Analyzing varieties of (post-enlargement) Europeanization in CEE advocacy organizations across policy fields

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Abstract

This article aims to explain Europeanization processes among advocacy organizations from four post-communist states—Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic—which have been subject to strong Europeanization pressures before and after the European Union accession. The authors aim to identify how Central and Eastern European organized interests have adapted their organizational logics to a changing environment in the post-enlargement phase. Specifically, we address the following questions: How do various levels and dimensions of Europeanization of interest organizations differ across policy fields and countries and what determines this diversity? What are the strongest predictors of the specific forms of Europeanization? Against this background, we test how the specific characteristics of CEE advocacy organizations correlate with the different dimensions of Europeanization—its intensity, ways of occurring, variants, determinants, and outcomes.

Keywords Europeanization · Central and Eastern Europe · Advocacy · Organized interests

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Introduction

When it comes to the Europeanization of advocacy organizations, so far the literature has probed various determinants, most often factors like access, resources, or the salience of fit. In the region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the Europeanization studies focused predominantly on the accession *momentum*, including conditionality mechanisms (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005). However, quite often Europeanization effects only can be traced many years after the enlargement, as their direct effects are invisible or remain weak. This is particularly true in these aspects of Europeanization that do not deal with supranational policy compliance (in which case the effects are relatively fast and more evident), but rather with those that bring structural changes in specific segments of the state, society or economy. One such salient sector is civil society in the post-communist world, which has rarely been subject to empirical investigations in a systemic way (for noticeable exception, please see, e.g., Kopecký and Cas 2003; Blavoukos and Pagoulatos 2008; Ekiert 2014; Cekik 2017).

This is why many questions related to Europeanization in general, and with the Europeanization of CEE organized interests (OI) in particular, are still open to debate (Kröger 2018, p.18). This paper contributes to this debate by explaining Europeanization processes among advocacy organizations (AO) from four post-communist states—Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic—which have been subject to strong Europeanization pressures both before and after European Union accession. The authors aim to identify how CEE organized interests have adapted their organizational logics to a changing environment in the post-enlargement phase. Specifically, we address the following questions: How do various levels and dimensions of Europeanization of interest organizations differ across policy fields and countries and what determines this diversity? What are the strongest predictors of specific forms of Europeanization? Against this background, we test to what extent the specific features of CEE advocacy organizations correlate with the different dimensions of Europeanization—its intensity, ways of occurring, variants, determinants, and outcomes. We investigate which factors play a mediating or direct role in the Europeanization process among CEE advocacy organizations. The analysis proceeds inductively, focusing on how the actors themselves perceive various Europeanization-related factors and determinants.

First we look at variations in the Europeanization of interest groups across countries in selected policy areas (healthcare, higher education, climate and energy) as a dependent variable. It is operationalized as a synthesized index based on a series of answers obtained from a survey data set covering such elements as membership in supranational umbrella organizations (UO's), cross-country contacts, communication and learning processes, EU funding, etc. This allows us to analyze Europeanization as a broad phenomenon, as well as its specific varieties. In line with various theories established in interest group research, we expect numerous causal factors to condition the degree and diversity of Europeanization, for example available budgets (dependency on EU funds), membership size,

group type, the level of professionalization as well the expertise of advocacy organizations. Methodologically, we use quantitative data analyzed with use of descriptive statistics, Pearson's Chi-squared test (χ^2), and ordered logit models to estimate the likelihood of the certain events.

State of the art

Interest group research, and in particular the scholarly investigations on advocacy, lobbying, and civic society organizations, has blossomed in the past decades. However, the role of organized interests in politics and the economy has been the subject of research at least since the 1920s (Herring 1929). The increased interest in European-level lobbying is correlated with the introduction of the Common Market, when the salience of the EU grew together with more and more competences being delegated to the supranational level. Due to the growing importance of the EU as the center of power and authority in Europe, Brussels has become one of the hottest addresses for the international lobbyists. It is estimated to be the second largest lobbying hub (after Washington). In this lobbying and advocacy ecosystem, various types of organized interests play a crucial role in decision-making. On the demand side, they are perceived as the privileged interlocutors for EU institutions. On the supply side, they offer their members benefits in terms of information, education, and knowledge regarding EU matters (Gueguen 2007).

Organized interests have responded to the European integration process with varied adjustment strategies. No research has found standardized patterns of interest group activity in the European multi-level setting, but rather a complex mix of tactics and strategies, consistent with the diverse governance models (Constantelos 2004). Nevertheless, together with the growth of the EU's salience, advocacy organizations increasingly seek to influence supranational policy making.

Researchers of Europeanization have identified and explained necessary conditions (e.g., lack of fit giving rise to adaptational pressure) and casual mechanisms (e.g., legal compliance, top-down impulses, incentives, and socialization by persuasion and learning) through which "Europe hits home" (Boerzel and Risse 2012, p. 1). Combining the Europeanization research and advocacy studies allows us to overcome the dominance of the top-down approaches (that tend to over-emphasize the EU as a compliance machinery) present in the EU studies. The Europeanization approaches have been largely criticized for the prejudice that the main source of domestic change is the supranational level. The "shadow of hierarchy" not only allows the EU to legally impose its policies and institutions on the member states but also provides important incentives to comply. Much scholarly work has been conducted to cast light on the role of Europeanization in the functioning of organized interests inside and outside the EU (Beyers 2002).

