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**LOBBYING BY INTEREST GROUPS IN MACEDONIA,
MONTENEGRO AND SERBIA:
FINDINGS FROM A SURVEY OF ASSOCIATIONS**

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The existing literature on civil society in post-communist new democracies, with rare exceptions (for example, Fink-Hafner, 1998 on Slovenia; Cox and Vass, 2000 and Cox, Ilonzski and Vass, 2007 on Hungary), concludes that their civil societies are underdeveloped and not sufficiently influential in national politics (Howard, 2002; Pérez-Solórzano Borragán 2006; Lane, 2010; Sissenich, 2010; Borzel 2010; Dolenjec, 2013; among others). Although the role of civic initiatives and pluralistic associations in the initial stages of democratization has been recognized, the picture of a weak civil society remains dominant. This evaluation is even more common when it comes to the new Eastern European democracies.

These assessments, however, have mostly been based on the research of the NGO sector. Although studies have been undertaken on industrial relations/collective bargaining, much less attention has been placed on other types of politically active interest groups such as business and trade associations, trade unions, and associations defending the interests of professions. Moreover, we have no systematic information on central themes of research into interest groups from a cross-national study with a large number of actors encompassing the various types of interest groups.

The aim of this project was thus to collect novel data on the political behaviour of interest groups in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in order to fill the abovementioned gap in the literature. The research focuses on classic themes in interest groups literature, as well as on the less researched theme of the Europeanization of interest groups during the EU accession process. These themes include: exploring the characteristics and structure of the populations of national interest groups; the organizational characteristics of interest groups (size, membership, resources); the types of activities performed by interest associations; their contacts with and access to a range of national institutions; and the strategies such groups use in their attempts to influence public policy. With regard to the Europeanization of interest groups, the research explores the involvement of interest groups in national EU accession processes and their EU-level activities.

This report presents the descriptive findings of a survey conducted between April and November 2014 of associations in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia that have a minimum level of visibility (i.e., a web presence). A total of 984 associations in the three countries were contacted, with 305 responding to the survey, amounting to a response rate of 31%. The representativeness check of the survey is encouraging and allows for some preliminary conclusions to be drawn about interest representation in the new democracies of ex-Yugoslavia.

MAIN FINDINGS

Sharing a similar context of democratization, Europeanization, and a shared past in a common federal state, interest groups in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia show remarkable similarities. Most of the research findings are also in line with the literature on interest groups. However, there are a number of interesting differences between interest groups in these new democracies and those in older democracies. This is the case with the population structure of interest groups, the age of interest groups (i.e. the date of their founding), their funding sources, their access routes to national institutions (e.g. the low targeting of national parliaments in new democracies), and the frequent use of outside strategies in parallel with inside lobbying strategies in the new democracies.

The populations of national interest groups

The populations of interest groups in the three countries surveyed are dominated by citizen associations/NGOs. In the population datasets of this research, which included interest groups with a minimum level of visibility (web presence), more than 50% of interest groups are NGOs. This percentage is even higher if we look at official registers of associations. The large majority of NGOs were formed after the introduction of political pluralism in the 1990s, while some trade unions, chambers of commerce and professional associations existed during socialism. Today, pluralism in the area of trade unionism and business associations is allowed and their interests are typically represented by several national-level umbrella associations. The number of business associations outside the system of chambers of commerce is still rather small. Human rights groups, women's groups and environmental groups, as well as NGOs active in the areas of good governance and democratization, are among the most numerous NGOs. The largest concentration of interest groups in a few national associations of a particular type is in Montenegro.

Organizational characteristics of interest groups

Interest groups in these countries are young associations with an average age of only 11.5 years in Montenegro, 14.5 years in Macedonia and 19.5 years in Serbia. Their membership base, especially that of NGOs, is modest. No more than 66.1% of associations employ staff, with an average number of 4 employees in Macedonia and 5 employees in Serbia and Montenegro. 74% of associations rely on volunteers to conduct their work. While business associations experience far fewer problems with employing staff, NGOs most frequently rely on the work of volunteers. Interest groups are also small in terms of financial resources: around 40% of respondents in Montenegro, 30% of respondents in Serbia and 25% of respondents in Macedonia have annual budgets of less than 10,000 Euros. The large majority of associations,

particularly NGOs, are dependent on foreign funding, and this is especially marked in Macedonia.

Interest group activities and the policy areas in which they operate

Interest representation is an important activity of the associations surveyed—an activity to which they devote on average around 40% of their time. Business groups are involved in lobbying on a larger scale than other types of associations. Interest groups are most active in the areas of civil and human rights, education and research. Social welfare/social security, local and regional development and employment policy also attract a considerable amount of lobbying. Trade unions and business associations are active in a larger number of policy areas than other types of interest groups.

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Access to institutions

In general, interest groups appear to have good interaction with particular national institutions. The highest frequency of contacts occurs between interest groups and local self-government institutions. Lobbying is also frequently directed at executive institutions, especially at the working level of government. National parliaments and political parties in these parliaments, in contrast, are much less frequently contacted. Business groups appear to have more contacts than other interest groups with all types of national institutions across countries, though these differences are least pronounced in Montenegro.

Nevertheless, interest groups do perceive a certain level of difficulty in maintaining contacts, especially in Serbia. According to the survey respondents, their access to national governments is the most difficult, closely followed by the difficulty of access to national parliaments. Business associations again experience least difficulty when approaching national institutions, while NGOs, especially in Macedonia, face significant barriers when contacting national institutions.

Lobbying strategies

Interest groups use a wide variety of strategies to influence public policy. An interesting finding of this research is that inside and outside strategies are used with similar frequency by interest groups in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. Distributing a press release, a common outside tactic, is the most frequently used. Besides the frequent use of classic inside strategies—including direct contacts with politicians and participation in meetings and working groups (especially in Serbia and Montenegro)—two outside tactics, i.e., distributing folders, brochures or flyers, and organizing press conferences, are also quite frequently used. Organizing or participating in protests, one of the most radical lobbying strategies, is least frequently used. What is particularly interesting is that business groups, especially in Serbia, are also frequent

users of outside strategies, a behaviour that is less typical of business associations in developed democracies.

The Europeanization of interest groups

Interest groups are included in several forms of participation in national EU accession processes. Most frequently they are consulted on issues from their areas of expertise and are invited to participate in forums/conferences organized by political institutions on issues related to EU accession. The level of involvement is significant, with business associations being involved more frequently. However, NGOs and think tanks also show a considerable level of Europeanization. Around 20% of the associations that responded to this survey in the three countries are members of EU-level associations and consider the activities connected to this membership highly useful. The level of contacts with EU institutions is still rather low and is mostly directed to the European Commission.

1. THE POPULATIONS OF NATIONAL INTEREST GROUPS

National contexts of interest group activity

The three countries included in the survey are small or very small¹ former republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) and current EU-acceding countries.² While Macedonia proclaimed independence in 1991, Serbia and Montenegro remained in a state union as successors of SFRY until 2006 when they split into separate entities. The three countries are parliamentary democracies, but while Serbia and Montenegro are majoritarian democracies, Macedonia introduced a consociational power-sharing arrangement after the small-scale ethnic conflict in 2001.

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The transition to liberal democracy and the ongoing EU accession process frame the national context of the system of interest representation (Fink-Hafner, 2015; Hristova and Cekik, 2015). According to previous research, citizen participation in associations in these countries is still lower than that in Western democracies and Central European countries (Novak and Hafner-Fink, 2015). Research on industrial relations also shows the limited influence of this formalized type of interest intermediation in national politics (Stanojevic, 2003; Hristova, 2008; Orlovic, 2015;). Instead, strong informal ties between business and politics, weak trade unions, and the drafting of legislation behind closed doors have all been documented in the literature (Zakoshek, 1995; Majhoshev, 2012; Vukovic, 2013; Komar, 2015).

While most NGOs in the three countries were formed with the introduction of political pluralism in the 1990s, some types of interest groups previously existed during socialism. This was the case with trade unions, chambers of commerce, professional associations, and some citizen and social associations (for example, environmental associations, student associations, associations working on various disability issues, etc.). Their level of autonomy, however, was mainly controlled by the Communist Party, although there are different opinions on this in the literature. Although these associations were gradually restructured during the 1990s, most of their successors, especially in the case of trade unions and chambers of commences, are still

¹ Montenegro has a population of 621, 810 inhabitants (estimate as of 2014, the Montenegro Statistical Office, 2015). Macedonia has 2,067,471 inhabitants (estimate as of 30.06.2014, State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia), and Serbia has a population of 7,114,393 (estimate as of 01.01.2015, State Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia).

² Macedonia was the first ex-Yugoslav republic to sign the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU in 2001 (entered into force in 2004). The country gained candidate status for EU membership in 2005, but the accession negotiations have still not started due to the unresolved name issue with Greece. Although the EU accession process for Montenegro and Serbia started later, it is moving on a faster track. Montenegro applied for EU membership in 2008. The SAA entered into force in 2010, after which accession negotiations began in June 2012. Serbia applied for EU membership in 2009, with the SAA entering into force in 2010 after several delays due to insufficient cooperation with the International criminal tribunal for former Yugoslavia and dialogue with Kosovo. Serbia gained candidate country status in 2012 and accession negotiations started in early 2014.

among the largest umbrella organizations. They inherited significant resources from the previous system, including buildings, personnel, and established networks of local/regional and branch subunits.

Today, pluralism in trade unionism and the chambers of commerce system is allowed and the segmentation of groups is still ongoing. For example, there are a number of competing umbrella trade unions in each of the three countries, ranging from 2 in Montenegro to 4 in Macedonia and Serbia. There are also independent (branch) trade unions. Pluralism in the system of chambers of commerce has been allowed in Macedonia since 2004, while such pluralism was introduced in Serbia in 2009 and its implementation was started in 2013. Other types of business associations such as employers' associations and trade associations were established during the 1990s or, in many cases, only recently. Even though pluralism in this area is also allowed, currently only one employers' association in each country fulfils the representativeness criteria established by the EU-accommodated laws and participates in social dialogue at national level. The number of business associations outside the system of chambers of commerce and employers' associations is still rather low.

In terms of the types of system of interest representation (corporatism/pluralism), the institutional designs of these countries involve tripartite/neo-corporatist institutions. As mentioned above, these have limited functionality and influence. The system of interest representation also involves pluralist characteristics, since a significant number of NGOs appear to be active and involved in national policy-making, though sometimes only formally and as a result of international pressure.

Mapping the interest group population: national populations and national samples

The primary criterion for the inclusion of each association in the survey was that of having a web presence. This criterion takes into account the minimum visibility of interest groups based also on the assumption that they possess minimum resources (not only material resources) to engage in lobbying activities. Also included were associations with blogs or social media pages that are commonly used today (most frequently by NGOs), as well as sectoral branches of umbrella trade unions and business associations that do not necessarily have their own websites. Sports, cultural/art, religious associations and learned societies, which are dominantly leisure associations and engage in lobbying only occasionally and to a far lower extent, are not part of this research.

Public and informal registers of associations were used to compile the national datasets of interest groups. For **Montenegro**, an online public register of associations maintained by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Montenegro was used. As of March 2014 there were 2,881

registered organizations, classified in 27 categories. This register also contains information on professional and business associations, while trade unions are registered on a separate register. There is one chamber of commerce, several employers' associations, and two umbrella trade unions (Eurofound, 2012a) also included in the dataset. Of the 229 associations which fit the criteria of web presence, I contacted 201, for which I succeeded in providing an e-mail or valid postal address.³

For Macedonia and Serbia, several sources were used. For **Serbia**⁴ I mapped NGOs (and partly professional and business associations) using information from the *Directory of NGOs* maintained by the citizen association Centre for the Development of the Non-Profit Sector,⁵ information from the website for sectoral organizations of civil society (SECO) developed by the Government of Serbia's Office for Cooperation with Civil Society,⁶ and information from the TACSO website.⁷ The membership sections of several NGO networks/coalitions were also checked. All of the mentioned sources are overlapping.

Trade unions from four umbrella associations and three umbrella employers' associations mentioned in the Eurofound industrial relations report for Serbia (2012b) were also included in the population dataset. As of March 2014 there were 26 chambers of commerce registered in the Register of Chambers of Commerce run by the Business Registries Agency, which are also part of the research. The Serbian population dataset contains 524 associations, 493 of which were contacted by email and/or regular mail.

³ The number of NGOs in Montenegro declined significantly in 2012. According to USAID, over 4,500 of the almost 6,000 CSOs registered in 2011 failed to harmonize their statutes with the new Law on Non-Government Organizations in 2012 and were therefore deleted from the registry (USAID, 2013).

⁴ As of 31 March 2014, 22,600 citizen organizations were registered in the Registry of Associations maintained by the Business Registries Agency of the Republic of Serbia. Additionally, there are 11,335 sports associations, 556 foundations and endowments, 19 foreign foundations and endowments, and 49 foreign associations registered in separate registers.

⁵ The Directory of NGOs of the citizen association Centre for Development of Non-Profit Sector (CRNPS) was established in 1996 and contains 2,380 organizations. The directory includes contact information and short descriptions provided by the organizations. <http://www.crnps.org.rs/direktorijum-nvo>

⁶ SECO provides information about 8 issue networks of civil society organizations in Serbia.

