.160 (0.286)
<b>Registration year</b>		-0.084** (0.039)	-0.166*** (0.036)
<b>Constant</b>		-2.250*** (0.530)	-0.041 (0.421)
<b>N</b>		803	803

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  \*\* $p < 0.05$  \* $0.01$ .

Table 4.7 shows the results of the logistic regression models for the dependent variables IG direct meetings with MEPs and IG membership in EC expert groups. The logistic regression coefficients give the change in the log odds of the outcome for a one unit increase in the predictor variables (source). However, because the log odds do not tell us much else other than the direction of the effects, I present predicted probabilities for the variables with significant effects. The probabilities can give a more intuitive measure of the overall effect.

**IG direct meetings with MEPs**

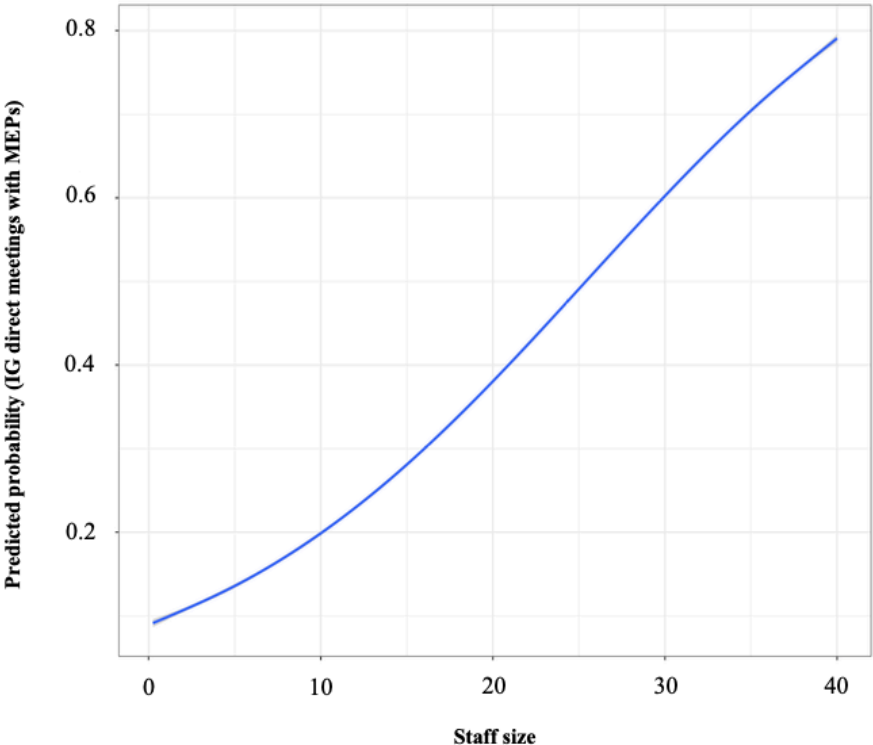
Model 4 presents the results for the dependent variable *IG direct meetings with MEPs*. It shows that Nordic business groups are more likely to have meetings with MEPs, compared to other interest types represented. All indicators of the variable Interest type represented are non-significant, however, with the exception of public authorities ( $p < 0.01$ ). Figure 4.10 shows the predicted probabilities for the variable *Interest type represented*. Nordic institutions are most likely to have direct meetings with MEPs, the predicted probability being 15.3%, but the effect is not statistically significant. Nordic public authorities are the least likely to have direct meetings with MEPs, with a predicted probability of 6.5%. The predicted probability that Nordic business groups have direct meetings with MEPs is 14.8%, i.e. higher than the others, but below Nordic institutions.



**Figure 4.10:** Predicted probabilities of direct meeting with MEPs for different interest type represented. Only Public authorities is significantly different from Business.

No matter which group type business groups were compared with, the predicted probabilities are not very high. Furthermore, there is not a large difference between the groups in terms of the predicted probability. That does not signify that all Nordic interest groups irrespective of interest type have equal access to legislators: business groups are more likely compared to all types with the exception of institutions. However, as mentioned, the effect of institutions is not statistically significant. Consequently, the third hypothesis on business groups being more likely to choose inside lobbying strategies relative to other types of groups, is not supported when it comes to direct meetings with MEPs.

The effects of Staff size and Brussels office are both significant at a 0,001-level and have positive effects on the dependent variable. Staff size appears to have a statistically significant effect. Figure 4.11 displays the predicted probabilities for staff size and shows that the higher staff size, the higher the probability of having direct meetings with MEPs. For example, a staff size of 10 FTE gives a predicted probability of 20%, while a staff size of 30 FTE corresponds to a predicted probability of 60%.

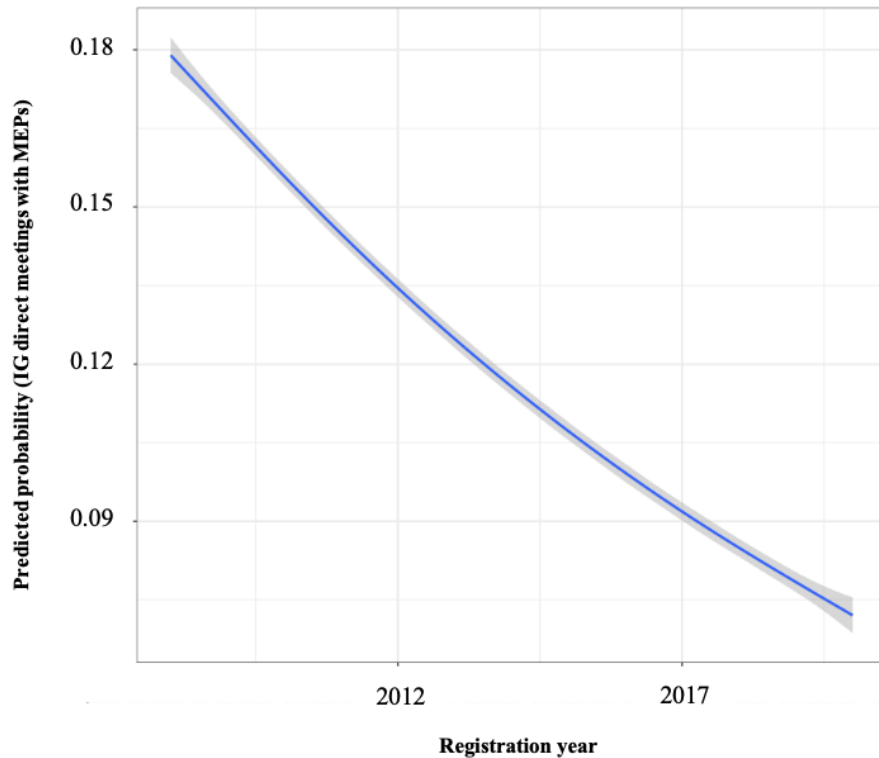


**Figure 4.11:** Predicted probabilities of direct meeting with MEPs for Staff size.

Furthermore, IGs with a Brussels office have a 31% predicted probability of having direct meetings with MEPs. IGs that do not have a Brussels office have a 10% predicted probability of having direct meetings with MEPs. Although the predicted probabilities of having a Brussels office are not particularly high, there is a stark difference between having an office or not. Accordingly, it means that having a Brussels office matters for whether interest groups meet with MEPs or not. This is in line with the literature that argues that being situated in Brussels improves the chances of getting close to EU policymaking (Mahoney 2004, 453; Bunea 2014, 1229; Bouwen 2002, 374). These results support part of the first hypothesis: resource-rich groups are more likely to choose inside lobbying strategies, in this case direct meetings with MEPs, relative to resource-poor interest groups.

The variable MS is EU member also seems to have a positive and significant effect ( $p < 0.01$ ) on the dependent variable, which means that interest groups based in EU member countries are more likely to have direct meetings with MEPs. Being an interest group based in an EU member state has a predicted probability of 13%, while an interest group based in Norway has a predicted probability of 7%. Accordingly, there is a difference, but the very effect of EU membership is not particularly strong on the dependent variable. This indicates that although Danish, Swedish and Finnish interest groups are more likely to have direct meetings with MEPs, the likelihood is not exceptionally larger than for Norwegian interest groups. This is a very interesting finding, considering Norway is not a member of the EU. Not only does it tell us that Norwegian interest groups have access to MEPs despite their lack of representation in the EP, but also that the difference between being member of the EU and a non-EU member is not tremendously substantial when it comes to meetings with MEPs. This supports the argument ascertaining that Norway has a special relationship with the EU (Leruth 2014; Eliassen and Peneva 2011).