However, few researchers have focused on CEE with all its civil society specificities, including the post-communist heritage. Thus, we have relatively good knowledge about the Europeanization processes of Western civil societies in various dimensions. Yet we do not fully understand the developments in this sphere in the Eastern part of the Old Continent.

For CEE AOs, EU institutions became crucially important in 2004—the date of the EU “big-bang” enlargement. It does not mean they were not present in Brussels beforehand. However only with the process of EU accession, they became—together with other political, social and economic actors from the joining states—legitimate agents in the legislative *apparatus* of united Europe. Their success in inserting themselves into the policy-making process depends on existing formal and informal ties with EU institutions (Thiel and Uçarer 2014, p. 99). Consequently, at least from the moment of enlargement, CEE advocacy organizations operate in the multi-level system and therefore had to incorporate the EU level into their activity repertoire. They act in two inter-linked arenas: the domestic setting and in Brussels. An important issue is whether the same factors affect the AOs’ functioning at the domestic and EU level. These questions are vital for the empirical and normative evaluation of interest groups’ Europeanization processes (Binderkrantz and Rasmussen 2015). Accession to the EU club entails participation in a new policy-making environment characterized by distinctive rules, norms and values, which—in the process of Europeanization—become gradually internalized and have an impact on the member states’ domestic political, social, and economic contours. The dynamics, depth and scope of internationalization depend on numerous factors, which have been subject to numerous investigations. This emerging multi-level policymaking environment (with its multiplicity of power centers) offers novel opportunity structures for societal actors to pursue their own objectives and put forward their own agendas (Blavoukos and Pagoulatos 2008, pp. 1147–1148).

The Europeanization studies carried out directly after the enlargement were premature in various instances. Many effects of Europeanization do not occur automatically and directly after the moment of enlargement. Certainly, some process were observable already before 2004, when the accession countries were subject to Europeanization pressures in the form of conditionality policy. However, it is reasonable to expect the consequences of Europeanization predominantly in a medium and longer time horizon. Against this background, this paper offers in-depth analysis of post-enlargement Europeanization processes in advocacy in the medium and long term.

Differentiating between the pre- and post- EU accession phase is legitimate from many points of view. Formal EU membership opened numerous windows of opportunity for direct access and influence on the supranational policy-making process. Funding increased substantially after the EU accession—the pot of money available for various types of civic society actions was significantly larger than in the pre-accession phase. Consequently, we observed an unprecedented boom in associational life at the supranational level in CEE states. Within the rich literature theorizing the development of transnational networks among social movements and organizations, there is evidence of resource transfer from richer to poorer states and (civic) societies. However, the power asymmetries and value differences that exist within the international networks create limits for transnational cooperation among organized interest groups (Rohrschneider and Dalton 2002, p. 510). This evolution may be perceived as a strategy of conscious adaptation to the dynamics of EU institutions’ “interest overload” or as a normal reaction to the current phase of interest group population (Vannoni 2013). Other findings indicate that the differences

between OI approaches can be, to some extent, attributed to the organizational character or policy area. Even in policy areas where the EU enjoys strong competences, the legislation is implemented at national levels, which underpins stronger linkages to local and national governments and less EU orientation (Lundberg and Sedelius 2014).

Our research connects to the literature that highlights the findings obtained in consolidated democracies, especially regarding the empirical knowledge on how advocacy organizations Europeanize. In CEE states, the fall of the iron curtain and the following democratic transition was expected to strengthen the pan-European revival of civil society—the same with the nation-state level of civic organizations, who benefit from EU funding (which has become one of the main ways of operationalizing the Europeanization levels, see: Thiel and Uçar 2014, pp. 100–101). EU support provided many societal organizations with resources necessary to function effectively in the supranational arena. This is why many civic society organizations were expected to switch their focus toward the supranational arena.

This analysis explores the degree to which the advocacy groups' characteristics and behavior can be tracked back to the EU and EU-related factors. This can occur directly through coercion, conditionality, socialization, or persuasion, or indirectly through normative emulation, lesson-drawing, and competition. The key question is—under which conditions does the Europeanization process affect organized interests in the new EU member states? Therefore, in our statistical analysis of the empirical material, we first provide a diversified picture of the Europeanization landscape in CEE across selected countries and policy areas building on variables present in the classic literature such as EU fund dependency, interactions with other European OIs, and membership in supranational UO's. Then in the next step, also following the established and recognized scholarship in the field, we test a number of explanatory variables linked with factors like available resources, or organization/group type.

Research design and operationalization of variables

The research design enables us to explore how power resources, levels of professionalization as well as cooperation with organizations from other EU countries explain the main differences in the Europeanization outcomes across countries and policy fields. This article relies on data from a large-scale survey of organized interests operating in healthcare, higher education and energy policy. The selection of policy fields is determined by their diversified redistributive and regulatory functions. The case selection of countries provides a variety of post-communist legacies as well as varieties of post-transition capitalisms and related diversified ways of organizing civic society.

Analytical concepts need to be (re)created before they are applied. To do this, scholars usually begin by providing an initial definition aimed at summing up the main elements of the concept. An operationalization, for the purposes of empirical research, is needed in the form of a set of indicators for research in the field. This creates a link between abstract theories or working hypotheses and the concrete

material. The empirical facts never just speak for themselves; they always need to be interpreted (Buller and Gamble 2002). Therefore, in the first step, an operational definition of Europeanization is needed as an analytical category.