<http://www.cdspredlaze.org.rs/>

⁷ The TACSO website lists 141 civil society organizations in Serbia that have voluntarily provided detailed information to its database of regional civil society organizations. As explained on its website: "TACSO is part of the Civil Society Facility (CSF) which is a European Union (EU) mechanism that provides support to civil society organizations (CSOs) in those countries that are not yet part of the EU. CSOs play an important role for the EU, because they are seen as key actors in supporting their country's accession process. The CSF's aim is therefore to strengthen CSOs so that they are able to actively participate in public debate and eventually have the capacity to influence policy and decision making processes." <http://www.tacso.org/project-org/introduction/?id=42>

NGOs in **Macedonia**⁸ were mapped by searching several national networks of citizens' associations;⁹ the NGO Infocentar website's address book of citizen associations; the TACSO website, which lists 126 citizen associations in Macedonia; as well as a database of organizations provided by the Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation, which includes 243 (mostly local) associations. (All these are overlapping sources.) All trade unions registered in the Registry of Trade Unions of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (48 umbrella and branch trade unions in total) were contacted, as well as eight employers' organizations registered in the same ministry's Registry of Employers' Organizations for which I could provide contact information. The same was the case with the three national chambers of commerce and their sectoral branches. Other business associations and professional associations were mapped by searching the internet using key words or other sources.¹⁰ The Macedonian dataset consists of 324 associations, 297 of which were contacted.

A total of 984 associations from three countries were included in the survey.

Description of the population

The resulting country samples are quite similar. Citizen associations (NGOs) comprise the majority of organizations in the interest group populations of these countries: 56.2% of interest groups in Macedonia; 54.5% in Serbia; and 50.2% in Montenegro.

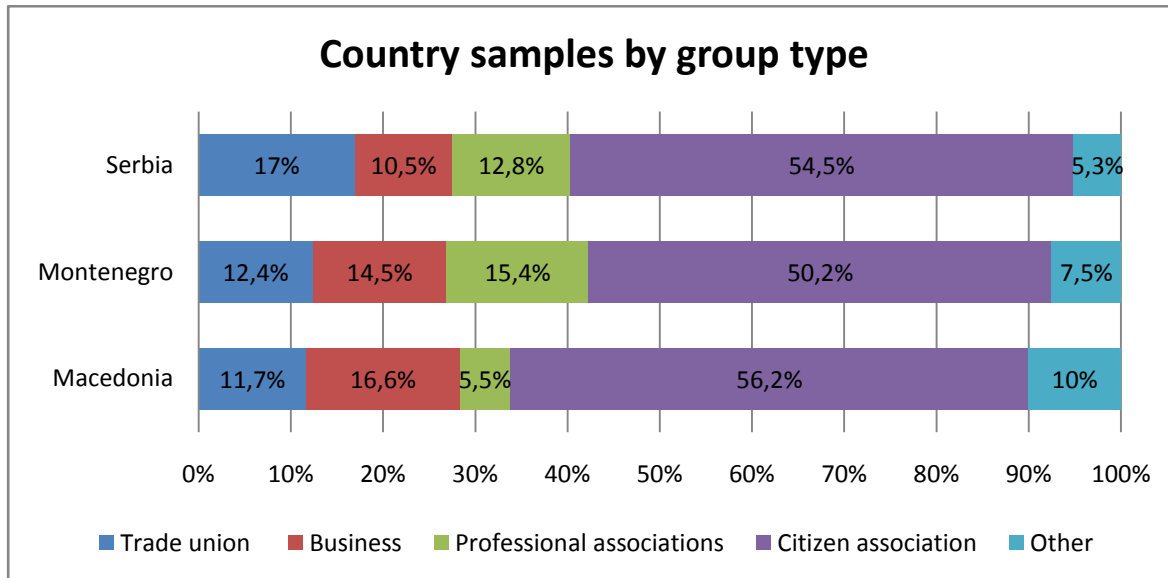
Trade unions and business associations have more or less similar shares of the total number of interest groups: 16.5% of groups in Macedonia, 14.5% in Montenegro and 10.5% in Serbia are business groups; 11.7% of associations in Macedonia, 12.4% of associations in Montenegro and 17% of associations in Serbia are trade unions.

5.5% of interest groups in Macedonia, 15.4% of groups in Montenegro and 12.8% of associations in Serbia are professional associations. The category 'other' consists of think tanks and foundations active in the areas of promoting democracy and human rights.

⁸ As of 2013 there were 13,021 officially registered citizen associations in Macedonia, 4,574 of which are registered in accordance with the 2010 Law on Associations and Foundations and are considered actually active (Nuredinovska and Ognenovska, 2014).

⁹ The Ecologists' Movement of Macedonia, the Macedonian Anti-Poverty platform, the National Youth Council of the Republic of Macedonia, the National Council of Disability Organizations of Macedonia, the National Network for Fighting against Homophobia and Transphobia, and others.

¹⁰ It was somewhat difficult to collect data, especially about professional associations in Macedonia, since very few sources and no voluntary registers mentioning these associations exist.



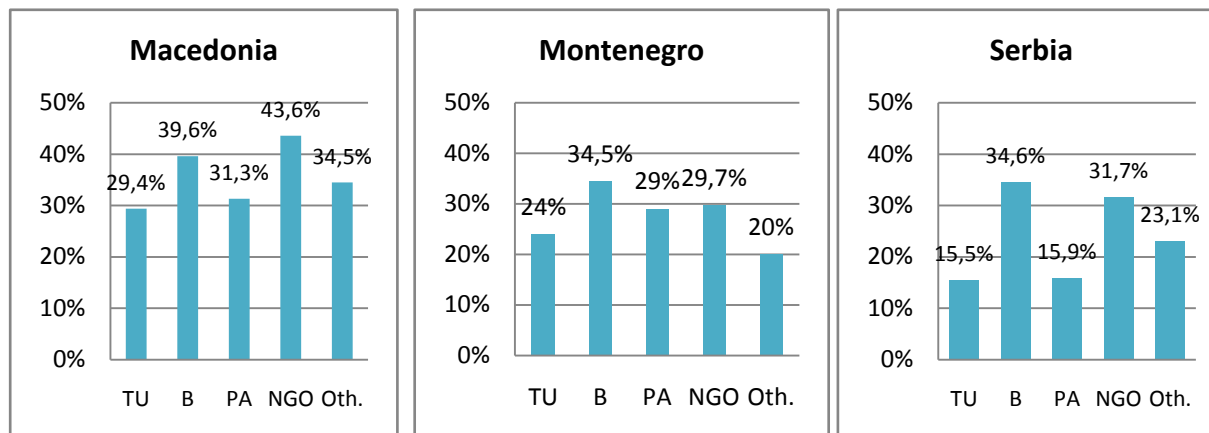
Response rate and representativeness of the survey

As mentioned above, a total of 984 associations were contacted for the first time in April 2014 with an invitation to fill in an online questionnaire. After sending two e-mail reminders, the non-responding associations were contacted by regular mail. The survey was closed in November 2014.

Of the 984 associations, 305 responded to the survey, amounting to an overall response rate of 31%. Across countries the response rate was highest in Macedonia, at 39.7% (115 respondents), followed by Montenegro at 28.9% (58 respondents) and Serbia at 26.8% (132 respondents). The response rate of Macedonian associations is comparable to those achieved by similar studies in Europe, while the Montenegrin and Serbian groups had somewhat lower response-rates. The representativeness of the survey (following Dür and Mateo, forthcoming) was checked by looking at the response rates across group types, as well as by comparing the age of responding and non-responding associations.

As for the types of groups, the response rate was somewhat lower for trade unions and professional associations in Serbia. In Montenegro only a few think tanks responded to the survey and these are excluded in the bivariate analysis.

Response rate by group type



TU- Trade union; B- Business association; PA- Professional association; NGO- nongovernmental organization; Oth.- other

With regard to the age of the formation of the interest groups that responded and those that did not respond, the representativeness of the survey is solid because the respondents and non-respondents have remarkably similar characteristics. The table below shows the average year of formation of the responding and non-responding associations, as well as the standard deviation.

Table 1. Average age of the formation of associations

	Respondents	Non-respondents
Macedonia	M=1999 (SD= 15.9 years)	M=1998.5 (SD= 15.7 years)
Montenegro	M=2002 (SD= 12.5 years)	M=2000.7 (SD= 16.8 years)
Serbia	M=1994 (SD= 25 years)	M=1994.1 (SD= 23.9 years)

2. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INTEREST GROUPS

Age of formation of interest groups

In 2014, interest groups in Montenegro had an average age of 11.5 years—the youngest in age of formation across the countries. In Macedonia the average age of associations was 14.5 years old. Somewhat older were associations in Serbia, at 19.5 years. Page | 11

Between 20 and 23% of the interest groups across the countries were established in the first decade of pluralism (1990–1999), while around half of the respondents are relatively new associations established between 2000 and 2009 (Table 2). In addition, 20.8% of associations in Montenegro, 17.6% of associations in Macedonia and 12.7% of associations in Serbia were only formed in the last four years (2010 or later). This finding suggests that the populations of interest groups in these democracies are rather dynamic and that the number of organizations which appear and then cease to operate after a short period of time might be rather high.

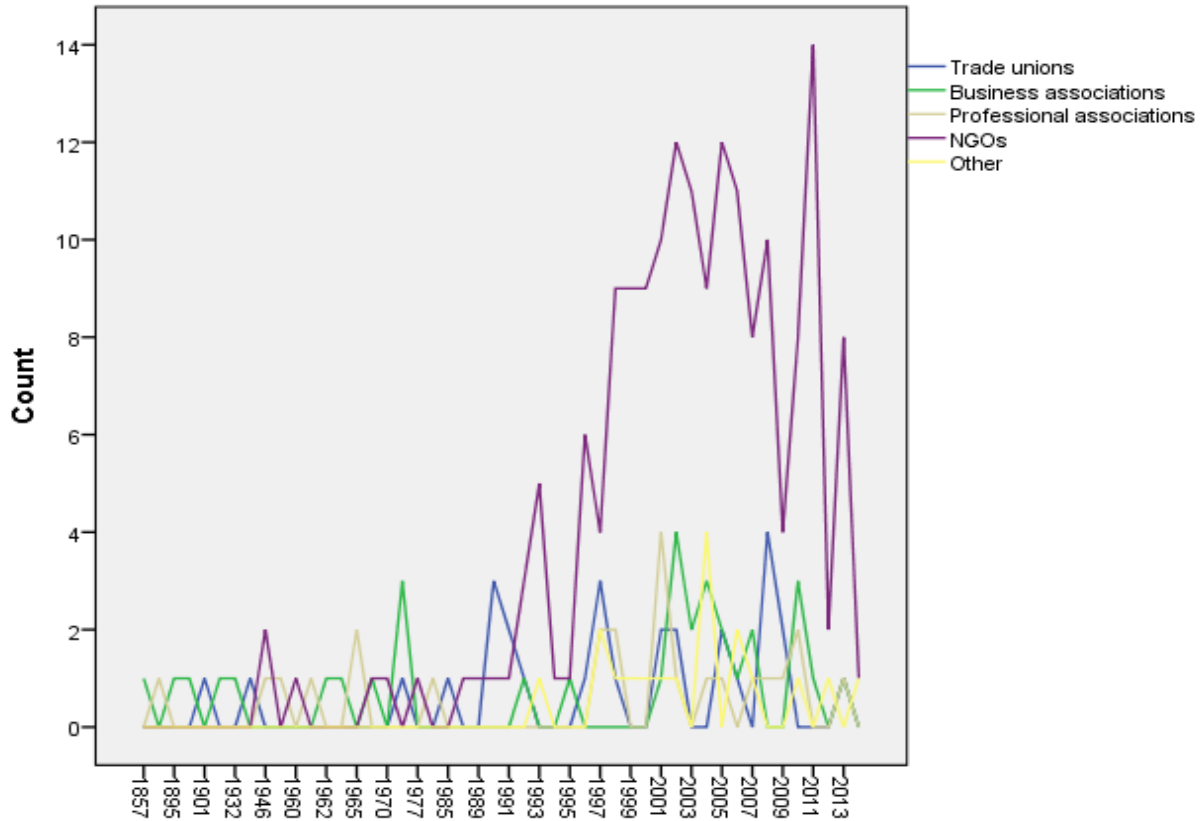
Table 2. Year of establishment of associations (%)

Year of establishment	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia
1850-1899	-	-	3.2
1900-1945	2	1.9	0.8
1946-1989	6.8	1.9	11.1
1990-1999	23.6	22.6	20.6
2000-2009	50	52.8	51.6
2010-2014	17.6	20.8	12.7
Total	100	100	100

11.1% of associations in Serbia, 6.8% of associations in Macedonia and 1.9% of associations in Montenegro were established during the communist period between 1945 and 1989. These include some professional associations, (regional) chambers of commerce, social associations, environmental organizations, etc.

Four per cent of associations in Serbia and around 2% of associations in Macedonia and Montenegro were formed between 1850 and 1945. Among the oldest associations of the respondents and the national population datasets are chambers of commerce and professional associations such as medical doctors' and engineers' associations. The graph below shows the years of establishment of associations by group type.

Year of establishment of associations by group type



Membership

The great majority of respondents (91%) are membership-based. Associations without members include some NGOs, think tanks and foundations. 74.8% of respondents have individuals as members, while 24.6% have companies as members and 30.9% have other associations as members.

Associations are rather small in terms of membership. For example, when trade unions are removed, only 11.9% of associations with individuals as members have more than 500 members. 45.8% of associations which have companies as members have more than 100 companies as members and 27.1% have more than 500 companies as members.

Staff

Close to 70% of associations in Macedonia, 64.8% of associations in Serbia and 62.5% of associations in Montenegro employ staff. And while 93.5% of business associations and 88.9%

of think tanks have employees, other types of groups employ staff on a smaller scale: 65.5% of trade unions, 59% of NGOs and 50% of professional associations indicated that they employ staff.

The mean number of staff of associations in the three countries is 8.17, while the median is 4 (there are several outliers in each country). Macedonian associations are somewhat smaller in terms of staff, with a median staff of 4, while Montenegrin and Serbian groups have an average of 5 employees.