Registration year is significant too ( $p < 0.05$ ) but has a negative effect on the dependent variable. Put differently, the more recently an IG is registered in the Transparency Register, the less likelihood of meeting directly with MEPs. Nonetheless, the predicted probabilities in Figure 4.12 do not show particularly large decreases. For example, interest groups registered in 2012 have a predicted probability about 13.5%, while interest groups registered in 2017 have a predicted probability of roughly 9%.

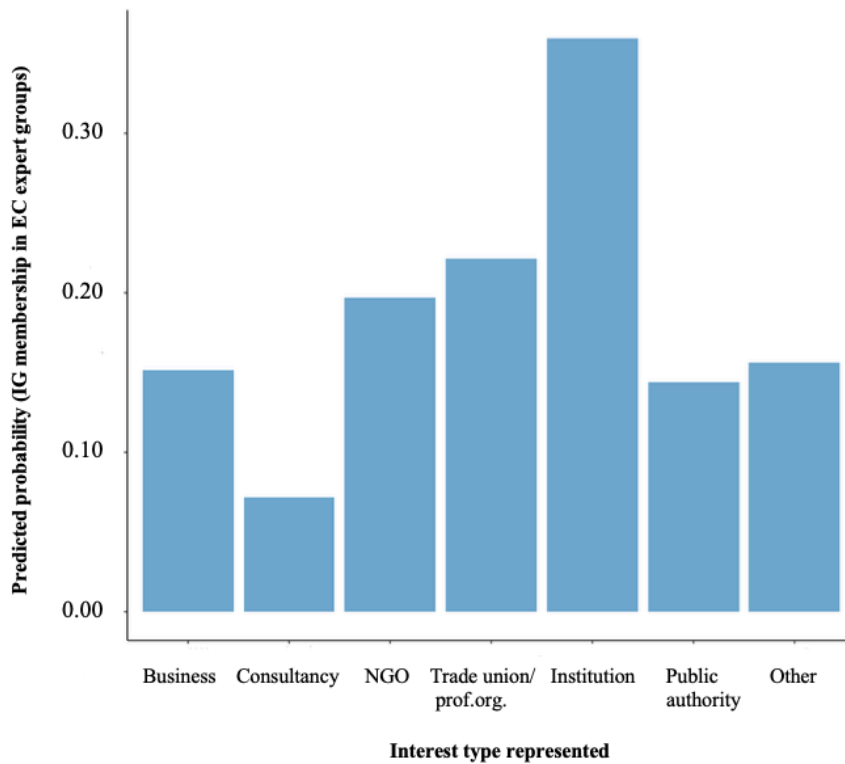


**Figure 4.12:** Predicted probabilities of direct meeting with MEPs for Registration year

### **IG membership in EC expert groups**

The results in Model 5 in Table 4.7 explain IG membership in EC expert groups and show that Nordic business groups are *not* more likely to be members of EC expert groups, compared to other Nordic interest groups. However, only the coefficients for Trade unions/professional organisations and Institutions have significant effects ( $p < 0.001$ ). As Figure 4.13 shows, business groups have a 15% predicted probability of membership in EC expert groups. The predicted probability of trade unions/professional organisations is 22%, whereas it is 36% for institutions, which is well over average compared to other interest groups. Figure 4.13 shows that business groups are not more likely to have membership in EC expert groups, compared to other types of groups. Moreover, the results in Table 4.7 unexpectedly show that the variable Brussels office in fact has a negative effect on the IG membership in EC expert groups. However, it is not statistically significant, and neither is the effect of Staff size.

Accordingly, neither H1 nor H3 can be supported when it comes to membership in EC expert groups. Although membership in EC expert groups is an inside lobbying strategy, it stands out a bit from the others. As emphasised by Dür and Mateo (2016, 171), membership in EU expert groups is highly influenced by the European Commission’s decision to invite some groups rather than others. Moreover, because the Commission desires to appear balanced (e.g. the 2001 White Paper on European Governance), it makes it less likely to find business bias in the membership of these expert groups (Dür and Mateo 2016, 171). Because Nordic interest groups are also the most resource-rich interest groups, it might explain why resources do not matter for IG membership in EC expert groups.

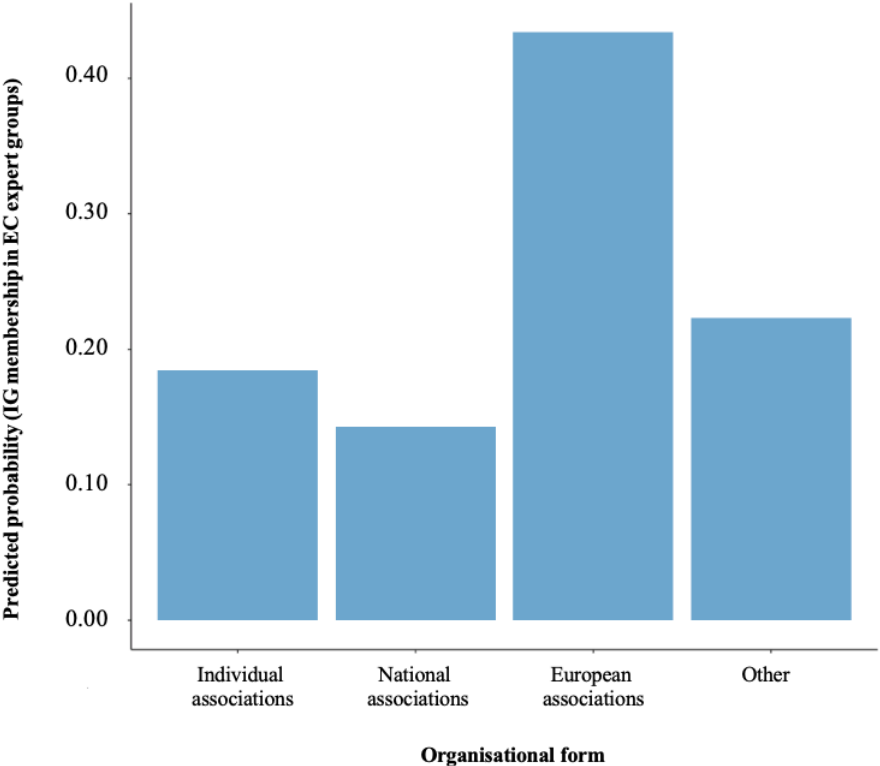


**Figure 4.13:** Predicted probabilities of membership in EC expert groups for interest type represented. Only Trade unions/prof.org and Institutions are significantly different from Business.

Organisational form plays a role and explains comment. The effect of the Organisational form variable indicates that individual organisations are more likely to have membership in EC expert groups, compared to national associations. Nevertheless, European associations are the most likely to have membership in EC expert groups. Both effects are significant at a 0.01-level. Figure 4.14 shows that individual organisations have a probability of 18% and national associations a predicted probability of 14%. Nonetheless, European associations are more



likely to have membership in EC expert groups, compared to individual organisations and national associations. Figure 4.14 displays that European associations have a predicted probability of having membership in EC expert groups is 43%, which is more than twice the probability of individual organisations.



**Figure 4.14:** Predicted probabilities of IG membership in EC expert groups for organisational form. Only National and European associations are significantly different from Individual organisations.

Moreover, the EU member-variable shows that being an IG based in an EU member country does not necessarily increase the likelihood of membership in EC expert groups. The effect is not statistically significant, but it makes sense given that several Norwegian interest groups are members of EC expert. One could argue that EEA membership matters and maybe reduces the effect of EU membership when it comes to technocratic evidence-based policymaking, like one taking place in these expert committees. Registration year is significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) and has a negative effect: being recently registered in the Transparency Register, decreases the likelihood of membership in EC expert groups for interest groups. This indicates that Nordic interest groups need to build reputation and trust and consolidate their relationship with the Commission services before being picked to join them. Figure 4.15 presents the predicted probabilities of registration year and clearly shows that older interest

groups are more likely to have memberships in EC expert groups. For example, interest groups registered in 2008 have about a 40% predicted probability, while interest groups in 2017 about 15%. Registration year thus has a quite strong effect on IG membership in EC expert groups.