Chronologically speaking, in the European integration context, Europeanization was defined as the development of institutions of governance at the European level (Risse et al 2001, p. 3). As such, Europeanization means creating a new institutional center of power. Secondly, together with the subsequent waves of EU enlargement, Europeanization was increasingly applied to situations in which distinct European forms of organization and governance were exported outside Europe's—understood as the EU—territorial boundaries (Buller and Gamble 2002, p. 10). Then, in a more teleological way, Europeanization as a term has been used to denote the achievement of the political unification of Europe (Olsen 2002). Europeanization also has been defined as a *smokescreen for domestic policy maneuvers*—a process in which certain actors will encourage (or acquiesce) in European integration as a way of either implementing a domestic change, or legitimizing the *status quo* (Dyson and Featherstone 1999).

In the most classical way, Europeanization is understood as a situation in which distinct modes of European governance have transformed aspects of domestic politics (Buller and Gamble 2002, p. 17). However, the scholarly ways of defining Europeanization still differ substantially. Some analysts have used the concept of Europeanization to denote the process under which political actors, such as political parties, governments or civic society organizations adapt to the impact of European integration. Radaelli (2000) defined Europeanization as the processes of construction, diffusion and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles of doing things as well as shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies (2000, p. 4). Similarly, Ladrech (2002) emphasized the adaptive processes of organizations due to a changing environment. This short overview of the standard Europeanization literature needs to be connected to studies on organized interests.

The conventional advocacy literature defines Europeanization as the domestic adaptation of institutions, policies and actors as a result of the EU membership. It looks at how the European integration process affects the interest representation system and advocacy groups in their domestic environment. Scholars have analyzed its influence on domestic legislative frameworks, the population ecology of organized interests, their organizational development, professionalization, resources, networking, issue salience, lobbying strategies and tactics both in member states and candidate or associated countries. Other perspectives prefer to analyze Europeanization as venue shopping—the extent to which domestic interest groups shift their lobbying activities to the EU level. The literature on the Europeanization of organized interests is rich in studies testing resource-related explanations with some attention to context at the same time (Kanol 2016, p. 165).

Originally, Europeanization was predominantly treated as an explanatory variable—how it affects other processes and phenomena. Over time and with the accumulation of research, it has also been analyzed as a dependent variable, and this paper contributes to this stream of scholarly reflection. After operationalizing

Europeanization across four CEE states and three policy areas, we reveal its varieties using descriptive statistics. Then, we look at the selected determinants that correlate with various dimensions of Europeanization. Both the dependent and independent variables are operationalized in a standard manner recognized in the earlier advocacy literature.

One of the most often explored factors of Europeanization are resources. They may include information, material, financial and human resources which allow organized interests to Europeanize. At the same time, Europeanization opens many windows of opportunity which build up resources, and therefore they should be treated as mutually influencing with the process and phenomena of Europeanization. However, there are also studies, which question these claims, suggesting that staff resources do not have a significant impact on multi-level venue shopping in the EU (Beyers and Kerremans 2012). Our analysis contributes to this debate by verifying the hypothesis that the Europeanization process is correlated with organizational resources in a way that resource-rich organizations are expected to be more Europeanized than organizations with weaker resources.

Others claim that the possibilities of Europeanization are largely determined by the organizations' features, like group size and the nature of interests it represents. Some studies claim (Kanol 2016, p. 166) that only bigger associations possess the necessary information and expertise that the EU institutions need. They also suggest that concentrated interests face fewer collective action problems than diffused interest groups. Thus, they are more likely to be able to take their activities to the EU level. However, is it the type of organization per se, or are more nuanced explanations needed here? We address this question by analyzing the available data that we collected in 2019–2020 in an extensive survey. We hypothesize that citizens' groups representing diffuse interests (such as environmentalist groups) should be more Europeanized. However, there is also a counter-hypothesis present in the literature, which we also test for the Europeanization of concentrated interests. Moreover, we expect the same for organized interests with weaker resources—as the EU's budget offers them desired financial resources.

Some other approaches highlight issue salience as a predictor of the Europeanization likelihood, namely that the issue on which an interest group works affects its tendency to Europeanize. Beyers and Kerremans (2012) argue that taking action is more likely for organized interests working on topics in which policy change can substantially create a benefit or cost. Moreover, those groups that are active in policy areas with high EU competence should be more likely to engage in EU lobbying. The level of supranationalization of a specific policy field creates incentives for Europeanization: organized interests operating in policy areas that belong to the sphere of EU competences are subject to higher levels of Europeanization pressures. Therefore, we also hypothesize that in policy areas in which the EU enjoys stronger competences, organized interests will reveal stronger "symptoms" of Europeanization.

Regarding the dependent variable, there is no widespread consensus on how to study or explain Europeanization. Taking into account the breadth of the concept, it is natural to expect variety of definitions and ways of understanding, as described earlier in this section. Important differences remain as to the operationalization,

measurement and (direction of) the causal mechanisms. Consequently, there is neither a united research approach nor a unified theoretical perspective on the Europeanization of advocacy groups, not to mention an established and generally recognized methodological canon. Nevertheless, there are some recognizable trends, to which our research connects.

We operationalize Europeanization as a dependent variable in relation to a set of the inter-related parameters. Indeed, much variation exists regarding measurements of Europeanization—first, interest groups vary in their level of networking at the national, supranational or international arena. The operationalization of the level of networking at the supranational level is based on the percentage of interest groups declaring their engagement in European-level activities and intensity of contacts with other European organizations. Additionally, their dependency on EU funds varies across countries and policy fields, which is also a standard parameter of Europeanization present in the literature.