Trade unions are the smallest in terms of staff: in Montenegro they have only 1 employee, while Macedonian and Serbian trade unions have 3 employed staff on average. Professional associations in Serbia have 4 employed staff, while those in Macedonia have 3 and those in Montenegro have 1.5. NGOs in Montenegro have an average of 6 employees, NGOs in Serbia an average of 5 and NGOs in Macedonia an average of 4. Think tanks have a median of 7 employed staff in Macedonia, 5 in Montenegro and 3 in Serbia. Business associations employ 7.5 staff in Serbia, and 4 in Montenegro and Macedonia.

Volunteers

71.2% of respondents in Macedonia rely on volunteers in their work. 100% of professional associations and 85.3% of NGOs have made use of volunteers in the last 3 years, followed by 66.7% of think tanks and 60% of trade unions. Only 21.1% of business groups have volunteers among their staff. Trade unions have the highest number of volunteers, with 40 on average. NGOs have an average of 13.5 volunteers. Business associations and professional associations have an average of 10 volunteers while think tanks have an average of 4 volunteers.

A slightly higher number of associations in Montenegro have volunteers, at 76.8%. All trade unions and 89.7% of NGOs rely on volunteer work. This number is smaller for professional and business associations: 55.6% and 44.4% respectively. The median number of volunteers is 10, with trade unions having 15 volunteers on average, followed by NGOs, with 10 and business associations with 9. Professional associations have a median of 5 volunteers.

A significantly higher number of associations in Serbia rely on volunteers, at 85.3%. Here 97.6% of NGOs, 83.3% of think tanks and 80% of professional associations have volunteers, compared with 69.2% of trade unions and 44.4% of business associations. The median number of volunteers in Serbia is 12, with NGOs having 15 volunteers, business associations having 10.5, trade unions having 8, think tanks having 6 and professional associations having 3 volunteers.

Offices

92.8% of associations in Macedonia, 83.6% of associations in Serbia and 75% of associations in Montenegro have offices. Across types of groups, between 89–100% of trade unions, business associations and think tanks in all three countries possess office space. The percentage of groups with office space is lower for professional associations and citizen associations. This is especially the case in Serbia and Montenegro, where no more than 66.7% of professional associations and 65.5% of NGOs in Montenegro, and 70% of professional associations in Serbia have office space.

Budget

The associations surveyed are also rather small in terms of budget, with some differences across counties. Macedonian associations appear to be somewhat better endowed with financial resources. While 40.3% of all respondents in Montenegro and 32% of respondents in Serbia have an annual budget of less than 10 000 €, in Macedonia this figure is 25%.

29.6% of associations in Serbia, 27.2% of associations in Macedonia and 18.9% of associations in Montenegro have larger budgets of more than 100,000 Euros.

Table 3. Budget of associations (%)

	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia
Up to 5000 €	16.2	28.3	23.2
5000- 9999 €	9.1	11.3	8.8
10 000- 49 999 €	22.2	26.4	22.4
50 000- 99 9999 €	25.3	15.1	16
100 000- 499 999 €	24.2	17	27.2
More than 500 000 €	3	1.9	2.4
Total	100	100	100

There are no striking differences across the different types of groups in terms of budget. For example, business associations and NGOs can be both small and large in terms of budget. Similar is the case with trade unions and professional associations. Think tanks, in contrast, tend to be better endowed with financial resources. Umbrella associations, unsurprisingly, have the biggest budgets.

A closer look at the sources of funding reveals differences across types of groups and countries. Around half of respondents in all three countries are financed by membership fees. But while between 80 and 100% of trade unions, business groups and professional associations in all

three countries are financed by membership fees, these percentages are far lower when it comes to NGOs: 40% in Macedonia, 30% in Serbia and as low as 14% in Montenegro.

Between 68% and 78% of business associations and 40% of professional associations are financed by the provision of services to their members, compared to 10% and 15% of trade unions and around 13% of citizen associations in Macedonia and Serbia. While the situation is similar with regard to business groups, in Montenegro not a single professional association or trade union, and only 6.9% of citizens associations, are funded in this way.

Table 4. Sources of income (%)

	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia
Membership fee	53.2	48.2	49.6
Payments for services to members	23.4	16.1	24.8
Income from own products and services	27	17.9	29.5
Funds from public sources	34.2	58.9	59.7
Funds from private sources	35.1	44.6	43.4
Funds from EU sources	55.9	39.3	54.3
Funds from other foreign sources	73	46.4	51.9
Other	3.6	5.4	6.2

Percentage of groups funded by specific kinds of funds

Macedonian associations rely more heavily on foreign funding as compared to associations in Montenegro and Serbia, which receive a higher proportion of national funding. As many as 73% of respondents in Macedonia receive funds from foreign sources (other than the EU) and 56% use some kind of EU funds. In Montenegro, 45.5% of groups receive foreign sources other than EU funds, and 38.2% of organizations use EU funds; 54.3% of associations in Serbia use EU funds and 51.9% use funds from other foreign sources.

Approximately 60% of groups in Montenegro and Serbia receive funds from domestic public sources, and 45.5% and 43.4% respectively receive donations from the private sector. These percentages are lower in Macedonia: 34.2% for domestic public sources and 35.1% from domestic private sources.

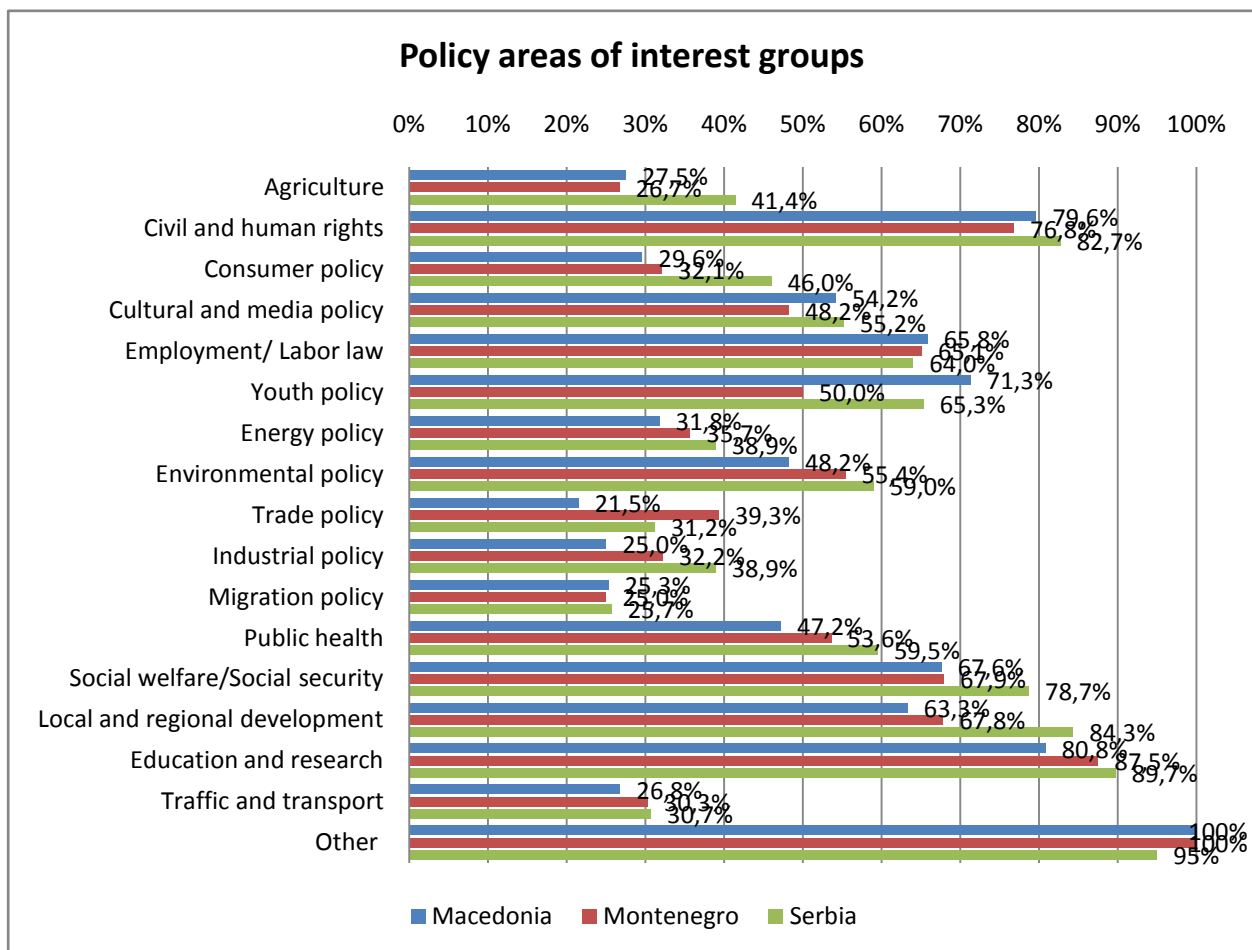
Fewer interest groups rely on resources from selling their products and services. Other funding is received from individuals, churches and volunteers.

Policy areas in which groups operate

The majority of interest groups are active in the areas of education and research and civil and human rights: in all three countries around 80% of associations consider these policy areas important or very important for their activities. Social welfare/social security, local and regional development and employment policy also attract a considerable amount of lobbying: around 65% or more of associations consider these areas important or very important for their activities. Interest groups in Macedonia and Serbia are also active in the area of youth policy.

The lowest level of activity takes place in the areas of migration and asylum policy, traffic and transport policy, trade policy, industrial policy, agriculture, and consumer policy.

Other policy areas mentioned by the groups surveyed include specific human rights issues and various aspects of democratization, including ethnic and minority rights, good governance, civil society development, combating corruption, decentralization, security, feminism, Roma rights, European integration, disability issues, tourism, tax policy and others.



Trade unions report a high level of activity in a considerable number of policy areas, including: social welfare, employment and labour laws, human rights, health, consumer policy, culture and media policy, youth policy, environment, industrial policy, education policy and local and regional development.

Business associations are also active in a significant number of policy areas, amongst which the highest level of activity occurs in the areas of agriculture, trade policy, industrial policy, employment policy, local and regional development and consumer policy. Business associations in Serbia are also very active in the areas of environment and social security.

Professional associations are active in a smaller number of policy areas, including human rights, cultural and media policy, employment, research, and local and regional development, with variations across the three countries.

NGOs are most active in the areas of human rights, education and research, social security, youth policy, and (in Serbia) local and regional development. Think tanks are especially active in the areas of education and research, human rights, local and regional development, as well as (in Serbia) in social security policy.

3. INTEREST GROUPS' ACTIVITIES

With regard to the various types of activities performed by interest groups, respondents were asked to indicate the proportion of time they spend on interest representation, services to members, research and other activities as a percentage of their overall activity. According to their responses, interest groups devote 39.5% of their time to interest representation, 35.7% to services for their members, 18.9% to research, and 6.9% to other activities. Other activities include writing project applications, monitoring, participation at seminars and conferences, cooperation with other associations, etc.

There is some variation across countries and types of groups with regard to the mentioned activities of groups (only the results for interest representation are shown in more detail). Interest groups in **Macedonia** devote around 40.44% of their time to interest representation. Business associations spend 48.42% of their time lobbying, followed by trade unions which spend 44.9% of their time on interest representation. Professional associations and NGOs spend slightly less of their time lobbying, at 41% and 40% respectively, while think tanks spend significantly less time on interest representation, at 24.2%.

In **Montenegro** groups spend slightly more time on interest representation than groups in Macedonia, i.e. 44.21% of their time on average. Here trade unions are most active in interest representation (56.7%), followed by professional associations (51%). Business associations and NGOs spend a similar amount of time on interest representation, at around 42%.

In **Serbia** interest groups spend on average a somewhat lower share of their time lobbying, at 36.67%, and slightly more time on other activities, at 9.2%. Business groups devote half of their overall activity to lobbying (51.5%), followed by trade unions (45.83%), while other types of groups spend less time on interest representation: NGOs at 35.1%, professional associations at 25.1%, while think tanks are least engaged in interest representation, spending about 15% of their time on interest representation.

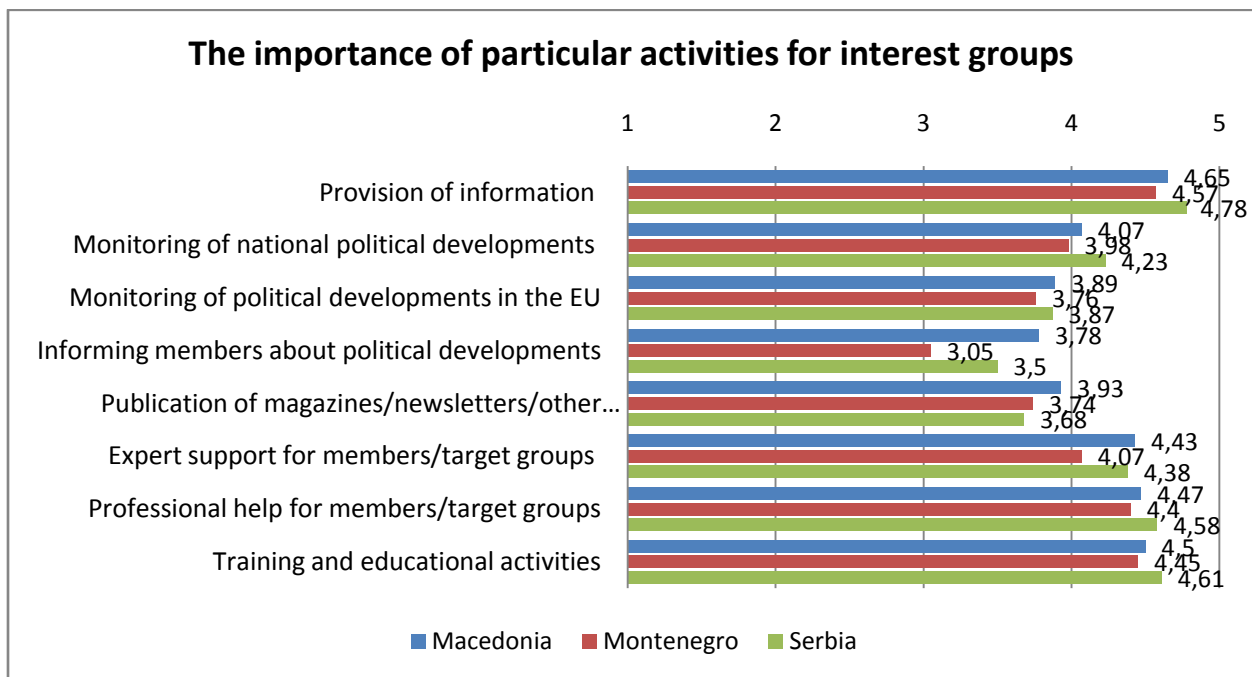
Trade unions and professional associations spend somewhat more of their time on the provision of services than do business groups (except in Montenegro), NGOs (except in Macedonia), and especially think tanks. In contrast, think tanks spend more of their time on research: as much as 63% of their time in Serbia and close to 40% in Macedonia.