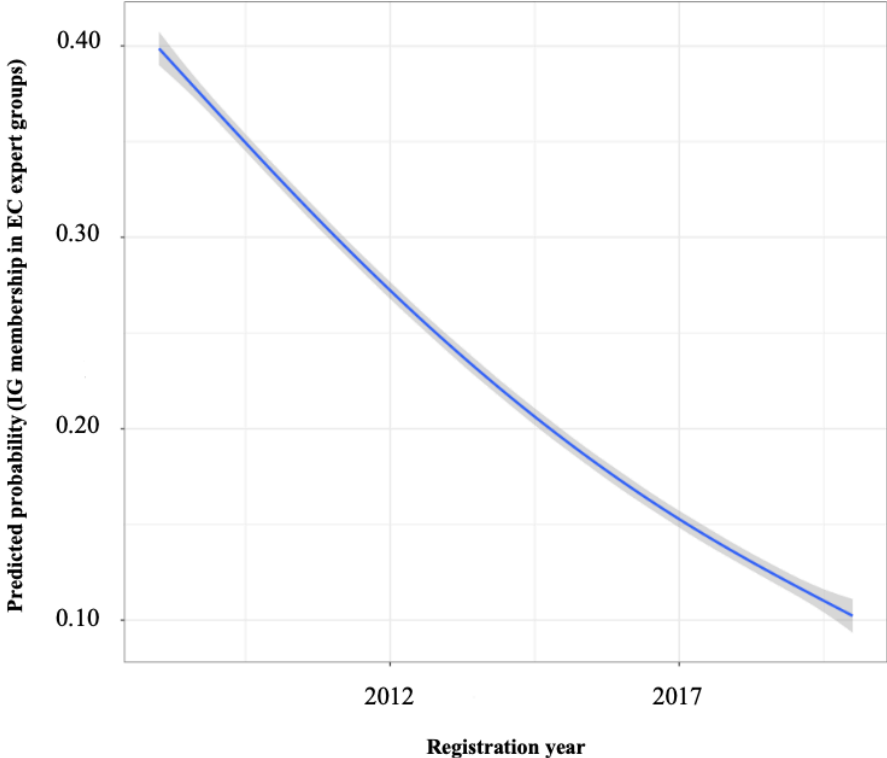


Figure 4.15: Predicted probabilities of IG membership in EC expert groups for Registration year

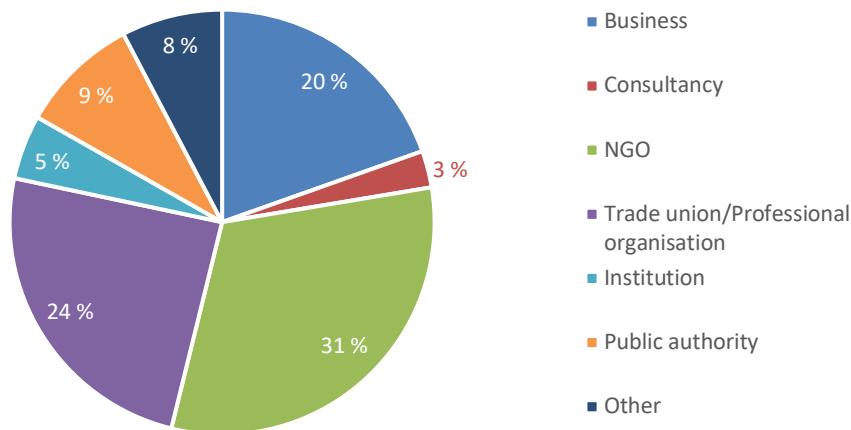
### **4.2.3 Is the choice of lobbying strategies determined by trust and reputation?**

The analyses suggest some trends for inside lobbying strategies, but also some differences. Resources seem to matter for all inside lobbying strategies with the exception of Nordic IG membership in EC expert groups. Dür and Mateo (2016) also find that the case of membership in EC expert groups is different from other inside lobbying strategies. As stated, the Commission desires to appear balanced, which might explain why resources matter for the inside lobbying strategies of IG meetings with EC high level officials, IG direct meetings with MEPs and Number of passes to access the EP premises, but not for IG membership in EC expert groups.

Furthermore, compared to other interest types represented, Nordic business groups are more likely to have meetings with EC high level officials or MEPs. This is also the case of having EP passes, with the exception of consultancies. They are not more likely, however, to have membership of EC expert groups. Regarding organisational form, there are diverse findings. Nordic individual organisations are the most likely to have meetings with EC high level officials. This is not the case for IG membership in EC expert groups, where European associations are more likely to have membership. IGs based in an EU member state are more likely to pursue inside lobbying strategies, with the exception of membership in EC expert groups. An effect that has been consistent, however, is Registration Year. How long an interest group has been registered in the Transparency Register seems to matter for inside lobbying strategies. This indicates that the more established interest groups are in lobbying the EU, the more likely they will gain access to bureaucrats and legislators. This appears to be the case for outside lobbying strategies as well. Additionally, the more resources interest groups have, the more likely they will have media access. This is in line with the literature which argues that more resources make it possible to choose both outside and inside lobbying strategies (Beyers 2004; Binderkrantz 2005; Dür and Mateo 2016, 80; Weiler and Brändli 2015).

### 4.3 Online survey analysis

To complement the analysis of data about Nordic interest groups provided by the EU Transparency Register, I conducted an online survey. An additional online survey may provide complementary insights together with the Transparency Register. A total of 143 Nordic interest groups participated in the online survey: 17 Norwegian (12%), 29 Danish (20%), 58 Swedish (41%) and 39 Finnish interest groups (27%). It is always desirable to have a sample that is as representative as possible. The percentage proportions are not tremendously different compared to the sample in the original dataset with 803 Nordic interest group, however Swedish interest groups constitute a larger share in the online survey data.

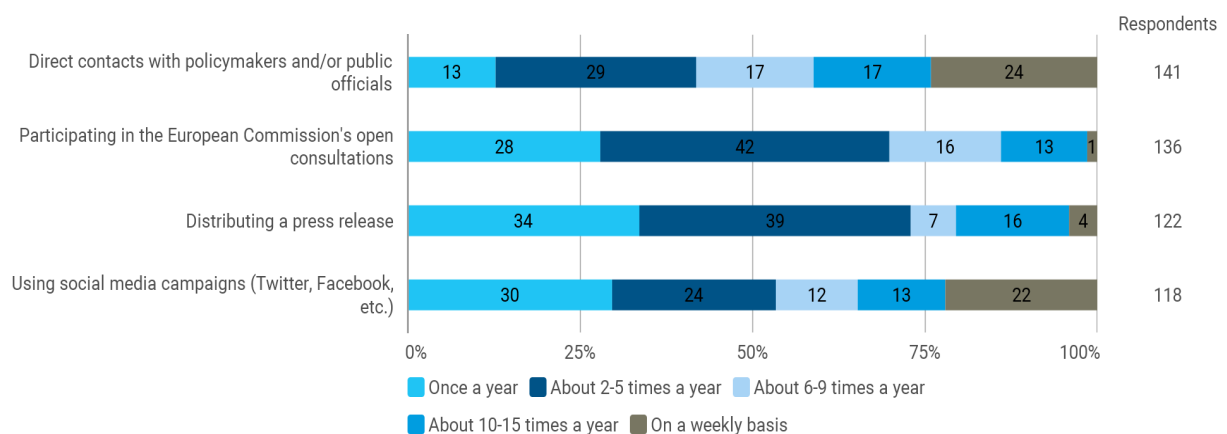


**Figure 4.16:** Interest types represented by Nordic interest groups that participated in the online survey.

Figure 4.16 shows the type of interests represented by the interest groups that participated in the online survey. To be consistent, I have divided them into similar categories as the original dataset.<sup>9</sup> The figure shows that the three largest represented interest types are public interest organisations/NGOs (31%), trade union/professional organisations (24%) and business (20%). Institutions and consultancies, respectively, amount to 5% and 3%, public authorities constitute 9% and other 8%. The percentage proportions are not similar to the original dataset: in the original dataset business constitute 40% while only 20% in the online survey. Trade unions, which is only 8% in the dataset, make up 24% of the online survey respondents.

