

**A thesis submitted to the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy of  
Central European University in part fulfilment of the  
Degree of Master of Science**

**Triathlon for environmental organizations – communication, information and  
narratives in agricultural lobbying in Brussels**

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**Budapest**

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cernov', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Elena CERNOV

**ABSTRACT OF THESIS** submitted by:

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In a time of a growing understanding of the environmental impacts of agricultural practices, environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) are still marginalized actors in shaping agricultural policy in the EU. This thesis traces the lobbying practices of Brussels-based organizations in order to examine how environmental concerns are being made visible and introduced in agricultural policy through various communication channels and narrative building. The study draws on interviews with representatives of ENGOS and other relevant stakeholders (representatives of European Parliament and European Commission; public health organizations), document analysis and event observation done during one month in Brussels in 2016. Findings reveal that environmental NGOs that participate in the policy process go over the formal channels provided by European institutions by developing their own informal channels of access to decision-makers as a need to counter-balance the more dominant stakeholders. Secondly, it focuses on the types of information being used in these communication channels and reveals the fact that due to the high level of technicality and science-based evidences needed for shaping environmental and agricultural policies ENGOS specialize narrowly on certain issues. This allows them to be able to follow the issues and contribute in a more targeted way to the policy shaping. Thirdly it shows how the agricultural lobbyists construct on competing narratives in presenting their own arguments. The thesis argues that despite the primacy of farmers' interests in agricultural policy making ENGOS manage to have an influence in the political discussion, but further research is needed in order to ascertain how to make the environmental voice in Brussels stronger.

**Keywords:** environment, agricultural policy, European Union, communication, interest representation, environmental non-governmental organizations, narrative, lobbying, advocacy.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

CAP – Common Agricultural Policy

DG – directorate-general

DG Agri – Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development

DG Envi – Directorate-General for Environment

EC – European Commission

ENGO – environmental non-governmental organization

EP – European Parliament

EU – European Union

MEP – member of European Parliament

NGO – non-governmental organization

EESC – European Economic and Social Committee

EPHA – European Public Health Alliance

EEB – European Environmental Bureau

ALDE – Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

## INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector in the European Union (EU) is at a crossroads. On the one hand it seeks to fulfil its commitment of assuring Europeans with safe and enough food, and its farmers with a flourishing food trade and access to international market (European Commission (EC) 2012). On the other hand it is characterized by the crises like milk price crisis due to milk over-production (European Parliament (EP) 2016), pigmeat industry crisis caused by the bans for import by Russia (EC 2016d), year-long debate on the prolongation of approval for use of the herbicide glyphosate in farming sector in the EU due to its potential carcinogenicity (EC 2016e), and more and more connections found between agricultural practices and biodiversity loss, greenhouse gas emissions and soil erosion. In this context of overlapping crises there are lot of political reputation for the policy-makers, a lot of money for the farmers and food industries, and a lot of concerns from the large public involved and therefore environmental issues become heavily marginalized. But nevertheless decisions are being made, policies voted for and measures decided in Brussels or Strasbourg are being adopted by the member states to their own context. This is how they shape the realities in which Europe exists, identities and ideas of how Europeans should live (Wedel *et al.* 2005) and as a consequence these decisions affect heavily the environmental state of art. That is why in this thesis I am focusing on a marginalized social group in agricultural policy represented by Brussels-based environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) and its work in bringing in environmental concerns to the agricultural policy discussions.

The quality and effectiveness of EU policies heavily rely on the shoulders of various invisible actors that shape it to a greater or lesser extent (Johansson and Lee 2014). Agenda-setting, policy design, different stages of policy-making, and political advocacy are political mechanisms that can be shaped by outside actors (Beyers *et al.* 2008; Pappi and Henning

1999), but also are mechanism assured by the Article 11 of the Treaty of European Union by presenting principles of participatory democracy as basis of functioning of EU (EU 2012).

Within EU agricultural policy the Common Agricultural Policy is being presented as “a **partnership** between agriculture and society, between Europe and its farmers” (EC 2012).

Based on the fact that in “Towards an Anthropology of Public Policy” the authors point out the little attention accorded to research on how social groups and networks influence the way processes happen and political decisions are made (Wedel *et al.* 2005) I will focus my study on unravelling the practical meaning of this “partnership” in order to understand better how ENGOs are influencing agricultural issues. In this context anthropology of policy preaches the need to “explore the cultural and philosophical underpinnings of policy” (Wedel *et al.* 2005, 24); – its assumptions, discourses, classifications of target groups, terminology, choices, ideologies and their use. And the underpinnings of the agricultural policy that I identified as dominant elements in ENGOs – policy-makers partnership are the communication patterns, information output and narratives used in shaping the present and future policy discourses and outcomes.