Provision of services for members

The next question focuses on the various services that interest groups provide for their members. Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of several types of activities for

their organizations, including: providing information; monitoring national and EU-level political developments in their areas of activity; informing members about political developments; publishing magazines, newsletters or other publications; providing expert support for members/target groups; providing professional help; and training and educational activities.

The results show that **provision of information** is the most important activity for interest groups: on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is “not important at all” and 5 is “very important”, the average score is close to the maximum of 5 in all three countries. Various types of support for members or target groups, such as the **provision of expert support, professional help, and training and educational activities**, follow closely the scores for provision of information. **Publication of magazines/news letters or other publications** is also important, especially in Macedonia. **Informing members about political developments** is least important, especially in Montenegro.



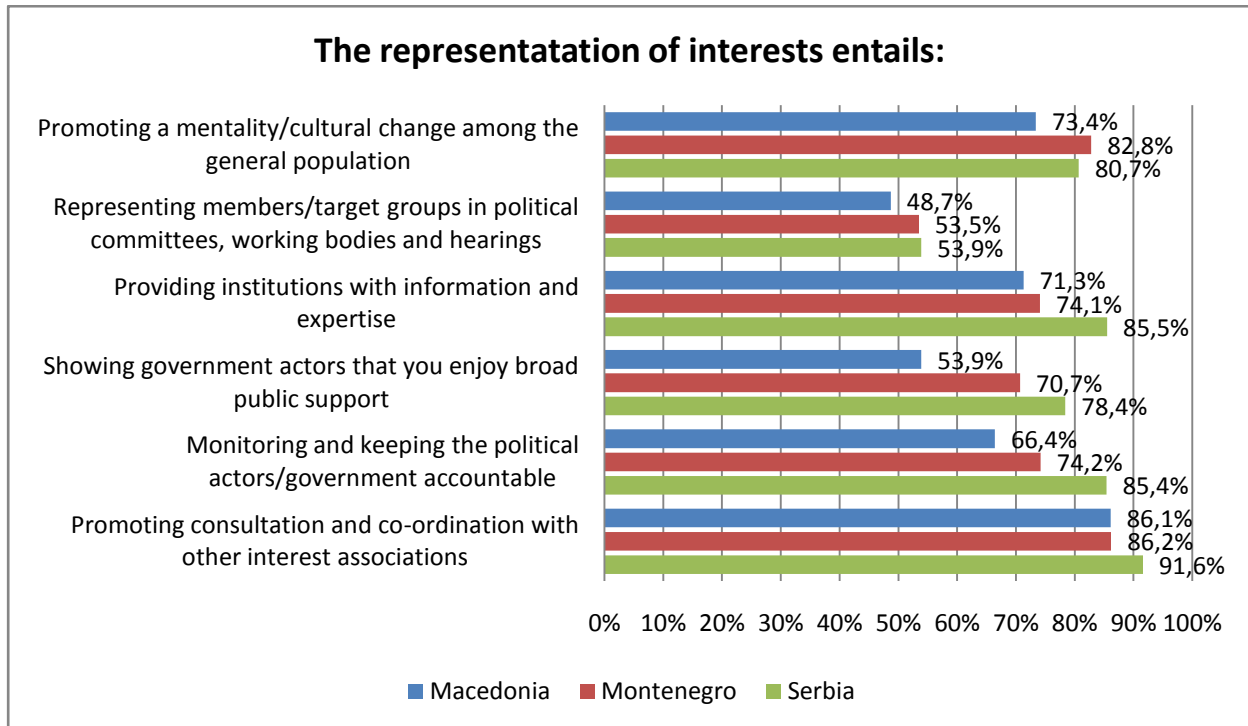
There is some variation among types of groups. In **Macedonia**, the **monitoring of national political developments** is most important for think tanks (M=4.9), followed by professional associations (M=4.4), trade unions (M=4.2), NGOs (M=4), and is slightly less important for business associations (M=3.74). **Publication of magazines, newsletters or other publications** is of greater importance for professional associations (M=4.6), think tanks (M=4.4) and business groups (M=4.21) than for citizen associations (M=3.79) and trade unions (M=3.6).

What does interest representation entail?

Turning to interest representation, interest groups were asked about what interest representation entails for them. They indicated their agreement (on the mentioned scale from 1 to 5) with several statements defining interest representation, as follows: promoting a mentality/cultural change among the general population; representing members in political committees, working bodies and hearings; providing institutions with information and expertise; showing government actors that they enjoy broad public support; monitoring and keeping government actors accountable; and promoting consultation and coordination with other interest groups.

Promoting coordination and consultation with other interest groups is the closest descriptor of what interest groups in these countries consider to be interest representation. Around 86% of respondents in Macedonia and Montenegro, and 91.6% of respondents in Serbia, agree or strongly agree with this statement. In Serbia a high number of associations (around 85%) also relate interest representation to **monitoring and keeping the government accountable to the public** and **providing institutions with technical information and expertise**. In Montenegro and Macedonia, **promoting a mentality/cultural change** among the general population is the second most acceptable definition of interest representation: 73.4% and 82.6% of respondents respectively agree or strongly agree with this statement. Relying on **public opinion** to show public support for interest groups is more commonly accepted as a descriptor by interest groups in Serbia (78.4%) and Montenegro (70.7%) than it is by interest groups in Macedonia (53.9%).

In all three countries there is least agreement with the statement which is considered to be a classic interest group activity in the literature, i.e., **representing members in political committees, working bodies and hearings**. Only 48% of groups in Macedonia and around 53% of groups in Montenegro and Serbia agree or strongly agree with this statement.



There is small variation across types of groups. In **Macedonia** there are differences with regard to **monitoring and keeping political actors/government accountable** and **promoting cooperation with other interest groups**. Think tanks and NGOs associate the first activity with interest representation more (the mean on a scale from 1 to 5, is M=4.3 and M= 4.1, respectively) than do trade unions (M=3.4), professional associations (M=3.4) and business groups (M=3.26). **Promoting cooperation and consultation** with other interest groups is more widely agreed upon as an acceptable descriptor for NGOs (M=4.42) and think tanks (M=4.2) than it is for professional associations (M=4), trade unions (M=3.9) and business associations (M=3.89), although the differences are small.

In **Montenegro**, **promoting a mentality/cultural change** is considered closer to the definition of interest representation for NGOs (M=4.4) than it is for professional associations (M=4.11), trade unions (M=4) and business associations (M= 3.8). Again, the differences are small.

4. INTEREST GROUPS AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Interest groups can be active at several levels of government, including at subnational, national and international levels. Since the countries included in this research are small, I anticipated that their activity would mainly focus on national and subnational levels. Indeed, the results show that in all three countries the national level of governance is the most important, closely followed by the local level of government. However, more than 75% of groups in all three countries also consider the EU level important, while 67% of groups in Macedonia, 74% of groups in Serbia and 76% of groups in Montenegro consider the international level important or very important for their activities.

Table 5. Importance of different levels of government (%)

	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia
Local level	81.7	81	81
National level	90.4	89.6	90.7
European (EU) level	74.8	81	77.9
International level	67.8	75.8	74.1

While there is very small variation with regard to the importance of the national level of government across countries and types of groups, there are some differences when it comes to other levels. In **Macedonia**, the EU level is somewhat less important to NGOs (69% of NGOs consider this level important or very important for their activity) as compared with the other types of groups, and the international level is least important for think tanks (50%) and NGOs (63.5%). In **Serbia** the EU level is least important for professional associations (70%), while the international level is least important for business groups (58.2%).

On the other hand, the local level of government is especially important for NGOs and think tanks. In **Macedonia**, 90% of think tanks, 87.5% of NGOs, and 80% of professional associations consider this level important, compared to 68.4% of business associations and 60% of trade unions. In **Montenegro**, local level government is least important for professional associations (66.6%). In **Serbia** the local level of governance is more important for NGOs (85.8%), think tanks (83.4%) and business associations (83.3%) than it is for trade unions (76.9%) and notably more so than it is for professional associations (40%).

Contacts with institutions

The next question is about the frequency of interest groups' contacts with: the executive branch of government (both the high/ministerial level and the working level of government);

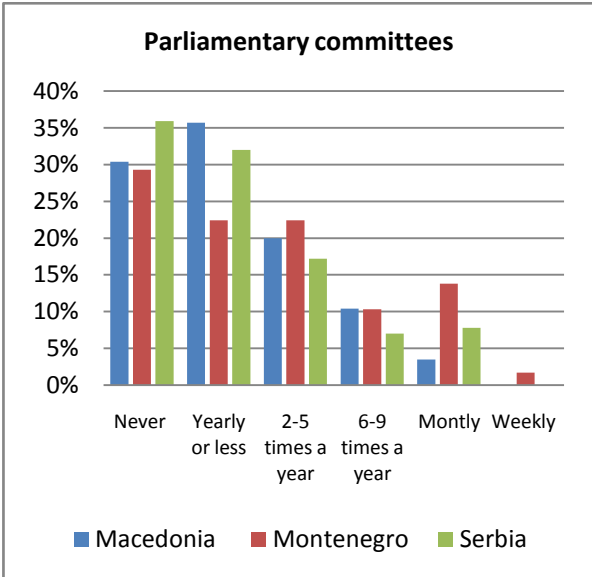
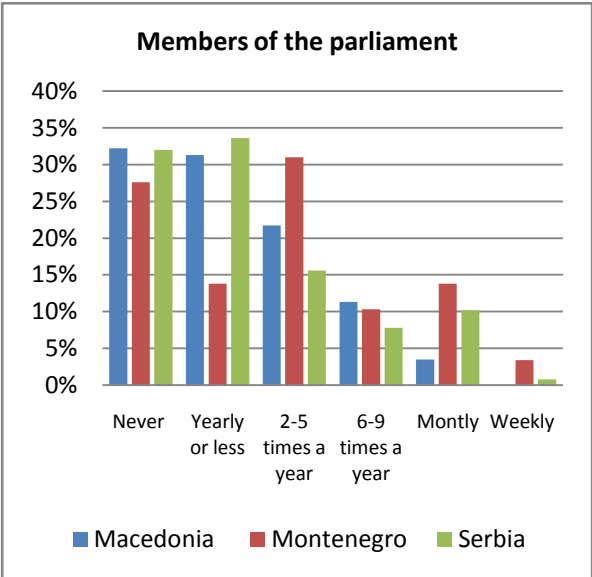
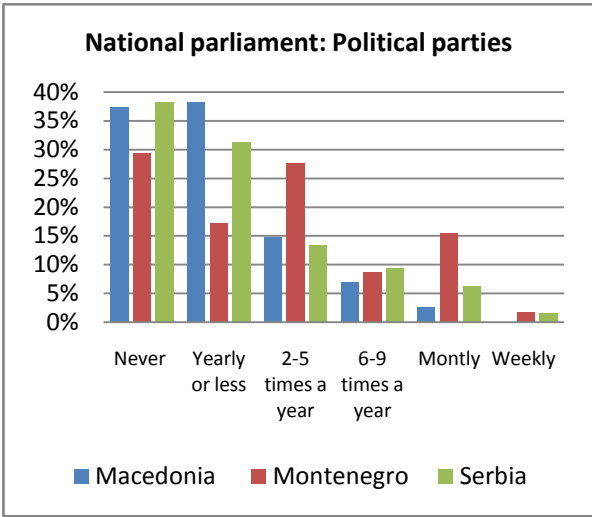
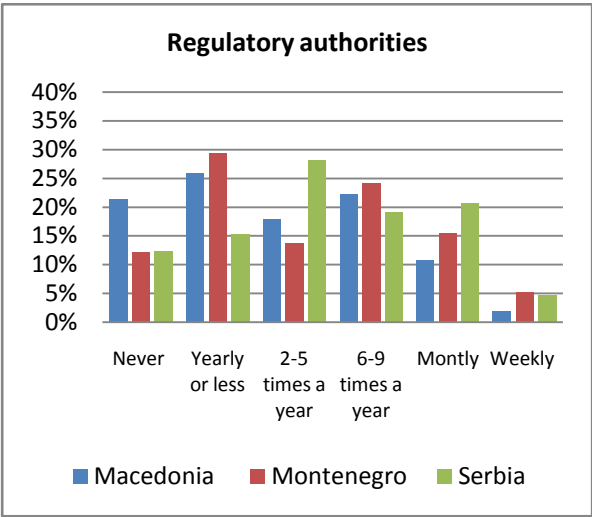
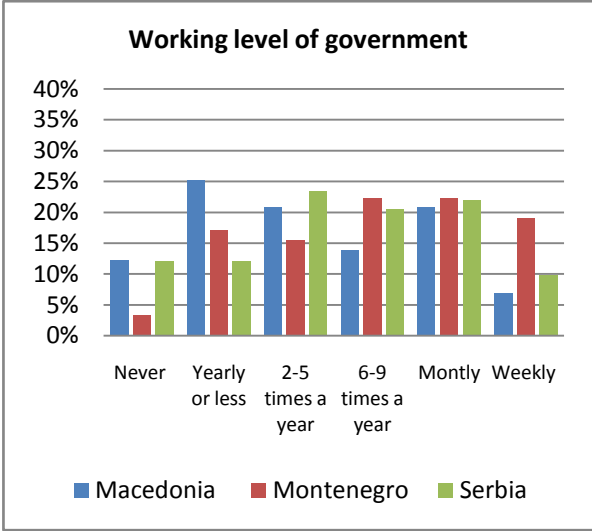
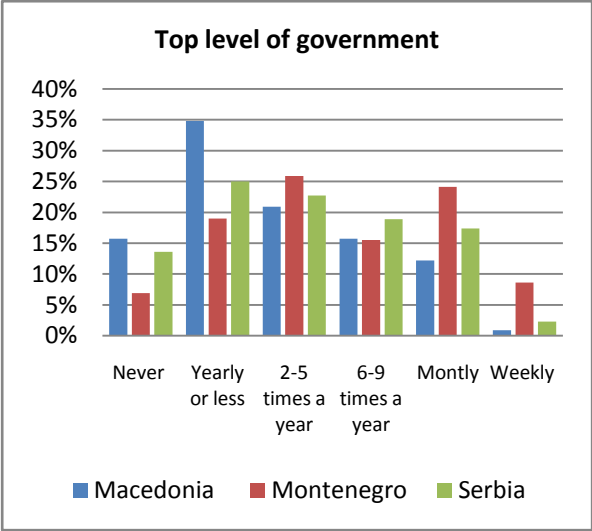
national parliaments (political parties in the parliament, individual members of the parliament and parliamentary committees); national regulatory agencies; and local-self government institutions. Groups were also invited to name other institutions with which they are in contact. Among those often mentioned are courts, public funds and national Ombudsmen.