<sup>9</sup> Institution was not a choice option in the questionnaire, but several interest groups wrote that they are institutions when ticking off “other”. There were also several who chose “other” but wrote that they are an interest type that fall under one of the already-existing categories and are thus moved into those respective categories

Furthermore, NGOs constitute 31%, while only 23% in the online survey. Moreover, according to the survey answers, only 30% of the Nordic interest groups that participated in the online survey have a Brussels office. This is in line with the coded information on Brussels offices in my original dataset. Nonetheless, the fact that there are such differences between the interest groups in the original dataset and the interest groups that responded the online survey, imposes a problem of comparison. Consequently, the differences need to be accounted for when comparing the findings.



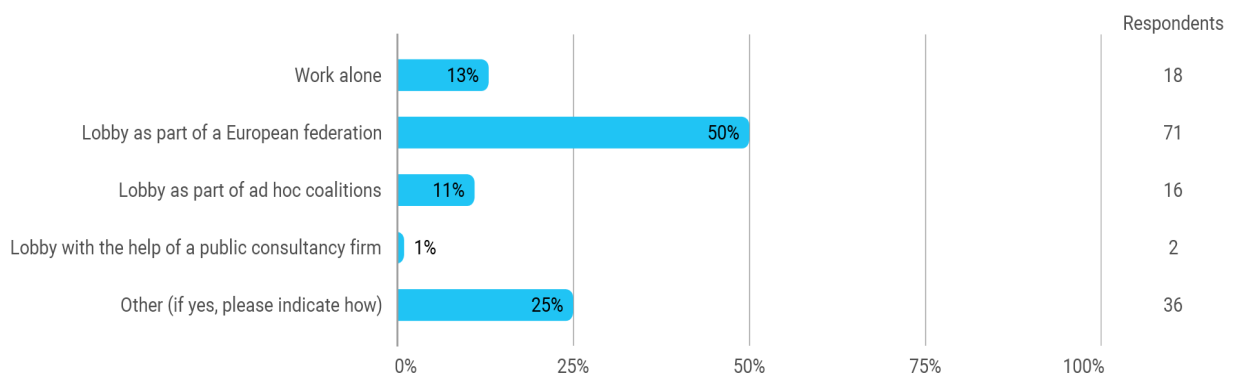
**Figure 4.17:** Frequencies of lobbying strategies applied by Nordic interest groups to participate in and influence EU decision-making and legislation.

Figure 4.17 shows that there is a difference in how frequent the interest groups that participated in the online survey employ the different lobbying strategies. A vast majority of the Nordic interest groups that participated in the online survey had direct contact with policymakers and/or public officials. 24 of the 143 interest groups (16%) have direct contact on a weekly basis; 24% about 6-15 times a year; 20% about 2-5 times a year and 9% of the Nordic interest groups have direct contact with policymakers only once a year or less. In other words, there is variation in how often Nordic interest groups have direct contacts with EU policymakers and/or public officials. However, Figure 4.17 shows that direct contact (i.e. inside lobbying strategy) is the most frequently applied strategy among Nordic interest groups.

Using social media campaigns (Twitter, Facebook, etc.), considered an outside lobbying strategy, is the second most common used strategy. 33% of the interest groups use social media campaigns 6-9 times a year or more, and 15% of them on a weekly basis. Nonetheless, most of them only use social media campaigns once a year or less. Participating in the

European Commission’s open consultations is the third most common used strategy, which is an inside lobbying strategy. However, the majority of the Nordic interest groups participate in consultations about 2-5 times a year or less, while 21% of them participate in consultations about 6 times a year or more. Lastly, distributing a press release (i.e. outside lobbying strategy) to influence EU decision-making is the least common strategy out of the four. 18% distribute a press release about 6 times a year or more. Most of them distribute a press release once a year or less, and 27% about 2-5 times a year.

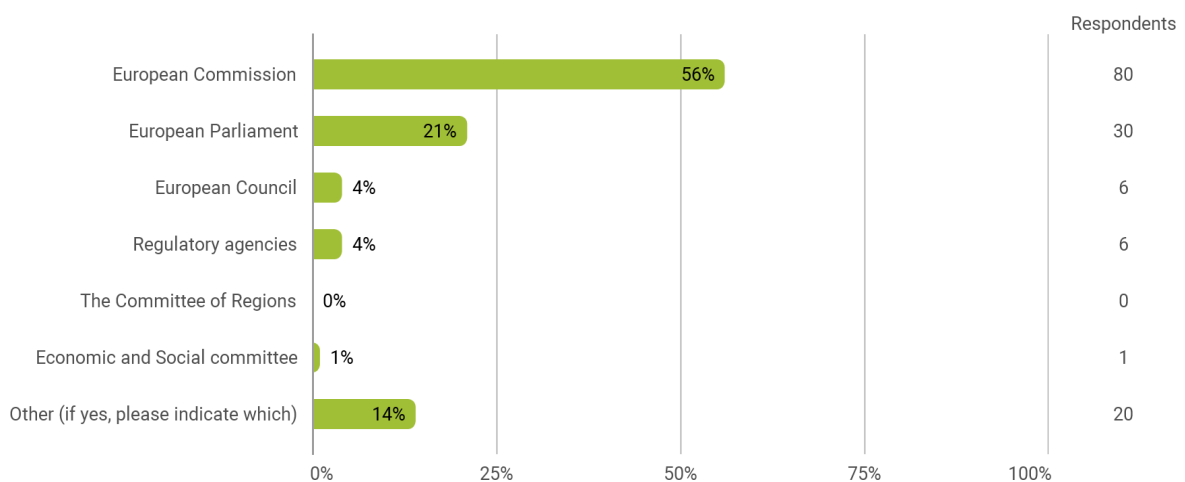
Perhaps the most interesting finding in the online survey is that most of the Nordic interest groups lobby in coalitions as their main approach to lobby EU institutions and policymaking. Roughly 75% of them answered that lobbying in coalitions is their main strategy - either as part of a European federation, as part of ad hoc coalitions or other types of collaborations. Figure 4.18 shows that only 13% work alone and 1% with the help of a public consultancy firm. 25% answered “other”, but many answered that they combine lobbying as part of European federations, ad hoc coalitions or other types. After viewing the text answers for “others” there were 20 interest groups that said lobbying in coalitions is their main strategy. A disadvantage of the survey is not only that respondents may be unable to single out one main strategy, but also that the survey asks them to do so and consequently restrains them from providing an adequate answer. Many interest groups answered that they equally apply the first three alternatives: work alone, lobby as part of European federation and as part of ad hoc coalitions. Nevertheless, the important discovery is that the majority of the Nordic interest groups lobby in coalitions to lobby institutions and policymaking.



**Figure 4.18:** Nordic interest groups’ main approaches to lobby EU institutions and policymaking.

Given that most of the Nordic IGs that participated in the online survey are NGOs and trade unions, it is not surprising that most of them prefer lobbying in coalitions. However, among the 18 IGs that answered that their main approach is to work alone, there is only 3 business groups. The rest constitutes of 3 public authorities, 7 NGOs, 1 trade union, 2 institutions and 2 consultancies. This means that also business groups prefer to join coalitions to lobby EU institutions and policymaking. Nonetheless, 50% of the business groups that participated in the survey are resource-poor (i.e. spends less than 100,000 euros in lobbying activities). As a matter of fact, the majority of the Nordic interest groups that participated in the online survey are resource-poor (the mean is 1,7 and the median is 1 for Financial resources). Additionally, several IGs, representing different interest types, wrote that they do not have enough resources to lobby actively on their own. The 18 IGs that prefer to work alone, however, are a bit more resourceful (both the mean and median are 2 for Financial resources). These findings emphasise the underlying argument in H2, as it seems as resource-poor groups are more likely to lobby through coalitions to influence EU policymaking.

Figure 4.19 presents the interest groups' answers on the question asking them to indicate which of the EU institutions mentioned is the main target of their organisation's attempt to communicate with EU decision-makers. 56% of the Nordic interest groups answered that the European Commission is their main target, while 21% said the European Parliament. Respectively, only 4% regard the European Council or regulatory agencies as their main target. None of the interest groups view The Committee of Regions as their main target, and only 1% answered that their main target institution is the European Economic and Social committee. 14% of the Nordic interest answered "other" – and here too, the question and choice options restrict the Nordic interest groups from providing an adequate answer.