Summing up, we developed a number of hypotheses employing some explanatory variables enabling us to explore the variation in the extent of the Europeanization of advocacy groups. Following the assumptions present in the established scholarly literature, we hypothesized that (H1) the level of IOs' Europeanization is associated with EU competences in a specific area. In policy areas where the EU enjoys stronger competences, we expect IO's to be more Europeanized than in policy fields with fewer EU competences. The second assumption is related to one of the most frequently explored factors of Europeanization: resources. Interest groups vary substantially in their internal resources and the types of issues they represent. Resources can refer to financing, public support, or even outside input and information (Dür and De Bievre 2007). At the same time, Europeanization opens many windows of opportunity for building resources, and therefore resources should be treated as mutually influencing the process and phenomena of Europeanization. Therefore, we address two competing hypotheses present in the scholarly discourse—one claiming that (H2) the Europeanization process is dependent on organizational resources in a way that resource-rich organizations are expected to be more Europeanized than organizations with less resources. Other groups of scholars suggest that the effect of the group type is conditional on the resources of the organized interest group (Dür and Mateo 2014). The EU may play an important role as a source of internal resources for groups. Therefore, it is also legitimate to hypothesize that (H3) citizen groups representing diffuse interests (such as environmental protection groups) and groups with less resources should be more Europeanized. The inter-related argument suggests that business associations are more Europeanized, as they are better equipped for advocacy activities. At the level of group interests, there is a tendency to achieve the goals of small groups in neglecting the needs of larger communities. Diffuse interests (e.g., patients or consumer groups) may be more difficult to organize than concentrated interests (e.g., business, associations of well-established and protected professions such as doctors or business groups). As achieving goals is associated with direct contact with decision-makers' active representation at a certain level we hypothesize that (H4) interest organizations that represent concentrated interests are more Europeanized than diffuse interest organizations.

Data analysis and discussion

To measure the variations in the Europeanization of interest groups we rely on quantitative research, a large-scale online survey conducted among a representative sample of interest groups in Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia. Finally, a total of 421 responses were collected (120 organizations from Czechia, 91 from Hungary, 92 from Poland, and 118 from Slovenia) of which, for the purposes of this analysis, we included the responses from organizations operating in three policy areas: energy, higher education and health care.

First, we look at variations in the Europeanization of interest groups across countries and selected policy areas as a dependent variable. This allows us to analyze Europeanization as a broad phenomenon, as well as its specific varieties, including uploading Europeanization (when advocacy organizations undertake bottom-up initiatives), downloading Europeanization (compliance of interest groups with top-down impulses), or cross-loading Europeanization (OIs networking horizontally). In line with various theories established in interest group research, we expect numerous causal factors to condition the degree of Europeanization, for example, available budgets and personnel size but also—in line with existing literature—the level of financial flows (Thiel and Uçarer 2014, pp. 100–101).

Methodologically, this analysis is based on various statistical methods. First, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the most important Europeanization variables in the four analyzed countries and in the three policies. Using the means and medians, with the use of graphs we presented the average share of EU funds in the budgets of the organizations, membership growth and interest representation at the EU level. Using Chi-square test, we analyzed whether there is an association between organizations based on policy fields, country of origin and the membership in European UO's. In the final step, we conducted an ordered logit model to estimate the likelihood of the events that might affect EU representation. It allows us to estimate whether and how the applied variables affect interest group representation at the EU level and whether there are cross-national and cross-policy variations.

Our first measured variable is the share of the EU funds in the budgets of organizations. We asked our respondents what percentage of their budget is from public and EU funds (Fig. 1).

With complete data from 421 organizations using descriptive statistics, we calculated how many organizations use EU funds and the average share of EU funds in the organizations' budgets. We analyzed the data comparatively to see whether there are any differences between the IG's due to the country, individual policies and the group type (concentrated and diffuse interest organizations). As we see in Fig. 1, EU funds are the source of financial flows for only 20 percent organizations in four analyzed countries including Polish (30 percent), Slovenian (22.5 percent), Czech (19 percent), and Hungarian (12 percent) organizations (Fig. 2).

The results of our analysis show differences between four analyzed countries regarding the EU's financial share in organizational budgets (0–100 percent)

Fig. 1 EU funds by country.
Source: Own elaboration

% of organizations using EU funds by country

Fig. 2 Average EU funds in budgets (%)—across countries. *Source:* own elaboration

among 20 percent of the groups that are using EU funds. Organizations from the Czech Republic (31 percent) and Slovenia (24.5 percent) have the highest average share of EU funds in organizational budgets, while Polish (16 percent) and Hungarian (12.5 percent) organizations show smaller financial flows from EU in their overall budgets. Thus, the CEE states differ substantially considering this most standard parameter of Europeanization (EU fund dependency). Lower values of the EU funds among Hungarian organizations could be associated with the anti-NGO sentiment in Hungary that is visible in recent years. In 2016, the idea of increased legal restrictions on civil society was first voiced and soon the discussion centered on those organizations receiving foreign funding (Buyse 2018). The example is imposing restrictions on NGOs that receive foreign funding by introducing a law on the transparency of organizations receiving support from abroad (2017). These budget limitations may play an important role in organizational opportunities, since fewer resources may limit access to decision makers. Taking into account that the organizations differ by type, we also analyzed differences in the share of the EU funds in organizational budgets using the diffuse/concentrated interest typology (Olson 1965). The literature mentions various