## **Problem definition**

Based on the data available on the Transparency Register<sup>1</sup> there are 1461 registered organizations working at European level that represent interests in the area of Agriculture and Rural Development, accounting for 25.6% of the total 5700 organizations registered (EC 2016g). From these 1461 organizations 628 have an office in Belgium, and 158 are registered as non-governmental organizations. The number of interests groups in Brussels easily outnumber other politically active entities (Beyers *et al.* 2008), but they are far from being

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<sup>1</sup> Transparency Register – online database to which all organizations seeking to influence policymaking, policy implementation and/or decision-making in the EU institutions – whether directly or indirectly - should register (EP and EC 2015)



self-explanatory. What is not known is how these groups participate in the process of policy-shaping, the role they play in policy-decision making and what their contribution in designing the vision of European agriculture really are.

Therefore I picked as study object the “lobbying practice” of environmental NGOs based in Brussels and while spending 4 weeks in Brussels I studied their participation in shaping agricultural policy, mainly through their communication channels and information flow. During this period I met and interviewed representatives of environmental NGOs and other relevant actors, attended thematic events and collected documents and media reports for further analysis. This approach would allow me to shed light on the “semi-institutionalized process of lobbying” (Beyers *et al.* 2008), and thus semi-documented process.

There are various studies that concern certain issue-related campaigns of the ENGOS (Warleigh 2000, Ruse 2016) and comprised data on civil society groups’ activity in general. But there is a gap between this narrow case-specific studies and broad all-encompassing European interest groups studies. I will address this gap by focusing on a set of interest groups that work on agricultural policy. Understanding better how these groups work has the potential to lead to optimization of the institutionalized communication they have with European institutions dealing with agriculture, food, environment and public health; increase the transparency of the European policy processes on these topics to the large public and allow an easier integration of the messages from environmental sector into the agricultural political debate.

### **Research aim and questions**

The aim of my research is to investigate the role of and methods used by environmental NGO in shaping the agricultural policies in Brussels through interviewing, event observations and analysis of documents. I will achieve this by addressing the following research questions:

1. How do environmental NGOs based in Brussels influence environmental policy-making on agricultural issues?
2. How do lobbying organizations use communication channels and different types of information to shape policy narratives and outcomes?
3. What are the struggles encountered by NGOs in their lobbying activity in Brussels?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Due to the increasing openness of governments to interest groups involvement in policy-making and stricter transparency rules in the EU (EC 2014) there is more and more attention given to the study of interest groups.

There are common characteristics that have been identified by several studies on interest groups (Beyers *et al.* 2008, Dur 2008, Grant and Stocker 2009; Long and Lorinczi 2009; Johansson and Lee 2014 etc.). Each study points out slightly different aspects of the interest groups' activity and organization, which in combination would allow me to have a multi-dimensional and functional image of the interest group I will study. Based on characteristics developed by Beyers *et al.* and Dur, there are certain elements that are important when characterizing the activity of an interest group: organization type, strategies, and the issue they are working on.

Organizational structure can be described by intra-organizational dynamics, type of membership, professionalization (equipment and resources), knowledge and expertise, history of active involvement (Beyers *et al.* 2008; Mahoney 2004). Moreover lobbying can serve as an important pillar for organizational maintenance through building political networks, increasing visibility, developing special expertise etc. (Beyers *et al.* 2008).

The second element of interest group characterization - the strategies, comprises all the attempts undertaken by interest groups to influence policy and there is a lot more research than on the organizational type, especially in the United States. On this topic there are various levels of activity that could be analyzed. Dur (2008) investigates the role of resources in influencing policy, mainly such resources as money, legitimacy, political support, knowledge, expertise, information. Beyers *et al.* (2008) add the insider (as active actor within European Commission) or outsider strategies (petitions, protest, mobilizations) that seem to be used by interest groups as single strategies or combined. Dur (2008) broadens the analysis of impact

to the level of interaction between different interest groups, interaction with national and European institutions, government, and political parties. While Betsill and Corell (2001) add the element of influencing policies by introducing new terminology, since each new term carries with it a certain attitude, weight of importance and broader context (for example the introduction of term “hot air” during Kyoto Protocol negotiations, which meant proposals that permitted countries with lower GHG emissions than its legally binding limit to trade the difference) (Long and Lorinczi 2009). As we can see, the ability and success of influencing decision making has a multitude of levels that depending on the ways used trigger different effects. Specifying these characteristics for a certain interest group will help me localize and assess its successful and less successful strategies and also observe its position within the larger geographical and inter-organizational context.