**Figure 4.19:** Main target EU institutions of Nordic interest groups attempting to communicate with EU decision-makers.

Several of the interest groups answered that the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council are equally important – depending on the issue at hand and the status of the discussions and/or proposals. Some commented that the Commission and Parliament are considered equally important and their main targets. What is noteworthy is that these constitute IGs from all four Nordic countries, and most of them represent business and individual organisations. Moreover, an interest group answered that they prefer targeting the Commission, and that targeting the Council is not preferable because it goes through national channels which make the processes slow. This interest group is an institution which is quite resource-rich, and hence able to invest in strategies that focuses on gaining access to EC high level officials. However, Table 4.8 shows that nearly 68% of the Nordic interest groups consider targeting/talking to national governments and/or responsible ministries at national level one of their main targets.

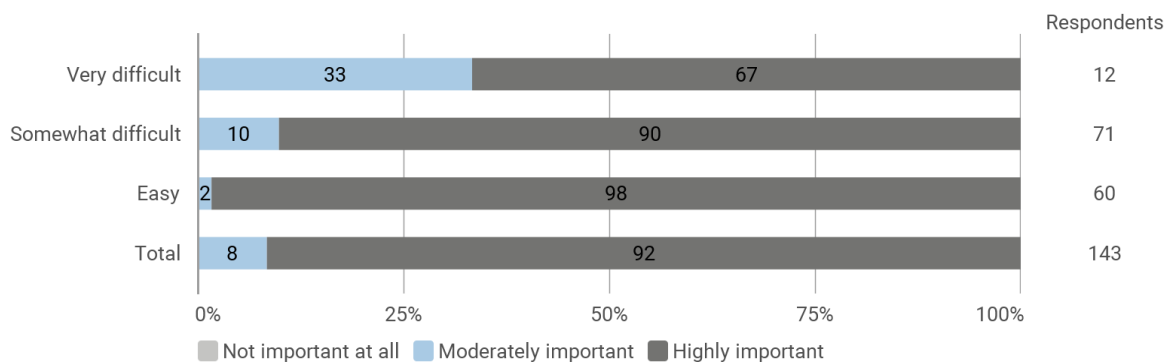
Nonetheless, most of the Nordic interest groups answered that lobbying in Brussels is preferable to shape EU legislation and decision-making, in line with the argument that IGs lobby where regulation is being decided. About 63% of the Nordic interest groups are most likely to target the EU institutions, whereas roughly 29% target/talk to the national permanent representation. Several interest groups that answered “other” reported that it depends on the issue. Others wrote that they target local/regional policymakers, think tanks, UN agencies and umbrella organisations. The answers thus reveal that lobbying at both national level and in Brussels is important for the Nordic interest groups to shape EU legislation and decision-making, and that the Commission and Parliament are considered the two most important EU institutions.

**Table 4.8:** Main targets of where Nordic interest groups attempt to shape EU legislation and decision-making.

	Respondents	Percent
At national level, targeting/talking to national governments and/or responsible ministries	97	67.8%
In Brussels, targeting/talking to the national permanent representation	41	28.7%
In Brussels, targeting the EU institutions	90	62.9%
Other (if yes, please indicate where)	19	13.3%
Total	143	100.0%

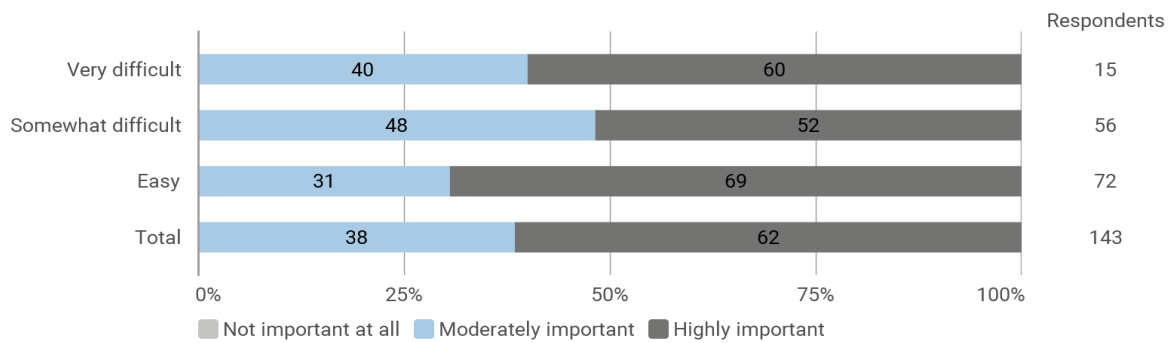


The interest groups were asked to rank the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council on the importance to their attempts to shape EU legislation. Figures 4.20, 4.21 and 4.22 show that the Commission and European Parliament are both considered moderately important or highly important, while the Council is also regarded as not important at all to some of the Nordic interest groups. The Commission is regarded as highly important to the vast majority: 92% answered that it is highly important, whereas only 8% of the interest groups consider the Commission to be of moderate importance. According to Figure 4.20, this is in relation to the interest groups' views on how difficult they find it to approach the Commission. Among the 12 interest groups that consider the Commission as very difficult to approach, 33% said the Commission is moderately important for their attempts to shape EU legislation. What characterises these interest groups is that they are small, resource-poor interest groups (all below an FTE of 2,25 and none have a Brussels office). Furthermore, they constitute of diffuse interests: most of them represent NGOs, while the rest are trade unions and other.

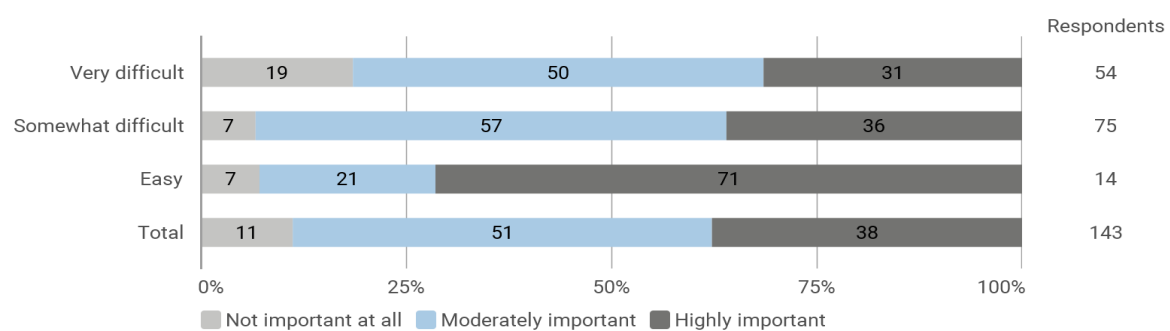


**Figure 4.20:** Rank of importance and approach difficulty of the Commission for Nordic interest groups to shape EU legislation.

71 out of 143 Nordic interest groups (50%) argue that the Commission is somewhat difficult to approach, while 42% view it as easy to approach. This makes sense considering that most of the IGs that participated in this survey are NGOs, which usually represent diffuse interest. The finding is thus in line with the literature that generally argues that diffuse interests are less likely to lobby the Commission, as it is in need of specific expertise (e.g. Dür and Mateo 2016, 2-3; Mahoney 2008, 152; Bunea 2014, 1229). The answers regarding the European Parliament are a little more diversified, as shown in Figure 4.21. 62% regard the EP as highly important, while 38% consider it moderately important. The majority also considers the EP to be easy to approach, and in fact easier to reach than the Commission.