classifications regarding types of organizations based on Olson's collective action theory comprising concentrated vs. diffuse interest groups or organizations with corporative resources versus public interest groups (Binderkrantz and Rasmussen 2015, 2008; Beyers et al. 2008). Nevertheless, the classification schemes largely correspond to each other. In line with Olson's notion of concentrated interests, sectional organizations represent specific groups such as business associations of well-established and protected professions. These groups represent special interests that create concentrated costs and benefits for their supporters and are formed to obtain material benefits for specific groups (Klüver 2010). Diffuse (Olsen 2002) or cause groups are more idealistic, representing some belief or values. In this case, we used 0 (diffuse)—1 (concentrated) scale to differentiate two groups. For health care, we coded each organization that represents the interests of medical professionals (e.g., doctors, nurses), organizations representing the healthcare industry (e.g., pharmacy companies, private hospitals) and employee organizations as concentrated interests. Patients' organizations were coded as diffuse. In energy policy, all associations of energy suppliers of different types of energy were coded as concentrated interests. Civic organizations representing energy consumers, idealistic organizations promoting renewable or clean energy were coded as diffuse. Regarding higher education, all student organizations were coded as diffuse, whereas organizations representing the interests of the academic professions such as university workers or Rectors' organizations were coded as concentrated (Fig. 3).

We found out that the average share of EU funds among diffused organizations is much higher (30 percent) than among concentrated groups (14 percent). We can conclude that group type is conditional on the resources that the interest group uses. Diffuse organizations are much more idealistic with a fewer financial resources. These groups are much more dependent on different forms of public donations and grants as well as members fees. Diffuse groups represent interests that only imply diffuse costs and benefits for their supporters. Concentrated organizations represent the specific interest of their members and their membership is usually limited to that section. Concentrated organizations are much closer to businesses, which makes their financial horizon more 'stable' and less dependent on external public donations or grants. Due to their form, they may be less frequently included in public grant applications and for some organizations it may be even impossible to participate in

Fig. 3 Average EU funds in budgets (%): Group Type. *Source:* own elaboration

Fig. 4 Average EU funds in budgets (%) across policy fields. *Source:* own elaboration

grant applications. The interpretation of this data connects to the established hypothesis that citizens' groups representing diffuse interests (such as environmental protection groups) and groups with weaker resources should be the most Europeanized (Fig. 4).

In the next step, we measured differences in the dependency on EU funds among three selected policies. We also found a significant difference between the three analyzed policies. The highest share of EU funds is represented by organizations operating in the field of higher education, while energy and healthcare organizations share is approx. 19.5 percent in both cases. The interpretation of this data connects to the established hypothesis, present in the AO studies, claiming that interest groups active in areas with high EU competences are more Europeanized than others. Undoubtedly healthcare belongs to the nation-state competences—which is openly declared in the EU treaties—and as such is subject to seriously lower Europeanization pressures than higher education. Universities are subject to various harmonization tendencies (e.g., Bologna process) and supported by EU funds—(e.g., Erasmus+, Jean Monnet Actions, Mari Currie Programme, Horizon 2020 or ERC) and therefore are expected to be more Europeanized. The academic profession is also a more internationalized sector than nationally managed healthcare or energy production. It is important to remember that although energy belongs to the EU level competences (supranational decisions are taken predominantly in the macro scale, for example, the overall share of renewable energy sources in specific member states' energy mixes), the concrete measures are decided on the nation-state level and this explains the relatively low level of energy sector advocacy organizations becoming Europeanized in this way (as EU funds dependency).

Using descriptive statistics (median), we also developed a picture of OI's Europeanization, based on the parameter of the extent of EU level representation over the last 15 years. The obtained data were measured on the ordinal 1–5 scale (1. much less—2. less—3. the same—4. more—5. much more) (Fig. 5).

Our analysis indicates that there is a pattern of representation of organizations' activities at the EU level. It appears that the European integration process affects the interest representation system. The average values of the level of representation at

Fig. 5 EU level representation across countries. *Source:* own elaboration based on survey data

the EU level for analyzed organizations are moderately higher than 10–15 years ago. Organizations have pointed out that representation at the EU level is as important or more important than 15 years ago. We obtained the highest mean values among Polish (3.88), Czech (3.61), and Slovenian (3.59) organizations. Harmonizing our data with the median analysis, we observe that organizations from every analyzed country are more represented at the EU level compared to 10–15 years ago. Moreover, three of the analyzed countries with a post-communist heritage are rather similar, while the Slovenian case presents a broader scope for the EU representation growth over the last 10–15 years. Applying the same scheme, we also analyzed the changes in the representation at the EU level over the last 10–15 years in the three selected policy fields. We observe, like before, that the European integration process affects the interest representation system in the three analyzed policies. The average values of the level of representation at the EU level are higher or much higher than 10–15 years ago (Fig. 6).