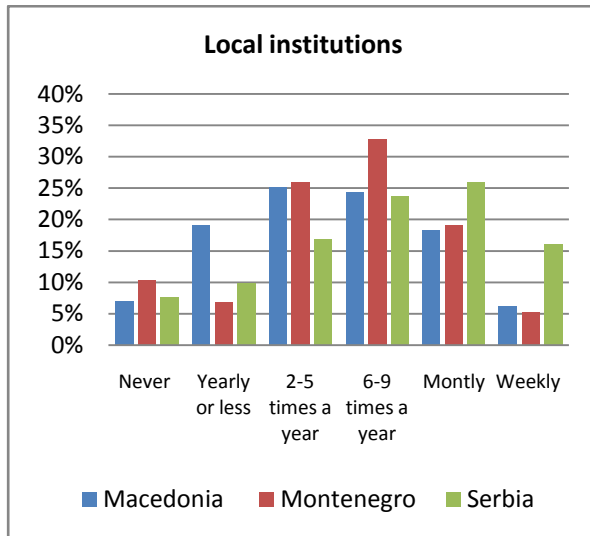
The research results show that, across countries, Macedonian interest groups have the lowest frequency of contacts with all the institutions listed above, while Montenegrin interest groups have comparatively better access to institutions. In all three countries, interest groups are most often in contact with **local-self government institutions**. In Serbia, 42% of associations have frequent (monthly or weekly) contacts with local institutions. In Macedonia and Montenegro this is the case with around 24% of respondents. In addition, 32.8% of groups in Montenegro, 24.3% of groups in Macedonia, and 23.7% of groups in Serbia have between 6 and 9 contacts per year with local institutions.

As for central institutions, the frequency of contacts is highest with executive institutions, more precisely with the working level of government, where most of the legislation is usually prepared. 41.4% of associations in Montenegro, 31.8% of respondents in Serbia, and 27.9% of respondents in Macedonia have frequent contacts (weekly or monthly) with the **working level of government**. Additionally, 22.4% of groups in Montenegro, 20.5% of groups in Serbia, and 13.9% of groups in Macedonia, reported having 6–9 contacts per year with the working level of government. 32.7% of groups in Montenegro, 19.7% of groups in Serbia, and 13.1% of groups in Macedonia have frequent contacts with the **top level of government**, and around 15% of groups in Macedonia and Montenegro, and 19% of groups in Serbia are in contact with the top level of government between 6–9 times per year.

In **Serbia**, 25.2% of associations have frequent contacts with **national regulatory authorities**, compared to 17.7% of associations in Montenegro and 12.5% in Macedonia.

Interest groups are least frequently in contact with **national parliaments**, without significant differences as to whether these be contacts with political parties, individual MPs or parliamentary committees. Groups in Montenegro have somewhat more frequent contacts with members of parliament, with 27.9% of groups having at least 6–9 contacts per year. This is the case with only 14.8% of groups in Macedonia and 18.8% of groups in Serbia. Similar is the case with contacts with political parties in parliament: 25.8% of groups in Montenegro, 17.2% of groups in Serbia and 9.6% of groups in Macedonia have 6 to 9 contacts per year or more.





In accordance with the results of previous research (Beyers, 2002; Dür and Mateo, 2012; Fraussen and Beyers, 2015), this report found variations across types of groups with regard to frequency of contacts with institutions. Business groups have the most frequent contacts with almost all political institutions, while NGOs have the lowest frequency of contacts, except in the case of local institutions. Trade unions and think tanks also tend to have good access to most institutions, while professional associations are sometimes close to business and at other times closer to NGOs. These differences are, however, smaller (and not statistically significant) in Montenegro. In addition, NGOs have no more contacts with parliaments than other types of groups; in fact business groups have better access to national parliaments than all other types of groups (though the differences are not statistically significant).

In **Macedonia**, statistically significant differences across group types are observed with regard to contacts with the **highest** and **working levels of government**, with **national regulatory agencies** and with **local institutions**. Business groups have better access to both government access points: on average 7.1 contacts per year with high-level government ministers and state secretaries, and 17.4 contacts per year with the working level of the executive. Trade unions also have good access to the high ministerial level of government (8.6 contacts per year), as well as with the working level of government (13.4 contacts per year). Professional associations also have good access to the working level of government (M=9.3) and to the top level of government (M=5). Think tanks on average have 3.8 contacts per year with the highest level of government and 5.7 contacts per year with the working level of government. Citizen associations have the lowest level of access: M=2.8 to the top level of government, and M=5.2 to the working level.

Think tanks have the best access (M=16.9) to the **local level of government**, followed by professional associations (M=12), NGOs (M=8.7), business (M=4.2), and trade unions (M=2.1).

With regard to contacts with **national regulatory agencies**, professional associations have better access, with 15 contacts on average per year. Think tanks have 6.3 contacts per year and business associations 6.1 contacts per year. NGOs have 4 contacts per year, and trade unions have only 1.45 contacts per year with national regulatory agencies.

In **Serbia**, business associations and trade unions have more frequent contacts (13 and 10 per year on average, respectively) with the **top level of government** than do think tanks (M=4.7), NGOs (M=3.9) and professional associations (M=3.2). Business associations and trade unions also have better access to the **working level of government** (23.5 and 16.5 contacts per year respectively), followed by professional associations (M=9.4), while NGOs and think tanks have a lower frequency of contacts at 6.8 and 6.6 contacts per year respectively.

There are also differences with regard to contacts with **national regulatory authorities**. Business groups have the most frequent contacts, 18.3 per year, followed by think tanks (M=6.6), trade unions (M=6), NGOs (M=5.8), and professional associations (M=4.3).

Business groups in Serbia also have the most frequent contacts with **local institutions**, having 26.8 contacts per year, followed by NGOs and think tanks, having 13.8 and 13.9 contacts per year respectively. Trade unions and professional associations have 4.5 and 3.9 contacts per year respectively.

Difficulty of access

The next question is about the degree of difficulty that interest groups experience when trying to contact national institutions. The respondents indicated their difficulty of access on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is 'not at all difficult', 2 is 'slightly difficult', 3 is 'difficult', 4 is 'very difficult' and 5 is 'extremely difficult'.

The results show that for **Macedonian** interest groups access is most difficult to government/ministries (M=2.87), although the mean averages for access to national parliament (M=2.7) and regulatory agencies (M=2.55) are just slightly lower and are inclined to 'difficult' on the 5-point scale. Access to local institutions is rated as 'slightly difficult' (the mean is close to 2).

It is somewhat easier for interest groups to access institutions in **Montenegro**. The difficulty of access to local institutions is the same as in Macedonia, while the mean for access to other institutions is around 2.35, i.e., between 'slightly difficult' and 'difficult' on the 5-point scale.

Serbian interest groups experience the greatest difficulty in gaining access to institutions. Access to national parliament is rated the most difficult (M=3.21) and is closely followed by access to the executive (M=3.09). The difficulty of access to regulatory agency inclines towards 'difficult' (M=2.57), while access to local institutions (M=2.35) is closer to 'slightly difficult'.

Table 6. Difficulty of access to institutions

	Macedonia		Montenegro		Serbia	
	No contacts	M (1-5)	No contacts	M (1-5)	No contacts	M (1-5)
Government/Ministries	10.5%	2.84	5.2%	2.36	12.2%	3.09
National parliament	15.8%	2.7	12.1%	2.35	20.2%	3.21
Regulatory/executive agencies	14%	2.55	15.5%	2.35	13%	2.57
Local self-government institutions	4.4%	1.94	3.4%	1.95	3%	2.35

The biggest differences across types of groups in terms of access are observed in **Macedonia**. Access to **government/ministries** is most difficult for think tanks (M=3.3) and citizen associations (M=3.18), followed by trade unions (M=2.44). Business (M=2.06) and professional associations (M=1.40) experience the lowest level of difficulty of access. Surprisingly, access to **national parliament** is also most difficult for NGOs (M=3.02). Such access is also difficult for think tanks (M=2.75) and trade unions (M=2.62), while business groups (M=1.82) and again professional associations (M=1.75) experience the least difficulty of access. **National regulatory authorities** are again more difficult to access for NGOs (M=2.84), trade unions (M=2.43) and think tanks (M=2.4) than for business (M=1.88) and professional associations (M=1.5).

In **Montenegro**, access to national government is somewhat easier for business groups, though the differences are not very great.

In **Serbia**, **access to national government** is most difficult for NGOs (M=3.32) and think tanks (M=3), followed by professional associations (M=2.86) and business groups (M=2.78), while trade unions have only 'slight difficulty' of access (M=2.33).

Participation in the work of national institutions

While consultation of interest groups in the policy-making process is not a normative demand in the literature and is sometimes even considered detrimental to democracy (Grant and Maloney, 2007), in the unconsolidated/new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe there is actually pressure on national governments to consult various interest groups in the preparation of public policy. These demands are mainly imposed by the international organizations which these countries aspire to join (the EU, most noticeably), and, to a lesser extent, by international organizations from which they receive some kind of developmental aid. They are openly welcomed and often used by interest groups in the respective countries. This is also changing in the West, in contemporary neo-corporatist policy-making (Binderkrantz and Christiansen, 2015). In this sense, another indicator of the good insider position of interest groups is that of taking part in the work of national institutions. Thus respondents were asked if they were part of any kind of advisory or permanent working body within domestic institutions, and how often they take part in the work of parliamentary committees.

No less than 53.4% of associations in Montenegro are members of these types of bodies. This is the case with 38.4% of associations in Serbia and 33.3% of associations in Macedonia.

Table 7. Participation in advisory/working bodies within domestic institutions (%)

	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia
Yes	33.3	53.4	38.4
No	66.7	46.6	61.6
Total	100	100	100

Business associations tend to have more seats in advisory or permanent bodies within domestic institutions as compared to other types of associations, while professional associations hold fewer seats. No fewer than 80% of business associations in **Montenegro** are members of advisory bodies, a much higher percentage than is the case with trade unions (50%), citizen associations (46.7%) and professional associations (44%). In **Macedonia**, 47.4% of business groups have a seat in such bodies, compared to 31.4% of citizen associations, 30% of trade unions and think tanks, and 20% of professional associations. In **Serbia**, 62.5% of business groups are members of this type of bodies, compared with 37.6% of NGOs, 35.3% of trade unions, 33.3% of think tanks and only 10% of professional associations.

Although constitutional designs in these countries allow for the participation of interest groups in the work of parliamentary committees of national parliaments, this is not well developed in practice. 58% of associations in Macedonia and Montenegro and 65.1% of associations in Serbia have never taken part in the work of parliamentary committees within their national parliaments. The large majority of those groups which reported having taken part in such committees had only done so only a few times over the previous three years: 39.5% in Macedonia, 35.1% in Montenegro and 33.3% of groups in Serbia.