Issue characteristics is including the general context of lobby in EU and on environmental topics.

When studying interest groups in the EU, Beyers *et al.* (2008) mention the need to study interventions in such process as agenda-setting, policy design, implementation stages, and Long and Lorinczi (2009) added to it legislative activity (readings and conciliations) in the Parliament and Council and post-legislative and pre-implementation stage of creating guidelines and stating implementation rules.

There are various ways in which the interaction between NGOs and representatives of European institutions is being performed: the informal interaction and the institutionalized one (Beyers *et al.* 2008; Long and Lorinczi 2009). In this way there is a constant flow of expertise, knowledge, influence and access between the main actors (Dur 2008; Pappi and Henning 1999). It is worth mentioning that even though there is little data on the environmental lobby, the specificity of the issue, its technical characteristic (Dur 2008), and the sensibility of the large public to it (Mahoney 2004) determine largely the need of this

thesis to cover the gap of data on the strategies and way of policy making within environmental policy making.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In her book “The Network Inside Out” Annelise Riles (2000) tries to analyze how an international network works, what are the forms of knowledge used, what are its elements, what kind of reactions does it raise etc. What she found out in her work on the Fiji delegation participation in the Women’s Conference in Beijing in 1995 is that “more than a place or a society, what the persons and the institutions described here [*meaning the network*] share is a set of informational practices” (Preface, xvi). Using open coding on the interview texts and by extracting the dominating ideas I was led to a similar idea of information flow as a core element of the agricultural lobbying in Brussels. This idea is strongly supported by one of the interviewees who has both worked as a lobbyist and as an EU institution representative who said:

“When you are lobbyist you are looking for information, [...] you have access to nothing so you should look for information always. Whereas when you are in the European Parliament it is totally the reverse. You have too much information and you have to classify and to make a filter on what you have to take and what you have to throw away.”

Transposed to the European lobbying and policy-making environment the “information practices” mentioned by Riles include various meetings, conferences, emails, twitter posts, funding application. As Riles further mentions “the Network offers a poignant case study for institutionalized utopism, and ambition for political change through communication and information exchange”. This utopism being mirrored in the White Paper on European Governance by European Commission which sets the principles of good governance as openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence (EC 2001) - first three of each promote quality stakeholders’ communication - principles which should by definition assure as outcome a good governance in the EU. Based on this, my study of information flow within the agricultural policy-making and ENGOs role in shaping, exchanging and delivering

information will open up some insights on the communication environment in the Brussels agricultural policy network. At the same time this study will give evidence on the ability of EU to fulfil its principles of openness and participation on the case study of involvement of environmental NGOs in agricultural policy.

By going away from analyzing individual actors and focusing on the rather on communication, the way Riles (2000) does, I try to go away from documenting an instance of globalization to describing a certain pattern of communication that can be later observed in other policy-making contexts.

Riles (2000) proposes to exclude individual social interactions from the idea of network, and focus on broader concept of information flow. Empirically it feels like this approach ignores a big part of the network described by the one-to-one interactions. But this approach is supported by the fact that all the instruments developed by European institutions to assure participation of all stakeholders are based on the principle of information flow and group consultation rather than assuring an environment for developing individual social relations, even though the former is not excluded.

I chose to use an anthropological approach to my study of agricultural policy because it permits to “uncover constellations of actors, activities, and influences that shape policy decisions and their implementation, effects, and how they play out” (Wedel *et al.* 2005, 30).

In this regard the study of lobbying process whose main goal is to influence political decision making is an important element in understanding the real picture of policy making, especially in the context of growing professionalization of interest groups (Beyers *et al.* 2008).

The approach promoted by Riles has blurry borders when defining the information flow as the gluing element of the involved stakeholders and is open to finding new data. Therefore, it fits perfectly to the open approach I have in my exploration of ENGOs role in the agricultural

lobbying in EU and understanding the value of information and political narratives in this process.