**Figure 4.21:** Rank of importance and approach difficulty of the European Parliament for Nordic interest groups to shape EU legislation

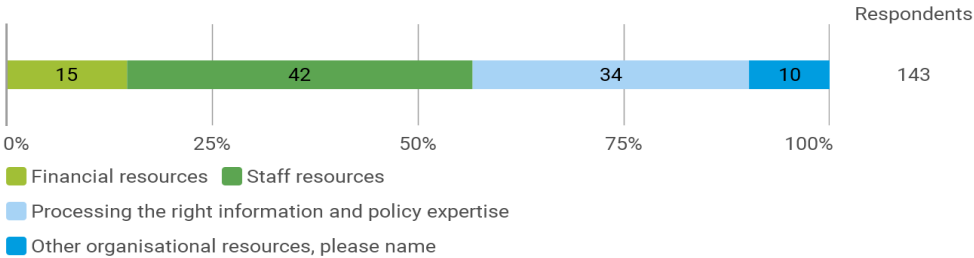


**Figure 4.22:** Rank of importance and approach difficulty of the Council for Nordic interest groups to shape EU legislation

As presented in Figure 4.22, the majority (51%) consider the Council moderately important, while 38% believe it is highly important. Most interest groups also think it is somewhat difficult to approach the Council, as only 14 interest groups find it easy. 11% of the Nordic interest groups perceive the Council not important at all for them to influence EU legislation. 19% of those who regard the Council as difficult to reach also believe it is not important for their influence. It is clear that all the institutions are important to the interest groups, but that the Commission is the most important. Parliament comes in second place of importance but is considered the easiest to approach. The Council is for the most part considered moderately important, while 38% experience it very difficult to obtain contact. These findings are in line with the existing research and its previous findings (Coen and Richardson 2009).

The interest groups were asked which organisational recourses inform and determine their choice of lobbying strategies targeting EU institutions and decision-making. Figure 4.23 shows that 42% answered that staff resources are most important, and 34% that processing the right information and policy expertise is the most important. 15% argue that financial

resources determine their choice, whereas 10% answered “other organisational resources”. Other resources include a combination of financial, staff and informational resources, presence in Brussels (e.g. office), the client’s budget and travelling/climate responsibility.



**Figure 4.23:** Organisational resources that inform and determine Nordic interest groups’ choice of lobbying strategies in Brussels

The Nordic interest groups were also asked which lobbying strategy, in their view, is most likely to lead to lobbying success and policy influence when attempting to shape EU decision-making. Table 4.9 illustrates that 85.3% argue that direct contacts with policymakers and/or public officials (i.e. inside lobbying strategies) lead to lobbying success. 4.2% argue that participating in the European Commission’s open consultations. Only 1 interest group argues that using social media campaigns (i.e. outside lobbying strategies) leads to success. 9,8% chose the “Other”-option. Some wrote that working through European federations and other coalition forms lead to success, whereas others argue that a combination of the strategies is necessary or that it depends on the goal. These answers are in line with the literature on lobbying success, which mainly argues that direct lobbying of the Commission, i.e. inside lobbying strategies, is the most influential way (Coen and Richardson 2009; Marshall 2010; Dür et al. 2015).

**Table 4.9:** Lobbying strategies that most likely lead to lobbying success, according to the Nordic interest groups that participated in the survey

	Respondents	Percent
Direct contacts with policymakers and/or public officials	122	85.3%
Participating in the European Commission's open consultations	6	4.2%
Distributing a press release	0	0.0%
Using social media campaigns (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)	1	0.7%
Other (please indicate which)	14	9.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### 4.3.1 Additional insights about the Nordic interest groups

The main response from the Nordic interest groups participating in the online survey was that European lobbying is hard for small and resource-poor interest groups, which supports the hypotheses on resources. Some argued that it is difficult to gain access to policymakers and legislators in policy areas with “big players”, and that is the reason for why they lobby through coalitions. This is in line with the literature on policy context, arguing that policy context is decisive for the choice of lobbying strategies (Dür and Mateo 2016; Coen and Katsaitis 2013). Several interest groups stressed that lobbying strategies (and lobbying success) only really depend on the policy issue. What is fascinating is that these interest groups mostly represent business, as well as being among the most resourceful IGs that participated in the survey.

In contrast, a handful of interest groups responded that they experience lobbying the EU as an easy undertaking. These were mostly business groups, but also included other types of interest groups such as NGOs and. For instance, one Finnish interest group representing business, wrote that approaching the EU institutions (especially the Commission, Parliament and Regulatory Agencies) is a straightforward process. The argument was that they are usually open to listen and to consult stakeholders with their perspectives. This is in accordance with the literature arguing that EU institutions (in particular the Commission) is in need of specific expertise (e.g. Dür and Mateo 2016, 2-3; Mahoney 2008, 152; Bunea 2014, 1229).

Furthermore, some interest groups highlighted that the EU institution of target depends on the stage in the EU decision making. In the early stages, the Commission is the most likely institution to try to influence, while that will change when the process reaches the Parliament. Additionally, several interest groups reported that finding the right person (responsible of the matter at hand) is crucial. Numerous interest groups wrote that personal relations and networking make a difference when it comes to gaining access, emphasising that there is a “strength of weak ties” (Granovetter 1973). They argue that finding partners in other countries who have the same challenges is key when lobbying the European Union. Likewise, one Swedish NGO wrote that lobbying a mix of institutions is the key to success, however “built on professional conversations based on knowledge and experience”.

### 4.3.2 Explanatory analysis: lobbying in coalitions

The online survey reveals a very interesting finding: that Nordic IGs participate in coalitions to lobby EU institutions and decision-making. I want to take a closer look at what might explain this. Model 6 in Table 4.10 on the following page presents the results of the logistic regression with lobbying in coalitions as the dependent variable. As none of the results are statistically significant, I simply comment the trends.<sup>10</sup> The variable *Interest type represented* shows that only NGOs and institutions are more likely to lobby as coalitions, compared to business groups, which is in line with existing literature (e.g. Mahoney 2008; Dür and Mateo 2016). That all other groups are less likely to join coalitions, compared to business groups, makes sense considering that the other groups include consultancies, trade unions and public authorities. Consultancies work for others and provide them expert advice; a trade union is a collaboration already; and public authorities might have particular interests they wish to pursue.

When it comes to resources, the variables Staff size and Brussels office both have negative effects on the dependent variables. This means that the less resources interest groups have, the more likely they are to lobby in coalitions which supports the second hypothesis of this thesis. However, since none of the results in Table 4.10 are significant the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. The variable Organisation form reveals that national associations are more likely than individual organisations to lobby in coalitions, whereas European associations and Other are less likely. EU member has a negative effect on the dependent variable, indicating that interest groups from Norway are more likely to join coalitions than interest groups from the other Nordic countries - who are members of EU. The variable Registration year has a positive effect on the dependent variable. Accordingly, the more recently interest groups are registered in the Transparency Register, the more likely they will lobby in coalitions.

It is important to note that association does not equal causation (Schrodt 2013, 297). Nonetheless, because the sample is small, I would avoid claiming anything from this regression analysis. The analysis is a necessary step in investigating explanations as to why Nordic interest groups lobby in coalitions, but further studies are needed to verify it.

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<sup>10</sup> I also converted the variable *Interest type represented* into a dummy where 1 was business groups and 0 all other groups, but the results did not make any decisive differences.

**Table 4.10:** Logistic regression: lobbying in coalitions

		DV: Lobbying in coalitions
		Model 6
<b>Interest type represented</b>	<i>Business groups</i>	Ref.
	<i>Consultancies</i>	-1.867 (1.335)
	<i>NGOs</i>	0.225 (0.637)
	<i>Trade unions/Prof.org.</i>	-0.319 (0.684)
	<i>Institutions</i>	0.002 (1.031)
	<i>Public authorities</i>	-0.110 (0.838)
	<i>Other</i>	-0.227 (0.884)
	<b>Resources</b>	<i>Staff size</i>
<i>Brussels office</i>		-0.195 (0.514)
<b>Control variables</b>		
<b>Organisational form</b>	<i>Individual organisations</i>	Ref.
	<i>National associations</i>	0.995 (0.621)
	<i>European associations</i>	-1.531 (1.303)
	<i>Other</i>	0.781 (1.193)
<b>EU member</b>		-0.379 (0.711)
<b>Registration year</b>		0,021 (0.075)
<b>Constant</b>		1.276 (1,079)
<b>N</b>		143

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*p<0.001 \*\*p<0.05 \*0.01.

## 4.4 Concluding summary of the empirical analyses

Over the past three decades there has been a significant growth in lobbying in the EU and there is now a dense EU interest group system (Coen and Richardson, 2009, 3). Nordic interest groups increasingly register in the Transparency Register, a database that lists interest groups that participate and try to shape the decision-making processes in the EU institutions. Most of these Nordic interest groups represent business, but a fair share are also NGOs, and a smaller number of interest groups represents consultancies, trade unions/professional organisations, institutions and public authorities.