Again as previously mentioned, we tested if the representation at the EU level among IG's changed over the last 10–15 years. As in the previous case, our data show the measures on an ordinal 1–5 scale (1. much less—2. less—3. the same—4. more—5. much more) for the specific policy fields. Surprisingly, our data show that the highest average increase of the interest representation importance at the EU level took place in healthcare policy. Representation at the EU level was more important compared to 10–15 years ago for 42 percent of the healthcare organizations, and much more important for 20 percent of the organizations in the healthcare sector while 25 percent stated that it is the same as before. Oppositely, 11.5 percent of the organizations indicated worse or much worse representation of their interest at the EU level. Among energy organizations, 41 percent indicated more and 24 percent

Fig. 6 EU level representation by policy fields (nominal number of IG's). *Source:* own elaboration based on survey data

much more in terms of the representation of their interest at the EU level, 23 percent of organizations from the energy sector indicated that situation is same as before, while 11 percent indicated less or much less representation at the EU level. In higher education, only 5 percent of the organizations indicated less or much less representation of their interest at the EU level, while 33 percent indicated that the representation of their interest is at the same level as 10–15 years ago. Representation at the EU level was more important for 36.5 percent of higher education groups indicated more or 24.5 percent much more. The obtained results contradict against our hypothesis that interest groups active in areas with high EU competences are more Europeanized than others. Lower average results are visible among higher education or even energy organizations which can be also connected to their focus on national level of policy making. However, we still observe an increase in importance of interest representation at the EU level in every policy field (Fig. 7).

Regarding group types, concentrated interest organizations indicate that the representation of their interest at the EU level is more important (48 percent) or much more important (22 percent) than 15 years ago. The same representation at the EU level EU was indicated by 18 percent of the concentrated groups, while only 7 percent and 5 percent of the groups indicated that their EU-level representation is less or much less important. Diffuse groups much more often than concentrated groups indicated that representation of their interest at the EU level is the same as 10–15 years ago (35 percent), while more important representation at the EU level

Fig. 7 EU level representation: group type (nominal number of IG's). *Source:* own elaboration based on survey data

compared to 10–15 years ago was indicated by more than 55 percent of the diffused IG's. Like before, only a marginal number of the groups indicated less (3 percent) or much less (4.5 percent) importance of the representation of their interests at the EU level. A greater increase in the representation of concentrated IO's at the EU level may be an argument suggesting that business associations are more Europeanized, as they are better equipped for lobbying/advocacy activities. As mentioned earlier, there are competing hypotheses present in the literature addressing this question. Our data show that the Europeanization processes enhance the already strong(er) position of concentrated interests, especially business organizations.

To answer how membership in EU UO's affects the ability of organizations to assert their interests as opposed to 10–15 years ago at different levels, we used a statistical mean and frequency tables. Our results shows that organizations are more able to assert their interests than 15 years ago (Fig. 8).

Organizations which are members of EU-level UO's indicated a large (49 percent) or very large (25.5 percent) increase of the representation at the EU level over last the 15 years. The same level of the representation of their interest was indicated by 20.5 percent of the members of UO's, while 3 percent and 2 percent pointed to a lower or much lower level of representation of their interests at the EU level. In contrast to these results, organizations without membership in EU UO's indicated the same representation much more often (33 percent); yet again, more (31.5 percent) or much more (19.5 percent) representation was reported by more than 50 percent of

Fig. 8 EU Interest representation—European UO membership (nominal number of IG's). *Source:* own elaboration

the IG's, while 8 percent indicated a lower or 7 percent much lower representation of their interests at the EU level.

As a next step, using descriptive statistics (analysis of frequency tables) we measured the percentage of organizations that are members of European UO's in three analyzed policies (Fig. 9).

Fig. 9 Membership in EU UO's: policies. *Source:* own elaboration

Table 1 Chi-square test Policy Sector and UO's membership.
Source: own elaboration

	Value EU UO's	df	Asymp. sign
Pearson Chi-square	3.813	2	0.148
Likelihood Ratio	2.490	2	.288
Linear-by-Linear Association	.005	1	.943
a. 0.0% cells (0) have expected count less than 5			
The min	expected counts is 28.52		

The data show a higher rate of membership in European UO's among health-care interest organizations (47 percent) and the lowest rate in the energy sector (36.5 percent). We conclude that this factor may be associated with group characteristics. We concluded that healthcare organizations are more often professional associations that can be often associated with organizations abroad. Despite the limited EU competences in health policy, professional organizations are often platforms for the exchange of knowledge and experience. The academic profession is also a more internationalized sector than energy. In all analyzed policies, however, we observe that at least every third organization is a member of European UO's.

As a next step we analyze whether there is an association between organizations operating in specific policy fields and membership in European UO's using Chi-square tests. We first introduced contingency tables (two-dimensional tables containing frequencies by category). These tables provide a foundation for statistical inference, where statistical tests question the relationship between the variables on the basis of the data observed. Our independent variable has three values (selected policies) and two dependent variables (membership/lack of membership); in this case, the test statistics are based on a 3×2 cross-tabulation table (Table 1).

Since the p value in every analyzed case is greater than our chosen significance level ($\alpha=0.05$), we conclude that there is not enough evidence to suggest an association between organization operating in specific policy fields and membership in UO's at certain levels. However, there is a stronger tendency toward membership in UO's among healthcare organizations. Using descriptive statistics (analysis of frequency tables), we also measured the percentage of organizations that are members of European UO's among the four analyzed countries (Fig. 10).

Fig. 10 Membership in EU UO's in countries. *Source:* own elaboration

Table 2 Chi-square test:
Country and UO's Membership.
Source: own elaboration

	Value EU UO's	df	Asymp. sign
Pearson Chi-square	12.450*	3	.005
Likelihood Ratio	12.759	3	.005
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.527	1	.030
a. 0.0% cells (0) have expected count less than 5			
The min. expected	counts is 20.04		

Our study indicates that 54 percent of Hungarian organizations, 48 percent of Slovenian organizations, 39.5 percent of Czech organizations, and only 29 percent of Polish IO's are members of European umbrella organizations. Using the same scheme, we measured correlations between the country and memberships in UO's at a certain level (cross tabulation two by four) using Pearson's contingency coefficient (Table 2).