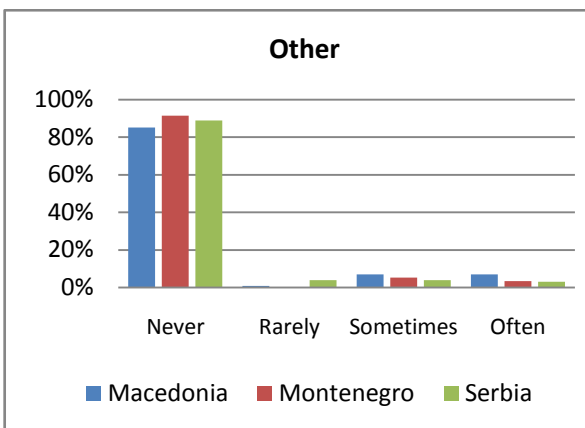
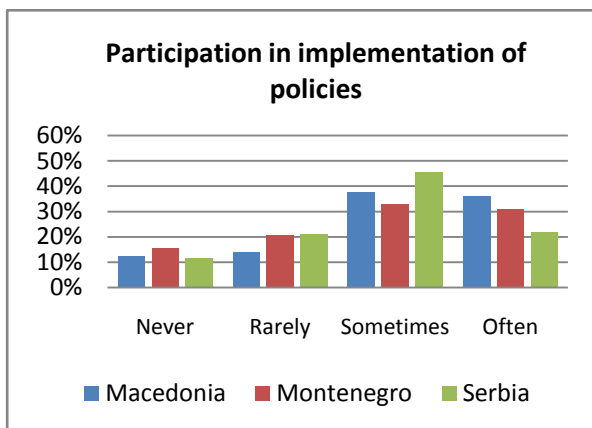
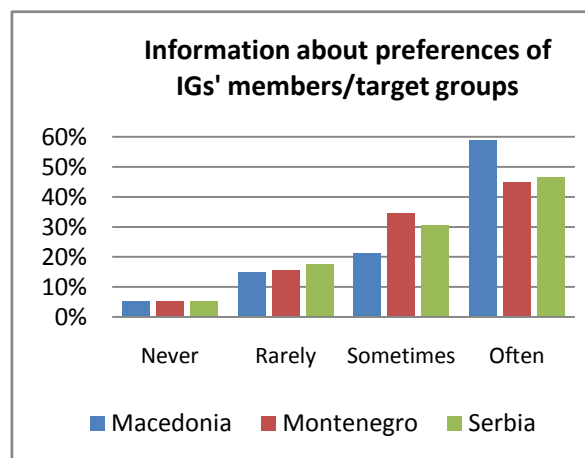
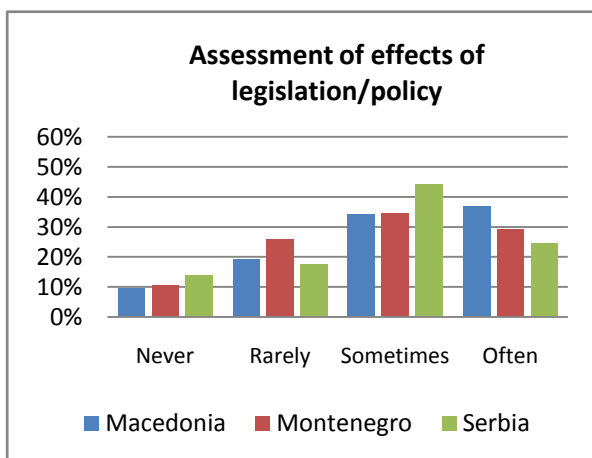
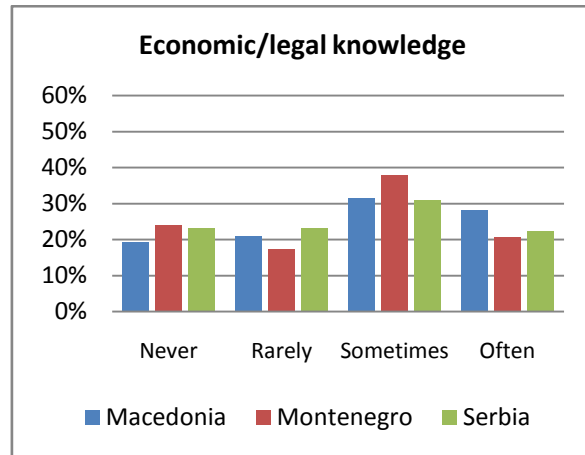
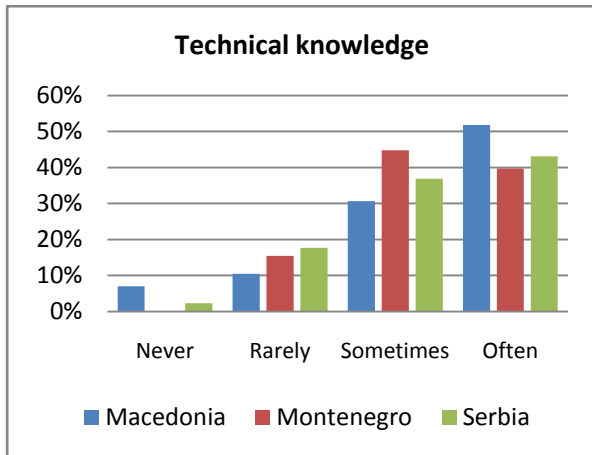
Table 8. Participation in the hearings of parliamentary committees over the last 3 years (%)

	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia
Never	57.9	57.9	65.1
Several times	39.5	35.1	33.3
Regularly	2.6	7	1.6
Total	100	100	100

60% of trade unions, 50% of think tanks and 47.4% of business associations in **Macedonia** have taken part in the work of parliamentary committees at least several times and are in a somewhat better position than other types of groups. This is also the case in **Montenegro**, with 70% of business associations having taken part in such committees, as compared to only 22.2% of professional associations. In **Serbia**, business associations are also more often invited to participate in the work of national parliament, with 43.8% of business associations having participated at least several times, in comparison to only 16.7% of think tanks.

Types of resources that interest groups provide to institutions

Interest groups provide a number of resources to political institutions, including the provision of technical information from their fields of expertise, political information (on the preferences of their memberships), as well as help in the implementation of policies. The research results show that groups in all three countries most frequently provide both technical information (**technical knowledge from their area of expertise**) and political information (information about the **preferences of their members/target groups**) to political institutions. Interest groups in Macedonia also provide **assessments of the effects of legislation/policy** and **participate in the implementation of policies** somewhat more often than is the case with interest groups in Serbia and Montenegro.



In **Macedonia**, around 80% of trade unions, business and professional associations provide economic or legal expertise at least some of the time, compared to 48% of NGOs and 60% of think tanks. Help in the implementation of policies is also less frequently provided by NGOs (67.2%) and think tanks (60%) than by the other types of groups, although the percentage is already high. NGOs least frequently provide assessments of the effects of policies/legislation,

while think tanks least frequently provide information on the preferences of their membership/target groups.

In **Montenegro**, technical/professional knowledge is less frequently provided by trade unions, although the percentage is rather high, with 66.7% at least sometimes providing this type of resource to political institutions. Economic/legal knowledge is least frequently provided by NGOs (36.6%).

In **Serbia**, trade unions (91.7%), business groups (77.7%) and think tanks (83.3%) provide economic/legal expert knowledge more often than NGOs (42.2%) and professional associations (40%). Information about the preferences of membership/target groups is somewhat less often provided by NGOs and think tanks (around 70%), compared to other groups. Assessments of the effects of legislation/policy is least frequently done by NGOs (58.3%), while professional associations least frequently take part in the implementation of policies (50%).

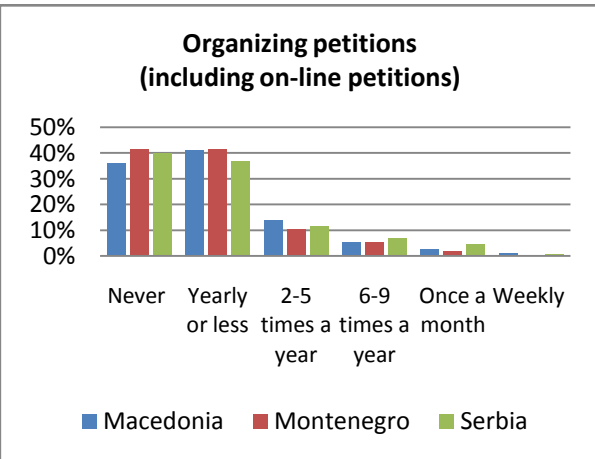
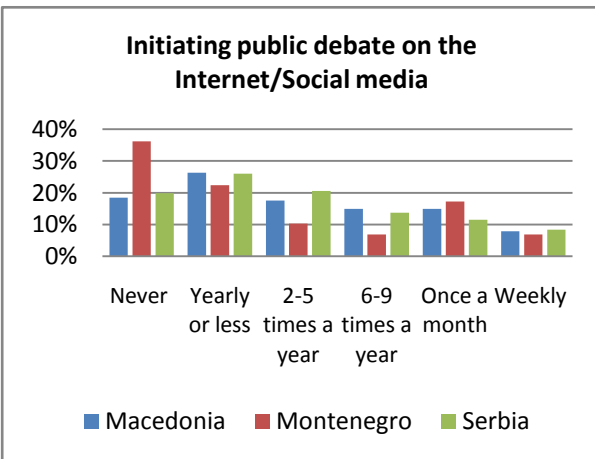
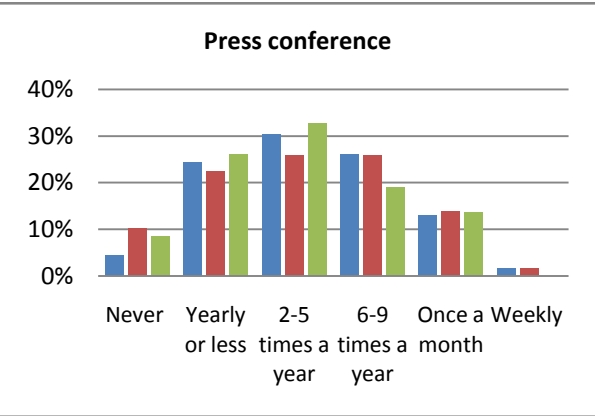
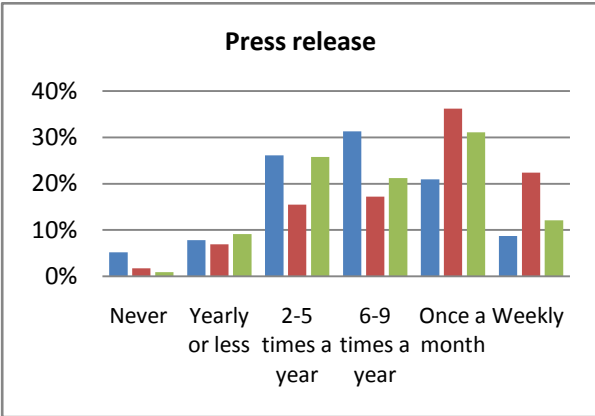
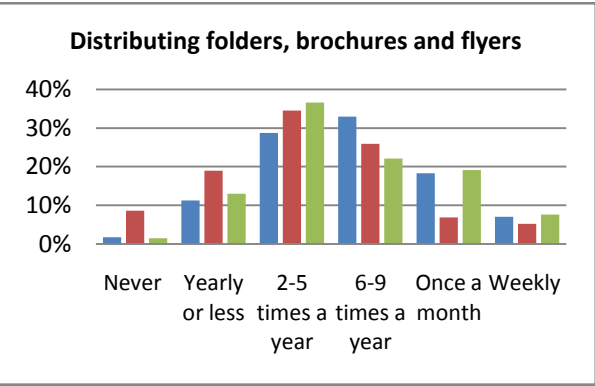
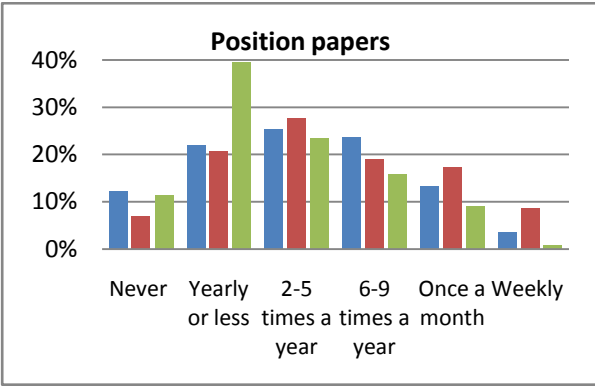
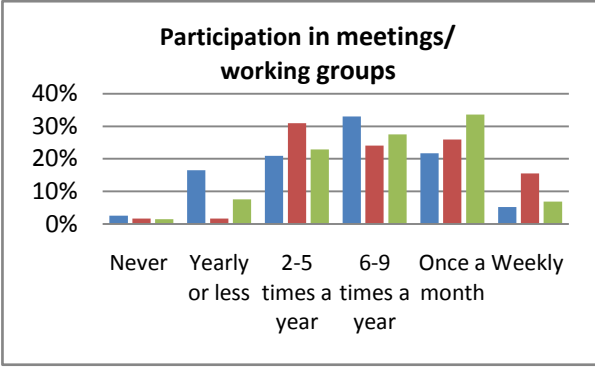
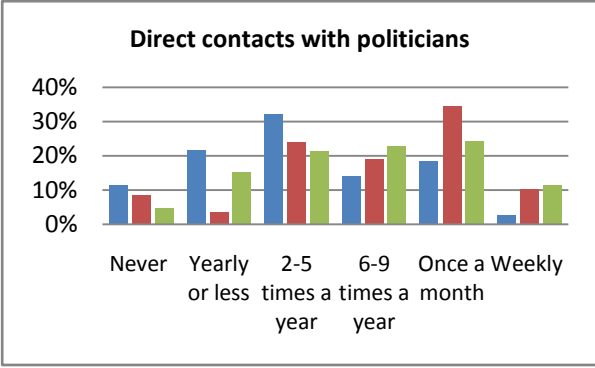
5. INTEREST GROUPS' STRATEGIES