Additionally, I am using policy narrative approach which Shanahan *et al.* (2011) mention adds “meaningful contributions” to the network’s studies. I am using the post-structural approach to narrative with its inductive and qualitative design (Jones and McBeth 2010), in order to assess the way messages, symbols, specific language is used in generating meaning (Jones and McBeth 2010) and resonate with relevant stakeholders (Shanahan *et al.* 2011). Thus I will focus on the dominant and alternative narratives that are mentioned during my discussion with stakeholders, as well as the ones I will identify in the analyzed documents and media texts. These narratives are a crucial source of information on the lobbying strategies and maneuvering, understanding the competing ideologies and defining the existing political dialogue. The narrative approach is enabling to reveal coalitions’ beliefs (Shanahan *et al.* 2011) and thus adds a new layer to understanding the complexity of agricultural lobbying. The ENGOs represent a “micro-foundations” of the political decision making in European apparatus. Ringe (2010) outlines on the example of EP is that the study of these micro-foundations, and political debates happening at the limit of transparency level of policy making have a huge gap in being research. Ringe suggests ethnography as an exploration tool of the inside processes. Subsequently the result would be a description of the processes that is closely resembling the experience lived by the studied group of stakeholders (Hajer, 2005). This “micro-foundations” are also referred as “policy subsystems” by Sabatier and Weible (2014) and defined as “primary unit of analysis for understanding policy processes”.

All these 3 approaches of network as flow of information, the use of narratives in policy shaping and the subsystem approach to the activity performed by environmental NGOs in Brussels will allow me to uncover and understand better the core of one of the elements of



agricultural policy making, based on the encounters of the stakeholders themselves, their activity and their written documentation.

## **METHODS**

My research is a qualitative study of the activity of environmental NGOs in the agricultural policy-making in Brussels. Qualitative research allows describing people and experiences in details, and more importantly reveal issues from the perspective of my study object (Hennink 2010). Driven by the idea to understand the role of ENGOS better and make a contribution to the anthropology of the agricultural policy I used ethnographic approach characteristic to social anthropology. Ethnographic study allowed me to look at my study group from a multi-dimensional perspective: interviews, documents' analysis and events' attendance. The interviews will unveil what representatives of NGOs think about themselves and their work, while documents and events will reveal the way they communicate, interact and how they are being perceived on the political arena. By using "thick description", which implies describing not only the event/person/activity in itself but to incorporate it in the context (Geertz 1973), I aim to create a more complex image of the processes involved in environmental lobbying in Brussels.

The main actors in this field are: environmental NGOs, policy-makers and other active interest groups. Due to time-limit and personal interest I picked my main "micro-foundation/policy subsystem" of study as ENGOS.

### **Positionality**

The position from which the research is being conducted is reflected in the collected data and outcomes of the data analysis (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007). This statement demonstrates the central role of positionality in conducting a qualitative research (Busby 2011) and the importance of being transparent on it to the readers.

There are two aspects of my background that I think influenced a lot the dynamics and direction of our discussions. My background in environmental sciences allowed my interviewees to go in more details on environmental issues and cover more aspects of

environmental discourses in the EU without the need to explain me what are pesticides, endocrine disrupting chemicals, biodiversity loss, soil biodiversity etc. At the same time our discussions were limited by my lack of experience and knowledge in the working culture of European institutions and specifically on the lobbying practices. Moreover my interviews fall into the category of “elite interviewing” which is defined as an interview where the interviewer, meaning me, is trying to learn from the special knowledge, experience and personal interpretations of various issues by the interviewee (Dexter 1970). This huge gap of experience between me as student and my interviewees as experts created a comfortable atmosphere for them to refer to what they find most interesting and important, sometimes without me even asking about it. On the other side this setting made my interviewees aware of their image and the importance of the things they say and the way they represent their institution (Busby 2011) and thus could be a limitation to the objectivity of the data acquired through interviews.

Further there is my position as stated before me leaving for my field research in Brussels, intended to explain some of the possible biases I will have in my interpretation of data:

I am doing a MA in Environmental Sciences and Policy and my Bachelor degree is in Ecology. I deal with environmental issues already for more than 6 years. In Moldova I was part of the founding team and then coordinating team of a grassroots environmental NGO and that determines my strong belief in environmental NGOs as important actors in shaping environmental awareness. Also I strongly believe in the crucial importance of grassroots initiatives in making a change.