Contrarily to the policy fields, our analysis indicates an association between variable 1. country and variable 2. membership in UO's at the European ($p=0.002$) level, which allows us to conclude that the level of membership in UO's at the European level is correlated with the country of origin much more than the policy field. We observe that organized interest groups from Poland are less active at European and international level than their counterparts in three other countries, as the highest level of membership in supranational organizations can be observed in Hungary and Slovenia. This may be related to the specific characteristics of the country such as size. Poland is the biggest country in the region and therefore constitutes the largest ecosystem of organizations. This factor may play an important role for national organizations, which may rather look for cooperation at the national level (Fig. 11).

When it comes to group type, we see rather similar memberships rates, with a slight predominance of diffuse organizations (43 percent). Since many organizations' activities are largely based on their resources, we decided to analyze whether organizational resources affect the changes of the interest representation at EU level over the last 15 years (Table 3). One of the most frequently explored factors of Europeanization are resources. They may include information, material, financial and human resources which may allow organized interests to Europeanize. At the same time, Europeanization opens many windows of opportunity which build up resources, and therefore these opportunities should be treated as endogenous

Fig. 11 Membership in EU UO's—group type. *Source:* own elaboration

Table 3 Ordinal logistic regression: EU representation and organizational resources

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Concentrated interest	0.438* (0.278)					0.108 (0.332)
Slovenia (ref category)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Poland	0.100 (0.359)	0.148 (0.356)	0.206 (0.391)	-0.022 (0.405)	0.011 (0.350)	0.404 (0.476)
Hungary	-0.383 (0.374)	-0.271 (0.365)	-0.184 (0.402)	-0.365 (0.398)	-0.398 (0.369)	-0.729 (0.472)
Czechia	-0.186 (0.373)	-0.188 (0.371)	0.106 (0.422)	-0.044 (0.393)	-0.141 (0.362)	0.114 (0.480)
Higher Education (ref cat)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Healthcare	0.210 (0.350)	0.114 (0.341)	0.054 (0.362)	-0.232 (0.363)	-0.233 (0.338)	-0.223 (0.415)
Energy	0.376 (0.395)	0.349 (0.392)	0.363 (0.421)	-0.123 (0.410)	0.061 (0.377)	0.289 (0.480)
Staff Size		0.132 (0.182)				0.250 (0.221)
Financial Horizon			0.146* (0.075)			0.091 (0.114)
Scientific expertise				-0.050 (0.225)		-0.035 (0.257)
Economical expertise				0.274 (0.240)		0.241 (0.272)
Legal Expertise				-0.050 (0.232)		-0.142 (0.276)
Membership in EU UO's					1.164*** (0.271)	1.038 (0.334)
Cut 1	-1.600** (.600)	-1.782** (.579)	-1.476* (.698)	-1.953** (.783)	1.953*** (.373)	-0.625 (1.092)
Cut 2	0.113 (0.582)	-0.078 (.559)	.316 (.681)	-0.337 (.766)	-0.174 (.340)	1.200 (1.091)
Observations	260	237	219	220	260	199
Pseudo R	0.016	0.011	0.027	0.018	0.090	0.119

Standard errors in parentheses ⁺ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

to the Europeanization process. However, there are also studies which question these claims, suggesting that resources, e.g., staff, do not have a significant impact on multi-level venue shopping in the EU (Beyers and Kerremans 2012). To test whether resources are an important factor for EU representation, we conducted ordinal logit regression to estimate how our variables affect interest group representation at the EU level and whether there are cross-national and cross-policy variations. The changes in EU representation were originally measured on a five-point scale. We asked our respondents how important are different levels of representation at the EU level for their activities compared to 10–15 years ago (or since its founding, if founded more recently)? To facilitate the interpretation of our analysis, EU representation, which was originally measured on a five-point scale from much less to much more, was recoded into a three-point scale from 1 (much) less, 2 (the same) and 3 (much) more. As independent variables, we tested staff resources (originally collected in continuous terms and later recoded into an ordinal variable, ranging from 1 to 5, with larger numbers indicating larger staff sizes). To analyze the organization's financial resources, each organization was asked to assess its financial horizon and stability on a 1–5 scale (financially stable for less than 1 year to financially stable for more than 5 years). We also included three types of expertise in our study, testing whether scientific, economic, or legal expertise affects EU representation. To get a broader view of the factors that may affect the EU representation we also measured whether the group type (concentrated/diffuse groups) plays a role in the IGs' EU representation. As one of our main questions was the difference of various levels and dimensions of Europeanization, we tested whether IG's membership in EU umbrella organization affects actual interest representation at the EU level. Both variables are dummies coded on 0/1 scales. Our model also includes countries and policy fields. Both variables were transformed into numeric variables coded as 1 = Slovenia, 2 = Poland, 3 = Hungary, 4 = Czechia and policy fields 1 = Higher Education, 2 = Health Care 3 = Energy. Collinearity was tested with the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient.