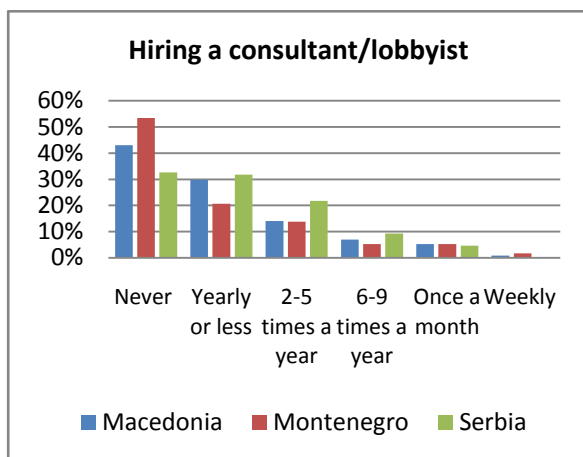
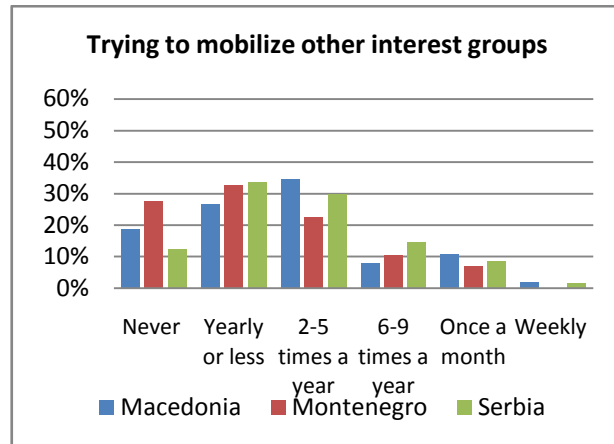
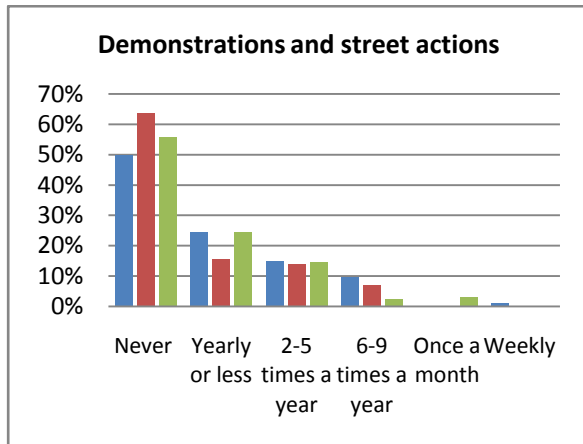
In their attempts to influence public policy, interest groups rely on various interest representation strategies/tactics. In the literature these tactics are often divided between inside and outside strategies. While inside strategies take place via more or less established (formal) channels, including direct contacts with policymakers and participation in committees and working bodies of institutions, outside strategies take the form of public campaigns, protests and street actions. Inside strategies are typically used by groups that have good access and working relations with institutions. Outside strategies, on the other hand, are sometimes used by interest groups due to difficulty of access and in order to signal their positions on specific issues to institutions through the public, to show their public support/mobilization power, or to raise the salience of particular issues (Kollman, 1998). Particular strategies/tactics are also often connected with particular types of interest groups: thus while business associations and, to some extent, trade unions, are considered to be well integrated into policy networks of national institutions, especially in neo-corporatist arrangements, NGOs and public interest groups often rely on outside strategies. Strikes are also a specific feature of the activity of trade unions.

One of the interesting findings of the survey is the approximately equal importance of inside and outside strategies for different interest groups in the three countries. This is especially the case in Macedonia. What is particularly interesting is that business groups are also frequent users of outside strategies, especially in Serbia, which is less typical of business associations in developed democracies.

The research results from this survey show that **distributing a press release** is the single-most frequently used outside strategy in all three countries. In Macedonia and Serbia, two other outside strategies **distributing folders, brochures or flyers**, as well as **organizing a press conference**, are also quite frequently used. However, in Montenegro and in Serbia, one classic inside strategy, **participation in meetings and working groups** organized by political institutions, is also frequently used, and this is certainly the case with **direct contacts with politicians**. **Position papers** are also quite frequently used, though these can be delivered to institutions using regular communication channels or by making them public.

Somewhat less frequently, groups **initiate debates on the internet/social media** or try to **mobilize other interest groups**. Lower frequency of use is also observed in **organizing petitions** and **hiring a consultant/lobbyist**. **Organizing or participating in protests**, one of the most radical lobbying strategies, is the least frequently used.





Some differences between types of groups noted in the literature on interest groups (Dür and Mateo, 2013) are also present in these countries. The lowest level of variation in the use of tactics across types of groups is in Macedonia. In Montenegro there is some variation in the use of some of the outside tactics which are more frequently used by NGOs and, to some extent, trade unions. In Serbia, NGOs use both important inside and outside strategies less frequently than other types of interest groups. These findings are summarized below.

In **Macedonia** there are no statistically significant differences across types of groups. When only business associations and NGOs are compared, only the difference in frequency of **initiating debate on the internet/social media** is statistically significant, being used on average 3.6 times per year by business associations and 9.1 times per year by NGOs.

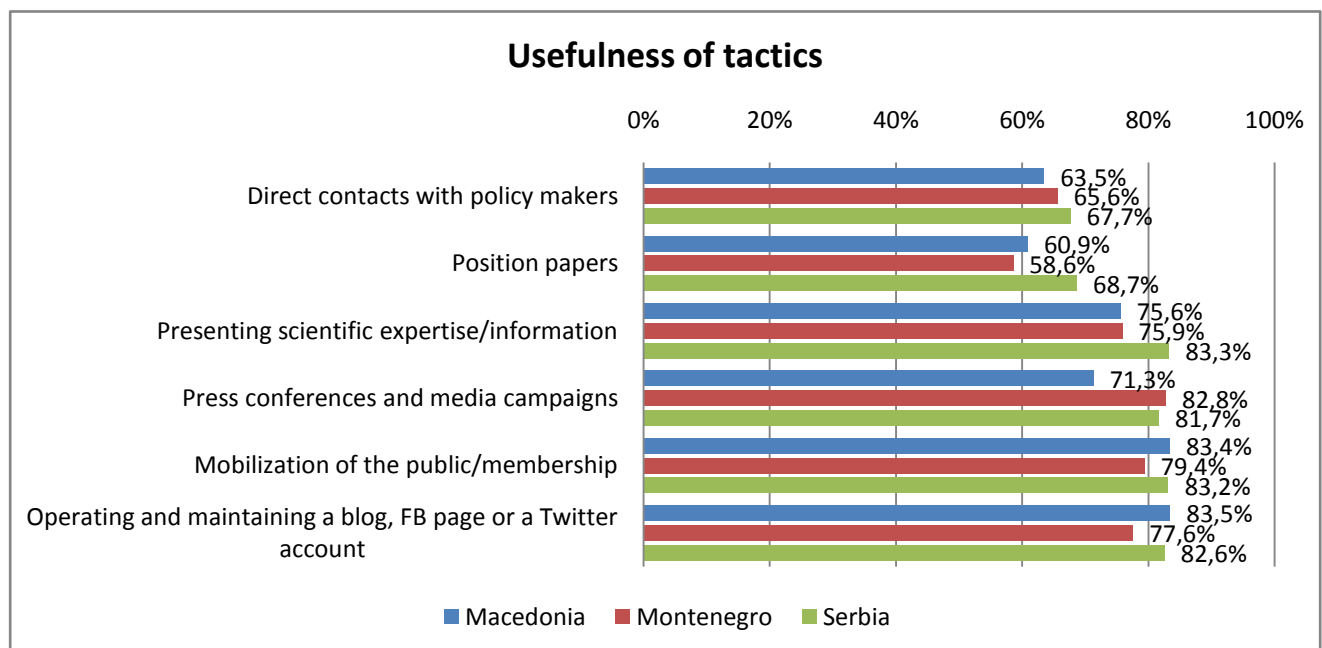
In **Montenegro**, trade unions and NGOs **organize or participate in demonstrations and street protests** approximately twice per year, while business and professional associations do not engage in this type of activity. With regard to the **mobilization of other interest groups**, this is done on average 4.3 times per year by NGOs, more so than other types of groups: trade unions (M=1.1), business groups (M=0.75) and professional associations (M=0.72).

In **Serbia**, business associations (M=19.4), think tanks (M=15.1), trade unions (M=13) and professional associations (M=11.4) more often **participate in meetings/working groups organized by political institutions** than do NGOs (M=7.8). **Organizing petitions** is more often done by trade unions, at 6.7 times per year, than by NGOs (M=2), think tanks (M=1.8), business (M=1.2) and professional associations (M=0.6). Similarly to Montenegro, trade unions are more involved in **organizing and participating in protests**, at 33.8 per year, than NGOs (M=1.3), think tanks (M=0.8), professional associations (M=0.3) and business associations, which almost never organize protests.

Usefulness of tactics

The next question is about the usefulness of several inside and outside strategies, as well as the usefulness of maintaining a social network profile. According to the results, outside strategies are not only frequently used by interest groups but are also found *somewhat more useful* in comparison to, for example, one of the most important inside tactics, that of direct contacts with policy-makers. However, **presenting expertise/information** to political institutions is considered equally as important as outside tactics, especially in Serbia and Montenegro.

Mobilization of the public/membership is considered useful or very useful by as many as 80% of respondents, closely followed by the usefulness of **press conferences and media campaigns**, which are especially useful in Serbia and Montenegro. **Social media** are also considered very useful, especially in Macedonia and Serbia. Across types of groups there are no significant differences.

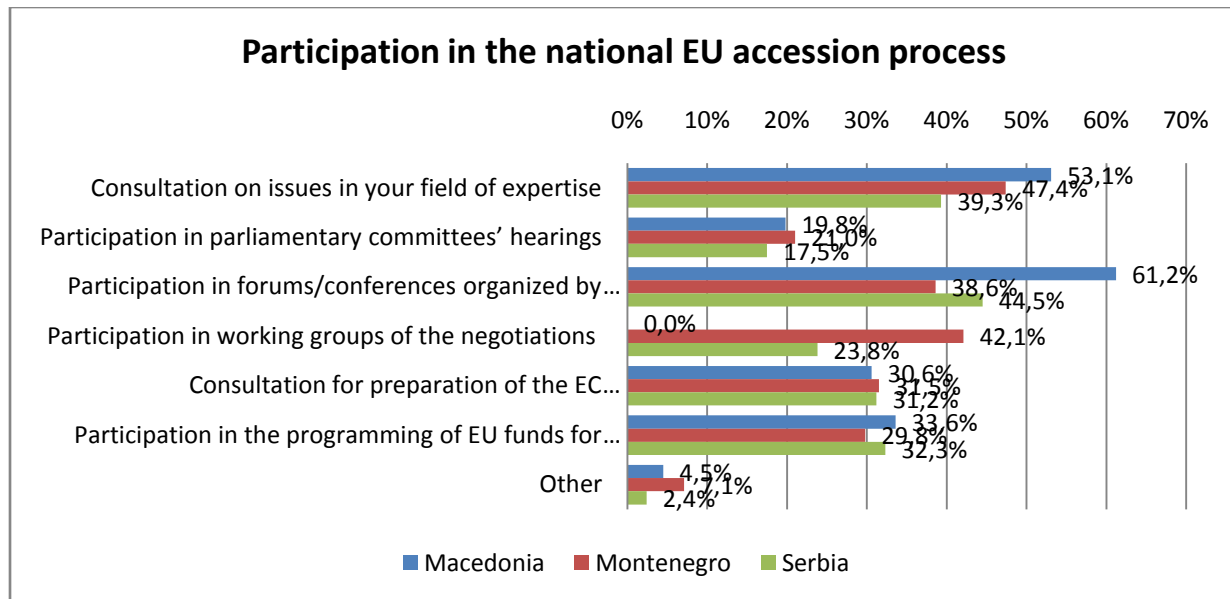


6. THE EUROPEANIZATION OF INTEREST GROUPS

The last section of the questionnaire assessed the extent of Europeanization of interest groups. In the context of EU accession, the Europeanization of interest groups was examined by looking at the level of their involvement in the EU accession processes of their respective countries, as well as by interest groups' EU-level activity, such as membership in EU-level associations, the types of activities performed in relation to that membership, contacts with EU institutions and presence in Brussels.

The first of this group of questions asked respondents whether, in the context of EU accession, interest groups: have been consulted by political institutions on issues falling within their areas of expertise; have participated in parliamentary committees' hearings; have participated in forums/conferences organized by political institutions; have participated in the working groups of negotiations (only for Serbia and Montenegro); have been consulted during the preparation of responses to the EC questionnaire; have participated in the programming of EU pre-accession funds; and other.

The results show that interest groups in Macedonia are somewhat more involved in the national EU accession process than are groups in Montenegro and Serbia, which is not surprising given that the EU accession process of Macedonia was initiated earlier than those of Montenegro and Serbia. In all three countries, **consultation on issues from their area of expertise** and **participation in forums/conferences organized by political institutions** are the most common forms of involvement by interest groups in the EU accession process. The level of involvement is quite considerable. 53.1% of groups in Macedonia, 47.4% of groups in Montenegro and 39.3% of groups in Serbia have sometimes or often been consulted on issues from their area of expertise in relation to the EU accession process. Also, 61.2% of groups in Macedonia, 38.6% of groups in Montenegro and 44.5% of groups in Serbia have **participated in forums/conferences organized by political institutions** in relation to the EU accession process. Around one third of groups have taken part in consultation on the **preparation of responses to the EC questionnaire** or in the **programming of pre-accession EU funds** for their countries. 42% of groups in Montenegro and 28.2% of groups in Serbia are involved in **working groups for negotiations with the EU**.



In **Macedonia**, trade unions have been **consulted on issues from their area of expertise** least frequently as compared to other types of groups (30% at least sometimes), while professional associations and think tanks have participated more frequently in forums/conferences organized by political institutions: 100% and 88.8% respectively have at least sometimes participated in this type of events. 58% of business associations have at least sometimes been **consulted during the preparation of responses to the EC questionnaire**, compared to around 20% of professional associations, think tanks and NGOs, and none of the trade unions. Think tanks, business groups and professional associations have been consulted more frequently during the **programming of EU funds** (55.5%, 44% and 40%, respectively) than have NGOs and trade unions (32.4% and 0%).