The majority of the Nordic interest groups are individual organisations, but also a large proportion of them are national associations, which makes sense regarding the corporatist background of the Nordic countries. For example, the national associations Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) and Finnish Energy are among the Nordic interest groups that spend the most on lobbying activities. Otherwise, most of the Nordic interest groups are small in size and have low lobbying expenses. Nonetheless, the majority of the Nordic interest groups have a Brussels office, indicating that Nordic interest groups are active in their efforts to influence the EU institutions and decision-makers. This is nonetheless expected given the fact that they are registered in the Transparency Register.

A certain proportion of the Nordic interest groups choose inside lobbying strategies: 32% of the Nordic interest groups have had meetings with EC high level officials, 19% of them have membership in EC expert groups, 14% have EP passes and 15% of the Nordic interest groups have had direct meetings with MEPs. Overall, that means that a relatively small percentage of the 803 Nordic interest groups apply inside lobbying strategies to influence EU decision-making. However, this is understandable considering that 47% of the Nordic interest groups are business groups. As seen in the analyses, business groups are more likely to meet with EC high level officials and MEPs than other interest types represented. This is also the case when it comes to number of passes to access the EP premises, with the exception of consultancies. Business groups are not more likely to have membership in EC expert groups, however. One could have debated whether it is actually lobbying resources that play the pivotal part, but as seen there is a mixture of interest types represented that spend the most on lobbying activities. Nonetheless, lobbying resources seem to matter for all inside lobbying strategies, except for

IG membership in EC expert groups. As discussed, this makes sense considering that the Commission desires to appear balanced.

As expected, the analyses showed that interest groups based in Denmark, Sweden or Finland (countries that are members of the EU) are more likely to have meetings with EC high level officials, as well as having direct meetings with MEPs and EP passes. However, this does not seem to be the case for IG membership in EC expert groups. Although the effect is not statistically significant, it is arguable that EEA membership matters and maybe reduces the effect. These results may be in accordance with the argument of Bernhagen and Mitchell (2009), stating that Norwegian companies compensate for lack of representation in EU institutions by inside lobbying in Brussels. Moreover, there are some small differences between the Nordic countries that are members of the EU, but as we have seen, this is as expected. Finnish interest groups, in particular, are very active in lobbying the EU and it is clear that they focus on inside lobbying strategies, as 42% meet with the EC high level officials and 40% have had meetings with MEPs.

The analyses also reveal that a proportion of the Nordic interest groups apply outside lobbying strategies. 24% of the Nordic interest groups have media access, i.e. have been mentioned in Euractiv, Euronews and/or Politico.eu. Particularly Nordic institutions and resource-rich groups have appeared in these media outlets. The results showed that business groups are more likely to gain access compared to other interest types represented, with the exception of institutions. This signifies that business groups rely on both inside and outside lobbying strategies. Additionally, the more resources interest groups have, the more likely they will have media access. This is in line with the literature which argues that more resources make it possible to choose both outside and inside lobbying strategies (Beyers 2004; Binderkrantz 2005; Dür and Mateo 2016, 80; Weiler and Brändli 2015). Particularly, having a Brussels office seems to matter a great deal for outside lobbying strategies. Having a Brussels office makes it easier to engage in outside lobbying (Mahoney 2008, 163).

The percentage of interest groups mentioned in the media is quite similar among Danish, Swedish and Finnish interest groups: around 20-24% of these interest groups are mentioned in the media. What is notable, however, is that as many as 37% of the Norwegian interest groups appear in the three media outlets, a fairly high percentage compared to the other Nordic interest groups. Appendix D shows that the Nordic interest groups that appear in the media



most frequently are institutions or resource-rich business groups. Thus, it can be argued that Norwegian interest groups focus on outside lobbying as well as inside lobbying strategies (mostly targeting the Commission), to compensate for their lack of representation in the EU institutions.

A main finding of the analyses, however, is that how long an interest group has been registered in the Transparency Register seems to be of importance for the choice of all lobbying strategies. This indicates that the more established interest groups are in lobbying the EU, the more likely they will gain access to bureaucrats and legislators – as well as gaining access to the media. Consequently, while lobbying resources and group characteristics matter for the choice of most lobbying strategies, the aspect of building reputation and trust is of importance when it comes to all lobbying strategies applied by the Nordic interest groups.

This might explain why so many Nordic interest groups choose to lobby through coalitions. In the analysis of the online survey it was discovered that roughly 75% of the Nordic interest groups that participated in the online survey prefer to lobby in coalitions as their main strategy to influence the EU decision-making. Based on their answers, in addition to their organisational characteristics and lobbying resources, it appears that lobbying resources are crucial in the choice of lobbying alone or in coalitions. However, the explanatory analysis shows that further research is required to verify these findings.

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aim of this thesis was to understand and explain the choice of lobbying strategies applied to influence EU policymaking. Explaining lobbying strategies is important because they contribute and determine levels of lobbying success. Furthermore, they provide important information about how national and sectional interests are represented and articulated at the EU level. The research questions answered in the thesis are as follow: (1) *What lobbying strategies do Nordic interest groups employ when trying to shape EU legislation?* And (2) *what explains the types of lobbying strategies used to influence EU institutions and decision-makers?*

I built my argument on a prominent school of thought that claims that organizational lobbying resources and group characteristics are key explanations of lobbying strategy choice. Such lobbying resources include financial resources (i.e. lobbying expenses), staff size and having a Brussels office. This argument was tested through a mixed methodological approach, combining the analysis of quantitative data and qualitative empirical evidence. I constructed a built for purpose dataset that provides information about all Nordic interest groups registered in the EU Transparency register. The data sources used to construct the original dataset was the EU Transparency Register, Lobbyfacts.eu; an online survey I conducted; an original dataset assembled by Adriana Bunea and Raimondas Ibenskas on meetings between IGs and MEPs based on the EP official website; and the media outlets Euractiv, Euronews and Politico.eu.

The empirical analyses showed that a considerable fraction of the Nordic interest groups chooses inside lobbying strategies and/or outside lobbying strategies. Moreover, the online survey answers revealed that a large majority prefers to lobby in coalitions. Resources seem to matter for all inside lobbying strategies with the exception of Nordic IG membership in EC expert groups, which might be explained by the Commission desires to appear balanced. Additionally, it can be argued that Norwegian interest groups focus on outside lobbying as well as inside lobbying strategies (mostly targeting the Commission), to compensate for their lack of representation in the EU institutions. Moreover, there are some small differences between the Nordic countries that are members of the EU, but as we have seen, this is as

expected. Finnish interest groups in particular are very active in lobbying the EU and it is clear that they focus on inside lobbying strategies.

A main finding of the analyses, however, is that how long an interest group has been registered in the Transparency Register seems to matter for all lobbying strategies. This indicates that the more established interest groups are in lobbying the EU, the more likely they will gain access to bureaucrats and legislators – as well as gaining access to the media. Consequently, while lobbying resources and group characteristics matter to the choice of most lobbying strategies, the aspect of building reputation and trust is of importance when it comes to all lobbying strategies applied by the Nordic interest groups.

## **5.1 Implications for future research**

That resources matter for the choice of lobbying strategies (with the exception of IG membership in EC expert groups) for Nordic interest groups is as expected, and in line with existing literature and research on interest groups lobbying in Brussels. Nonetheless, although lobbying through coalitions is a very frequent form of collective action at EU level, there have been few systematic analyses of EU lobbying coalitions (Bunea and Baumgartner 2014, 20). This thesis shows that the majority of Nordic interest groups choose to lobby in coalitions as their main strategy, indicating that lobbying resources are decisive to their choice. However, further research is required to verify these results. Increasing the number of units, in addition to a systematic study of different types of coalitions, would be advantageous.

Moreover, the findings in this thesis are the result of the chosen theoretical and methodological approach. I believe that relying on the resource and characteristics-explanation was a necessary first step in explaining lobbying strategies of Nordic interest groups. Nonetheless, several of the interest groups that participated in the online survey stated that the choice of lobbying strategies depends on the policy issue at hand. Consequently, studying the policy context of Nordic interest groups lobbying in Brussels is a task for future studies.