Since the NGO I worked for was doing mainly educational and networking activities, I am very interested to learn more about policy-shaping as part of NGO activity, something I did not experience before. In this regard I believe in the need and power of NGOs as actors in

environmental discourses present in European Commission, Parliament and other relevant communication and decision-making platforms. At the same time I doubt the level of representativeness of civil society by NGOs at the EU level and the ability to really make a change in the situation of scarce financial and human resources.

### **Data gathering**

For the interviews I e-mailed several NGO representatives before leaving for Brussels. My initial idea was to follow closely the activities of two NGOs, by being present in their office, talking to more members of the staff, being present of some of their internal work meetings but also meetings with other stakeholders in agricultural policy-making. This zoom in perspective would have been placed in a larger context with the data from additional interviews with other NGOS and policy stakeholders and event attendance. Even though I had confirmation from two NGOs prior to going to Brussels, it proved to be difficult due to their busy schedules, so I relied primarily on interviews, participant observation at events and document analysis.

During my fieldwork I got the chance to be introduced to some other NGOs and the opportunity to write to new contacts by making reference to people I have already interviewed. This “snowball method” opened up contacts that otherwise would not be that easy. In total I interviewed twelve people, from which eight are representatives of NGOs, two representatives of Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG Agri), one representative of Directorate-General for Environment (DG Envi) and one staff representative of a Member of the European Parliament (MEP). The interviews are semi-structured and lasted between 30 and 60 min each. The sample question are enumerated in the interview guide in the appendices section, where questions are divided in two sections: the ones for the

NGOs and the ones for policy-makers. Each of the two section had questions around several major topics: characteristics of the institution they represent, lobbying strategies used or witnessed, actors involved, and the knowledge transfer within organizations and network.

Interviews took place during 4 weeks in May and June 2016 in Brussels. I used widely open-ended question and encouraged my interviewees to support their arguments with concrete examples from their experience, practices, and recent encounters. It is important to mention that due to the fact that my main tool of collecting data was interviewing and I did not have too much time for each organization, I focused on difficulties encountered in their lobbying and how they are overcoming them, how they manage to achieve something. As result my discussion, especially the chapter on communication is much bipolarized on the struggles and examples of good communication practices. The working routine of communication between stakeholders, which also is very important in shaping-policies is often absent in this study.

Based on the fact that material artefacts are an important complementary source of information to interviews and participatory observations (Riles 2000) I devoted part of my time in Brussels collecting published materials from different NGOs, websites and open events. The list of events I attended is given in the appendices section presenting details on the date, organizers and location. The documents I used in my interpretations are being referenced throughout the text. Part of the documents I found on the websites of the NGOs in the section of press-releases, position papers, official letters etc.; part of them I received directly from the NGO representatives.

The selection of participants was biased towards representatives of the most known environmental NGOs working in the agricultural sector. These NGOs often have bigger working teams in Brussels, more financial resources, a lot of information coming from the network of members comparing to other NGOs, but specifically this history and experience of lobbying was interesting to me.

## **Ethical considerations**

I gave all interviewees an information sheet about my project and asked for their consent to be interviewed and to record the interviews. All interviewees accepted to be recorded and they all received a copy of the informed consent that is attached in the appendices. Within the text, for privacy security, I used different names than the real ones and in the interviewees list I mention only the position of my interviewees. Separately in the appendices there is the list of the NGOs I was in contact with during my study.

## **Data Analysis**

As mentioned in previous chapter, after initially analyzing the data collected via interviews my study object of the process of lobbying was redirected to the information flow within the process of lobbying. The method I used is called content analysis and it is used to analyze written texts and verbal messages (Cole 1988). In my cases these messages will be the documents and the interview transcripts. This method allow distilling the texts into a number of categories that are able to describe the analyzed phenomena (Elo and Kyngas 2008). There are 3 levels of data analysis I used until I reached the reasoning I present in this paper.

First level was during my interviewing, when I was making notes and based on my quick judgments, interests and analysis I was able to manipulate the conversation in the direction I thought to be most interesting and useful for my study.