In **Montenegro**, professional associations have been consulted on **issues from their area of expertise related to the EU accession process** somewhat less frequently than other types of groups (33.3%). Only around 10% of professional associations and NGOs have **participated in the work of parliamentary committees**, compared to around 30% of business associations and trade unions. Professional associations also least frequently **participate in events organized by institutions** (11.1%), and, together with NGOs (31%), hold fewer seats in the working groups of negotiations, compared to business (90%) and trade unions (66.7%). Similar is the case with regard to **consultation during the preparation of responses to the EC questionnaire**. With regard to **consultation for the programming of EU funds**, business associations (50%) are most frequently contacted, followed by trade unions (33.4%) and NGOs (24.1%).

In **Serbia**, trade unions are least frequently consulted with regard to **issues in their area of expertise** (23.1%) than are other types of interest groups (between 40% and 50%). Business

associations and think tanks most frequently take part in **the work of parliamentary committees**: 31.2% and 33.3% respectively. Only 10% of professional associations **participate in events organized by political institutions**, as compared to more than 38.5% of other types of interest groups. The same percentage applies to the participation of professional associations **in the working group for negotiations with the EU**, but the differences are less pronounced in this case. 43.7% of business associations, 33.3% of think tanks, 32.5% of NGOs, 20% of professional associations and 15.4% of trade unions have been consulted at least sometimes during the **preparation of the responses of the EC questionnaire**. 41.2% of business associations, 35.8% of NGOs, 33.3% of think tanks, 20% of professional associations and 7.7% of trade unions are at least sometimes consulted during the programming of EU funds for their country.

One of the most important forms of EU-level activity during the EU accession process is the membership of interest groups in EU-level umbrella associations. Through such membership, interest groups obtain information about EU policies and legislation, learn how to socialize at EU level and get help in establishing contacts with EU institutions (Perez-Solorzano Borragan, 2001; Fink Hafner and Lajh, 2006). EU-level associations are particularly important for interest groups from small states whose limited resources mean they cannot maintain a continuous/stable presence in Brussels.

The survey results show that 21.4% (24 associations) of the responding associations in **Macedonia**, 22.8% (13 associations) in **Montenegro** and 19.5% (25 associations) in **Serbia** are members of EU-level associations.

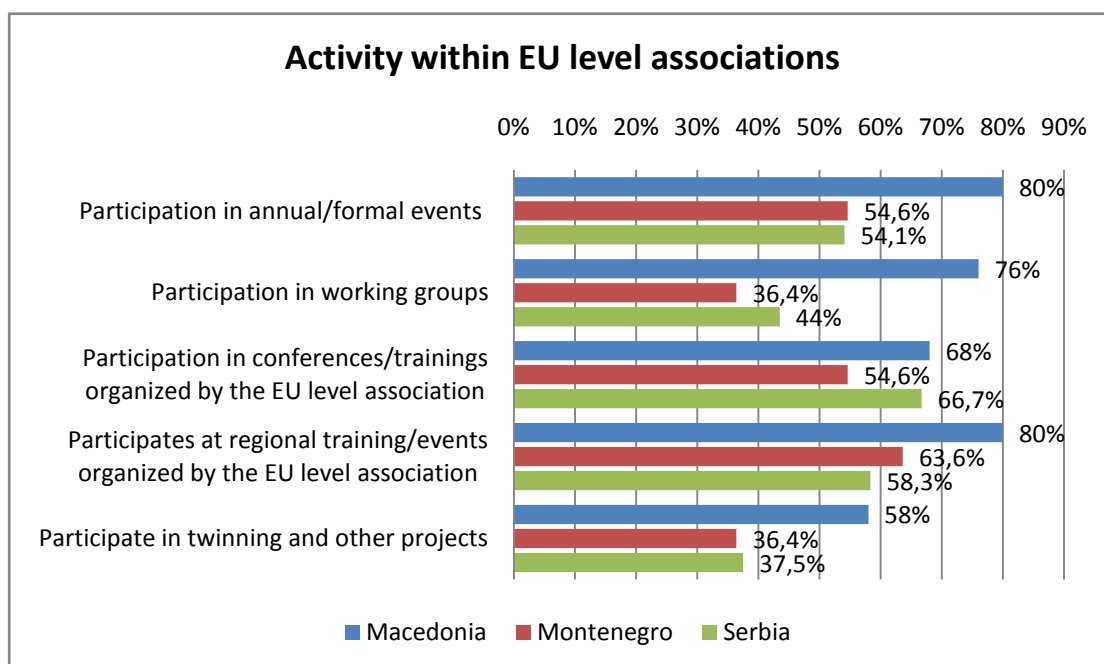
Table 9. Membership/observer status in umbrella associations/networks at EU level

Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia
21.4%	22.8%	19.5%

While national umbrella chambers of commerce are members of EUROCHAMBERS, sectoral chambers have not reported membership in EU-level associations. Employers' associations are members of Business Europe. Trade unions are members of branch umbrella trade unions, or in the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). NGOs are part of various EU-level civil society networks often supported by the EU.

The next question asked groups about various forms of activity in relation to their membership in EU-level associations. Interest groups in **Macedonia** are more active within EU-level associations, with 80% participating in **formal events** and 76% indicating that they at least sometimes participate in the **working groups of EU-level associations**. These percentages are around 54% in Montenegro and Serbia for participation in annual events, and 36.4% and 44%

respectively, for participation in the work of working groups. Groups also participate in **regional training/events organized** by the EU-level associations for the countries of the region, as well as in other **events organized for all members** of the EU umbrella association, and this also applies to groups in Serbia and Montenegro. Participation in **twinning or other projects** is the least frequent activity.



The next question asked groups about the usefulness of several types of activities and resources provided for them by EU-level umbrella associations. All the alternatives offered were given very high scores of more than 4.3 on average, on a scale from 1 to 5. The differences across countries are negligible, and there is also very little variation among types of groups.

Table 10. Usefulness of activities within EU-level associations

	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia
Obtaining information in the areas of your expertise	4.64	4.45	4.57
Networking with similar organizations from EU countries	4.76	4.55	4.65
Networking with similar organization from the region	4.60	4.55	4.61
Training and capacity building opportunities	4.32	4.45	4.61
Participation in joint projects	4.68	4.45	4.43
Knowledge of EU level interest representation practices	4.44	4.45	4.43
Contacts with EU institutions	4.52	4.27	4.26

Two thirds of respondents in all three countries consider an office in Brussels to be important for their EU-level activity, whether in the present or in the future. This is an interesting finding which indicates that groups seriously consider the possibility of being active at EU level regardless of their size or of the national channels (lobbying through national institutions) on which they can also rely in EU-level interest representation.

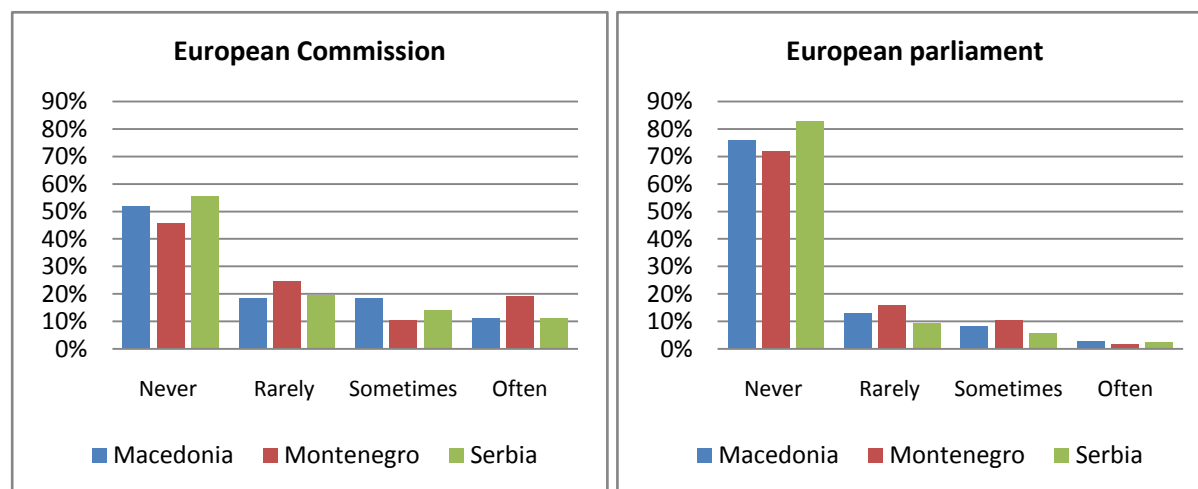
Table 11. Importance of a Brussels office for organizations' EU-level activity (%)

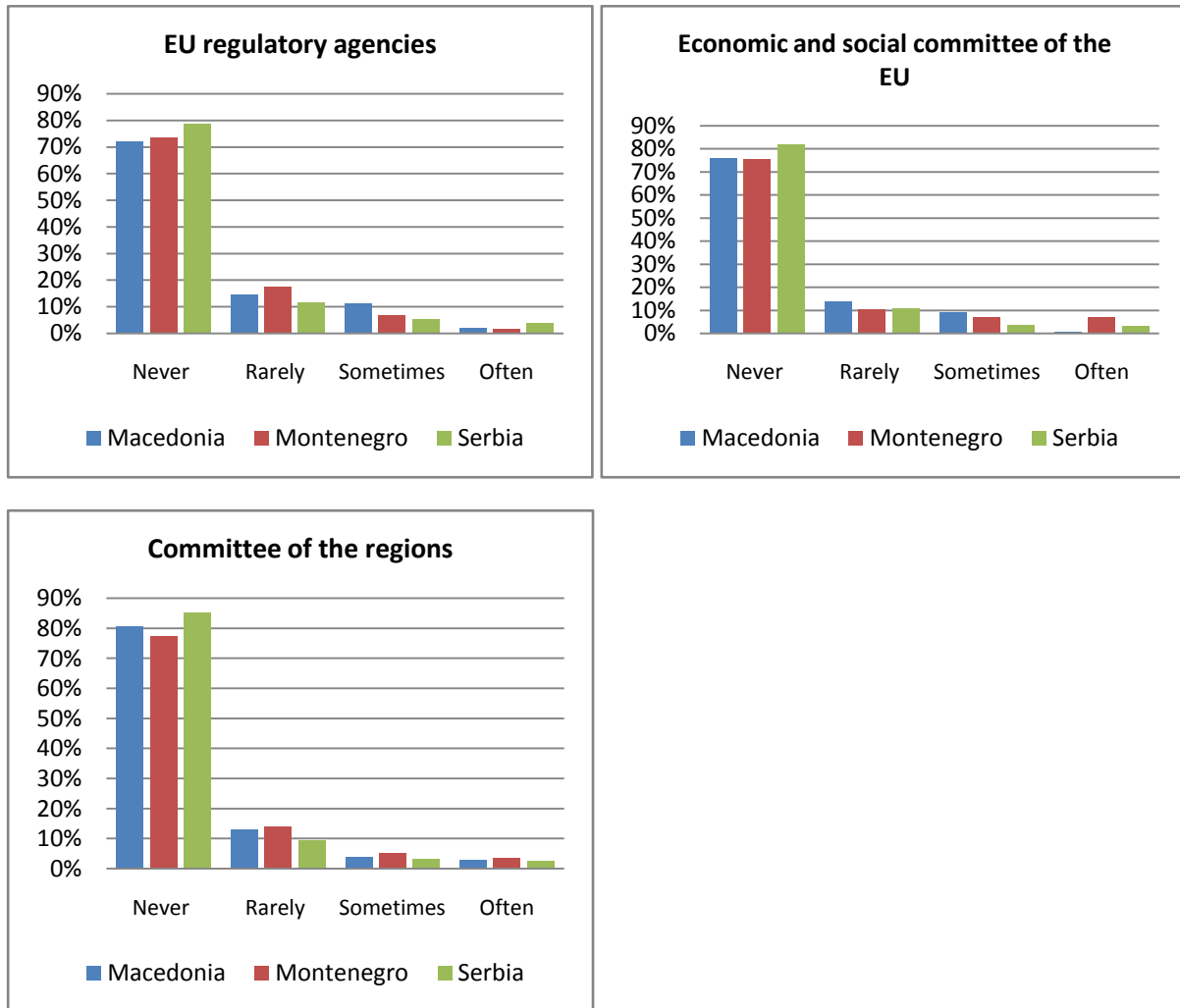
	Macedonia	Montenegro	Serbia
Yes	40.9	36.8	37
Yes, but not in this phase of EU accession	27.3	33.3	26
No	31.8	29.8	37
Total	100	100	100

Across different types of groups, 58.3% of professional associations and 35.8% of NGOs said that a Brussels office is not important for their EU-level activity, thus showing the lowest scores of Europeanization with regard to this question.

Contacts with EU institutions

Currently, the frequency of contacts of interest groups with EU institutions is low. Groups are most often in contact with the European Commission, with around 50% of associations having contacts with the European Commission, while 20-30% of groups across the countries have contacts with the rest of the EU institutions listed.





Across types of groups, think tanks, NGOs and business associations have more frequent contacts with EU institutions than trade unions and, especially, professional associations, which have the fewest contacts with all the EU institutions listed. No less than 50% of think tanks have contacts at least sometimes with the EC. This is the case with 30.9% of NGOs, 22.7% of business associations, 16.9% of trade unions and 8.4% of professional associations. Think tanks also have the highest level of contacts with the European Parliament (38.9%), followed by NGOs and business associations (10.1% and 9.1%, respectively). Trade unions and professional associations either do not have contacts with the EP or have only rare contacts.

With regard to EU regulatory agencies, 22.3% of think tanks and 18.2% of business associations have contacts at least sometimes with these agencies, followed by 10.3% of trade unions, 8.4% of NGOs and 4.2% of professional associations. Business associations have more contacts with the ECOSOC and the Committee of the Regions: around 18% have contacts at least sometimes with these institutions. 17.1% of trade unions have contacts at least sometimes with the ECOSOC.

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