Our first resource model based on staff resources was statistically insignificant. We found no evidence that the group size plays an important role in the degree of IGs' EU representation. Even in model VI, when all the variables are tested, staff size seems to play only a marginal role in EU-level representation. By contrast, we found out that the financial variable is statistically significant. We may conclude that organizational budget expressed as financial horizon plays an important role in increasing representation at the EU level. The effect of the financial horizon on the EU representation shows little variation among countries and policies. However, the results are not statistically significant either. Three types of expertise variables are negative with little variation among countries and specific policies. The interpretation of this data partially challenges the established hypothesis that weaker actors at the national level invest more of their resources on the supranational level as it is the only channel through which they can influence political decision-making. However, this argument cannot be rejected either, as financial background seems to be an important factor motivating the expansion of IG representation at the EU level. We also found statistical evidence for increasing EU representation by group type. It seems that concentrated groups enjoy greater representation than diffuse

organizations at the EU level compared to the last 10–15 years. However, diffuse organizations are more often members of EU UO's. Importantly, our data show that membership in EU umbrella organization, is the most robust factor for the level of EU representation. This dimension of supranational representation occurs to be one of the most important variant of Europeanization. Groups that are members of European UO's are much more likely to enjoy higher representation at the EU level than 10–15 years ago. Considering individual countries both the staff and financial resources seems to be a more important factor for the representation of their interest at the EU level to the Polish IG's. The group type might also be more important in Poland in favor of concentrated interest organizations. However, our data are not statistically significant. Regarding specific policy fields, the effect of the resources is rather weak showing rather moderate variance among specific policies in models considering group type, staff and financial resources. We may observe that expertise have some negative effect on healthcare organizations and their representation at the EU level, but yet again our analysis lacks statistical significance (Table 3).

Conclusions

The notion of Europeanization has become a “boom industry” in its own right in the pre-accession (before the so called ‘big-bang enlargement of 2004’) phase. This paper has empirically addressed the Europeanization of AOs in CEE in the post-accession era. A subjective perspective was chosen, thereby giving priority to how actors themselves assess their level of Europeanization (Kröger 2018, p. 28). As such, it embeds this piece of Europeanization studies in the larger research agenda on advocacy processes and phenomena.

The article stresses differences between various dimensions of the Europeanization of advocacy organizations and examines their determinants. We applied a comparative framework derived from the recognized literature about trans- and international advocacy, using subject matter and selected EU member states as variables. We compared sets of advocacy organizations across three policy fields in four countries, exploring selected aspects of Europeanization. We aimed to explain Europeanization processes among advocacy organizations from four post-communist states which have been subject to strong Europeanization pressures before and after the EU accession. We contend that European integration fosters processes of diffusion, learning and adaptation, resulting in new repertoires and templates for the functioning of advocacy groups. Therefore, we aimed to identify how CEE organized interests have reacted to a changing environment in the post-enlargement phase.

The study shows how the Europeanization of nation-level advocacy organizations differ within the countries and specific policies. We hypothesized that Europeanization possibilities are largely determined by the group size as main resource, as only bigger associations possess the necessary information and expertise that the EU institutions need. However, we found staff size to be statistically insignificant in our analysis, whereas the organizational budget and membership in the EU umbrella organizations were statistically significant. Additionally, we also found out that the type of the organization plays an important role

in increasing representation at the EU level for CEE organizations. Concentrated groups enjoy better representation than diffuse ones at the supranational level, compared to the last 10–15 years. Among the analyzed policies we also found no significant variance between group size nor financial horizon and interest representation at any level. The analysis shows that richer organizations may expect greater growth of representation at the EU level.

Regarding EU funds, we found out that IOs from the Czech Republic are much more dependent on European funding than organizations in other countries. Also, our data shows that the group type is an important factor in dependency on funds. Diffuse organizations are much more dependent on EU funding than concentrated interest organizations. At the same time, even though associations receiving EU funding are more likely to assign greater importance to the EU, they are not more likely to get in touch with EU institutions. The reason for this could be related to the ‘critical resource dependencies’ (Beyers and Kerremans 2012). EU funding could be more important to smaller groups, which are less likely to engage in EU-level activity, than to established, bigger groups. The latter also secure their funding through other sources as for example—membership fees (Cekik 2017). We also found out that all types of groups in the three analyzed policies in the four countries are increasingly representing their interests at the EU level. This process is more visible in Poland, Czechia, and Slovenia and a bit less in Hungary. However, the EU representation is not only dependent on the IOs’ budget but also on their sectoral scope (Kohler-Koch et al. 2017). When it comes to the policy fields, we surprisingly found the highest increase of the representation at the EU level among healthcare organizations. This conclusion goes against the acknowledged wisdom that the higher concentration of organized interests on the supranational level in these policy fields are subject to stronger “communitarization”. Healthcare, especially in the era before the coronavirus pandemic, belonged to the relatively less intensively Europeanized policy domains. Also, our research confirms that funding is crucial, whereby it seems to be more important for diffuse organizations in both financial and personnel aspects, than for concentrated groups. However, the reason for the strong representation of IOs at the EU level may be related not only to their internal resource or sectoral structure, but also to the fact that some countries have less engagement in organized civil society to begin with; in the new member states from CEE, the tradition of civil society involvement is much weaker as in many older Western European member states. (Kohler-Koch et al. 2017).

This type of relationship may also exist in other countries of the CEE region as well as in other policy fields. Following the time-honored academic tradition, we acknowledge that more additional research is needed to assess the extent to which these findings are more widely generalizable. Nevertheless, this study delivers a picture of the Europeanization phenomenon among advocacy organizations in four post-communist countries, which joined the EU in 2004. Sixteen years after the big-bang enlargement, organized interests changed and evolved differently in various policy fields. The diversity may be explained by many determinants. In this study we analyzed the classic factors, which could be tested due to the available data.

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Declarations

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

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