On the second level I already used content analysis on the interviews' transcripts and documents. Since the data was very scattered, diverse, and I did not have much information about the specifics of environmental lobbying within agricultural policy prior to my research, I used the inductive approach of the content analysis (Elo and Kyngas 2008). I used as unit of my analysis specific themes emerging from the texts and highlighted sentences and portion of texts that were describing details of the practices ENGOS have in Brussels. Based on this I identified lots of various groups like: the use of media channels for advocacy, building

alliances with other NGOs, creating personal connections within the European institutions, using food as promotional material etc. As a result I grouped most of the emerged elements within three overarching frames: communication processes, information and narratives. This categorization is already an important level of my data interpretation, and I explain it more detailed in my theoretical framework.

On the last level I used directed content analysis where based on the 3 overarching topics I identified I went through again the text performing a directed content analysis that allowed me to extract fragments and ideas that fit into or describe these 3 categories I identified.

Even though I chose to focus on these 3 categories and design my discussion around them, due to my ethnographic approach, I often make references to other elements that I find important in order to build the thick description of the processes. Moreover the borders between the 3 categories of my discussion are pretty fluid mainly because narratives are part of the information, and both of them are naturally incorporated in the communication process. These allows me create a very complex description of the information flow in the agricultural policy-shaping network.

### **Limitations of the methods**

These method might be limited in representability due to the small sample of the study group.

The sample is based on people who agreed to have a meeting with me and that already knew that I am an environmental sciences student and the topic of my research is lobbying. This most probably have impacted the fact that those who agreed have more positive experience with the topic and are eager to share their prior experiences.

Other limitations are determined by the natural biased position the interviewees have while representing their institution and their own work within it. During my interactions with some NGO representatives I felt lack of eagerness to share with me certain internal documents (like internal position papers or copies of letters to MEP), share the outcomes of some meeting

with other stakeholders. This could have as a result a not very complete picture of the communication process I tried to portray.

Nevertheless, I believe that the data collected allows me to create initial picture of the agricultural lobbying process within EU, and analyse the ways in which NGOs promote environmental values within agriculture, to reveal the main communication channels they use and as a result understand better their position and role in the agricultural policy-making. The research is an exploratory one and could be improved with a longer study period and a closer observation of the NGOs work.



## **DISCUSSION**

The argument in this paper is structured in three parts. The first section deals with the analysis of the formal channels of communication between policy-makers and NGO representatives and the need for developing informal channels for a more efficient policy influence. The second section explores the types of information required by NGOs for an informed lobbying and the targeted information they produce in order to assist policy-makers in their agricultural decision. And the third chapter reveals various roles ENGOS play in the narrative debate in European policy-making.

## **COMMUNICATION**

Advocacy in the Brussels context means for NGOs to be intermediary actors that engage with policy-makers, governments and the larger public. In this chapter I will focus on the communication network that makes the exchange between these actors possible. I will start with the institutional communication instruments, which is the skeleton, and then will dig into the way ENGOS use this “imperfect” skeleton and build upon it, creating new communication channels that contribute to achieving their advocacy goals. My main argument in this chapter is that European institutions and ENGOS interact with different goals in mind, which creates the need for the organizations to create side channels of communication in addition to the ones provided by the Commission. These side channels are being developed by all the interest representation groups. As a result, the groups with more financial and human resources are able to have more diverse channels, more involved staff, and thus more impact on the decision-making process.

According to Coen and Richardson (2008) “EUs machinery provides almost infinite number of access points to influence, among which they [interest groups] must allocate scarce

resources”. This multitude of channels of influence is definitely a threat to the transparency EU is trying to assure. Based on my communication with representatives of NGOs, each has developed its preferences for institutions with which to work, events to participate in and strategies used to get access or give information. In this way EP and EC is targeted by multiple stakeholders and their influence is hard to track in extremely dynamic and diverse system of interactions.

### **The formal path**

European institutions have developed various instruments to facilitate communication and exchange of expertise with the stakeholders. For example, the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG Agri) uses several tools for consulting citizens and stakeholders on main policy initiatives: civil dialogue groups, public consultations, expert groups and stakeholder feedback mechanisms. One of the main goals of these instruments is to put in practice Art. 11(2) of the Treaty on European Union for institutions “to maintain an open transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society” (EU 2012). Thus, NGOs play a key role in fostering participatory democracy (Junk 2016), mainly in the context where lack of transparency is associated with secrecy and conspiracy (Ballesterio 2012) – a reputation not wanted by the policy-makers.

At the moment DG Agri is working with 13 civil dialogue groups, which are organized around very broad topics like Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), international aspects of agriculture, quality and promotion, environment and climate change, and more narrow ones like milk and wine. The composition of these groups are decided based on open calls, and the chosen NGOs (whose activity should be performed at least at European level) are engaged in assisting the Commission, advising policy and delivering opinions on specific matters (EC 2013). The organizations are elected for 7 years and the participation in the activities of the group are not remunerated (EC 2013).