Furthermore, in order to make any generalizations, a large-N study was applied in this thesis. I included all Nordic interest groups that are registered in the EU Transparency Register. When interest groups are registered in the EU Transparency Register, it is reasonable to assume that they have the aim to shape and make their demands and preferences heard in the EU policymaking process. Consequently, it should be possible to make generalizations. However, a suggestion to further research would be to expand the sample to include interest groups from other EU member states and other Non-EU member states (but associated EEA countries) such as Iceland or Switzerland. This could enhance the comparative dimension to the study of Nordic interest groups.

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## Appendix A

**Table A:** The ten interest groups per Nordic country that most frequently meet with EC high level officials.

<b>Norwegian IGs</b>	<b>Danish IGs</b>	<b>Swedish IGs</b>	<b>Finnish IGs</b>
Equinor (46)	Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) (27)	Kreab (59)	Confederation of Finnish Industries EK (64)
Telenor (17)	Landbrug & Fødevarer - Danish Agriculture and Food Council (DAFC) (20)	Spotify AB (55)	Nokia (55)
Roundtable for Europe's Energy Future (REEF) (15)	Novozymes (20)	Ericsson (50)	Maa- ja metsätaloustuottajain Keskusliitto – Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK) (52)
Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) (12)	The Danish Chamber of Commerce (Dansk Erhverv) (19)	Telia Company AB (39)	Fortum Oyj (Fortum Corporation) (43)
Statnett (12)	Rasmussen Global (RG) (18)	Scania AB (publ) (Scania) (34)	Metsäliitto Cooperative (Metsä Group) (36)
NTNU (12)	LEGO System A/S (13)	Investor AB (Investor AB) (32)	Neste Oyj (33)
DNV GL (7)	Confederation of Danish Employers (DA) (12)	NASDAQ (29)	Technology Industries of Finland (Teknologiateollisuus ry) (25)
Statkraft AS (6)	Danish Shipping (11)	Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (27)	UPM-Kymmene Oyj (UPM) (21)
The Norwegian Shipowners' Association (NSA) (6)	Ørsted A/S (11)	Vattenfall (13)	European Forest Institute (EFI) (20)
Norsk Hydro (6)	A.P. Møller - Mærsk A/S (APMM) (10)	Volvo AB (Volvo) (13)	Finnish Forest Industries Federation (Metsäteollisuus ry) (FFIF) (18)
	ROCKWOOL International A/S (ROCKWOOL Group) (10)		
	Finance Denmark (FiDa) (10)		

Sources: Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu. Notes: Number of meetings in parentheses.

## Appendix B

**Table B:** Norwegian interest groups with memberships in EC expert groups.

<b>Name of interest group</b>	<b>EC expert groups</b>
PER BOQVIST	Skills development and careers in the blue economy (E03399), Other
The International Association of Independent Tanker Owners (INTERTANKO)	European Sustainable Shipping Forum (ESSF) (E02869), Stakeholders Advisory Group on Maritime Security (E01087), High Level Steering Group for Governance of the Digital Maritime System and Services (E03450), Cooperation group on Places of Refuge
Finance Sector Union (FSU)	Group of representatives of financial services employees (UNI Europa) (E00651)
LANDSORGANISASJONEN I NORGE (LO-Norway)	Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (X01803), Comité consultatif pour la sécurité et la santé sur le lieu de travail (X01211)
Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO)	Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (X01803), Comité consultatif pour la sécurité et la santé sur le lieu de travail (X01211)
Statnett	Commission expert group on electricity interconnection targets (E03412)
Telenor	High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence (E03591)
Trident Alliance (TA)	European Sustainable Shipping Forum (ESSF) (E02869)
DNV GL	European Sustainable Shipping Forum (ESSF) (E02869)
Norwegian Air Shuttle ASA (NAS)	Consultative Forum on EU External Aviation Policy (E03519)
DNB Bank ASA (DNB)	Commission expert group on electronic identification and remote Know-Your-Customer processes (E03571)
Norwegian Association Against Noise (NAAN)	Noise Expert Group (E02809)
Forbrukerrådet (NCC)	European Consumer Consultative Group (E00849)
Bellona Europa	Innovation Fund Expert Group (E03593)
Matvett SA	EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste (E03421)
Universitetet i Oslo (UiO)	Multi-stakeholder Group on Environmental Claims (E03327)
SINTEF Ocean AS (OCEAN)	European Sustainable Shipping Forum (ESSF) (E02869)
Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives (CESSDA ERIC)	Commission Expert Group “Executive Board of the EOSC” (E03632)
OsloMet - Storbyuniversitetet (OsloMet)	Expert group on the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme (E03018)
Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)	Commission operational expert group of the European Innovation Partnership on Raw Materials (E03392)
Val Videregående Skole AS (Val)	Skills development and careers in the blue economy (E03399)

Sources: Transparency Register and LobbyFacts.eu

## Appendix C

**Table C:** Names and nationalities of the MEPs that the Nordic IGs have had meetings with.

Sirpa PIETIKÄINEN (FI)	Evin INCIR (SE)	Vlad-Marius BOTOȘ (RO)
Jutta PAULUS (DE)	Tom BERENDSEN (NL)	José Ramón BAUZÁ DÍAZ (ES)
Pär HOLMGREN (SE)	Romana TOMC (SI)	Marie-Pierre VEDRENNE (FR)
Pernille WEISS (DK)	Gwendoline DELBOS-CORFIELD (FR)	Alexandra GEESE (DE)
Pascal ARIMONT (BE)	Cindy FRANSSSEN (BE)	Heidi HAUTALA (FI)
Margrete AUKEN (DK)	Jeroen LENAERS (NL)	Claudia GAMON (AT)
Henna VIRKKUNEN (FI)	Karin KARLSBRO (SE)	Martin HOJSÍK (SK)
Bas EICKHOUT (NL)	Alice KUHNKE (SE)	Norbert LINS (DE)
Bernd LANGE (DE)	Patrick BREYER (DE)	Sabine VERHEYEN (DE)
Esther de LANGE (NL)	Stéphane SÉJOURNÉ (FR)	Leila CHAIBI (FR)
Marc TARABELLA (BE)	Stéphanie YON-COURTIN (FR)	Martin SCHIRDEWAN (DE)
Kira Marie PETER-HANSEN (DK)	Svenja HAHN (DE)	Saskia BRICMONT (BE)
Niklas NIENASS (DE)	Birgit SIPPEL (DE)	Tilly METZ (LU)
Ville NIINISTÖ (FI)	Yana TOOM (EE)	Isabel WISELER-LIMA (LU)
Rasmus ANDRESEN (DE)	Daniel FREUND (DE)	Petri SARVAMAA (FI)
Andrus ANSIP (EE)		

Sources: Adriana Bunea and Raimondas Ibenskas' original dataset on meetings between IGs and MEPs based on the EP official website. Notes: Nationalities in parentheses, presented in standard two-letter country codes

## Appendix D

**Table D:** The ten interest groups per Nordic country that appear most frequently in media.

<b>Norwegian IGs</b>	<b>Danish IGs</b>	<b>Swedish IGs</b>	<b>Finnish IGs</b>
Equinor (18)	A.P. Møller - Mærsk A/S (APMM) (54)	Ericsson (62)	Nokia (92)
Bellona Europa (18)	Københavns Universitet (UCPH) (38)	Volvo Car Corporation AB (Volvo Cars) (58)	Fortum Oyj (Fortum Corporation) (18)
Universitetet i Oslo (UiO) (16)	Danfoss A/S (31)	Spotify AB (49)	Confederation of Finnish Industries EK (EK) (16)
Telenor (10)	Rasmussen Global (RG) (31)	Veoneer Inc (VNE) (45)	Aalto-korkeakoulusäätiö / Aalto University (AALTO) (13)
Fridtjof Nansen Institute (FNI) (9)	VELUX A/S (VELUX Group) (29)	Lunds universitet (ULUND) (19)	Suomen itsenäisyyden juhlarahasto (Sitra) (12)
Statnett (8)	Ørsted A/S (21)	Stiftelsen The Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) (15)	FINNAIR OYJ (11)
DNV GL (8)	ROCKWOOL International A/S (ROCKWOOL Group) (21)	Northvolt (14)	Neste Oyj (10)
Forbrukerrådet (NCC) (7)	Aarhus University (AU) (19)	Kreab (14)	Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA) (9)
Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) (7)	Novo Nordisk A/S (16)	The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (RSAS) (13)	Fennovoima Oy (9)

Sources: Euractiv, Euronews and/or Politico.eu. Notes: Number of media mentions in parentheses.