Another tool is public consultations, which are online consultations organized by the DG that can be accessed by any of the stakeholders, mainly in order to review certain existing policies.

There are also more targeted consultations of the Commission with specific expert groups.

These groups act at the request of the Commission or its departments to provide advice and expertise in preparation of legislative proposals, policy initiatives, delegated acts<sup>2</sup>, and implementing acts<sup>3</sup> at early stage etc. It is expected that the experts would provide high-level input in the form of opinions, recommendations and reports. Participants are not paid for their input, with only some exceptions (EC 2016b).

Stakeholders' feedback processes are designed to permit stakeholders and the public to be able to give feedback on legislative proposals early, meaning 8 weeks after their adaptation, in the policy-making process (EC 2016f).

As Mahoney evaluates, these consultation channels give opportunity to ENGOs for an early input, strong advantage in the ability to shape and modify contemplated legislation (Mahoney 2004). During my fieldwork, however, I also observed a number of other forms of communication.

There are a lot of conferences, discussion roundtables and thematic events during any given week. This is a real heaven of events for somebody who came to Brussels for one month only and is interested to see how things work here. The first event I attended was a public event called "Who pays for seeds?". It was in the European Economic and Social Committee, first European institution I ever entered. I registered at the entrance, got my badge, passed the security check and was welcomed near the meeting room by a small crowd and warm drinks.

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<sup>2</sup> delegated act - non-legislative act adopted by the European Commission that supplements or amends certain non-essential elements of a legislative act (EUR-Lex 2015)

<sup>3</sup> implementing act - legally binding EU acts adopted by the EC (in specific cases by Council) that address and should be implemented by EU countries (EUR-Lex 2015)

It looked like people knew each other, while I, from a distance, was trying to read the name badges, thinking maybe there is somebody to whom I already wrote emails asking for an interview. The event took place in a huge beautiful amphitheater. 67 people were registered for the event, most from NGOs, some scientists, and five were from EC and two from EP. The event started exactly on time and we were informed that we should use #OrganicPlantBreeding if we want to post something online.

The event was based on a joint study on financing of seed breeding in Germany and Switzerland (Kotschi and Wirz 2015), and included at the end short interventions by breeders and other stakeholders. Since one of the stakeholders' representative invited on the panel was a person that I ultimately interviewed, I was really curious to know her position on the conference and compare it to my delight about the nice people, interesting scientific facts and the a bit spicy debate at the end. Her opinion differed however:

“This event was nice for you to get to see NGOs etc. But the important thing at those events is to get a good impression of the Commission people that are there. That's the best thing you can take.” (Laura). So mainly these events are good environment to track the people interested in the topic, and policy-makers that could potentially be sympathetic to your cause. Each person present in the room received the participants list, names and institutions registered for the conference. That made it easy to always know who is speaking and make notes on their opinions. Also the lunch provided after the event opened up good opportunities to approach the policy-makers present at the discussion.

Another often met opinion on conferences summarized by Richard is that: “In Brussels there are thousands of them. And the level of debate is ... there isn't much debate going on because essentially of the logistical constraints of the conference”. Most of the events I visited the moderator had to shorten the plenary discussion time due to exceeding time of the presentations. As one of my neighbors at the conference on “Bees caring for Europeans.

Europeans caring for bees?” told me that in these plenary discussions there is no place for discussion actually, it is a place to show your expertise and interest and based on it find potential partners. So information is used as tool of self-identification with a certain cause or issue, but also to see who could support you or oppose you in views. In way you can be updated on who from the policy-makers is either in charge of the topic discussed or has a vivid interest in it. Information on policy makers’ positions seems to be a key information on planning the lobbying activity. You have to know to whom to go. Although the events do not fulfil the primary communication goal of exchange of opinions in the formal setting, it is still an opportunity for participants to be in a group of people interested in the same topic and also engage in informal communication with some of the participants. This determines NGO representatives to be very selective at the events they attend, since an events takes quite a lot of time (from one hour to the whole day) and they have limited human resources (Anna, Richard, Laura).

Additionally, due to #OrganicPlantBreeding I could track on Twitter the impact of the “Who pays for seeds?” event. It seems that even though the main topic was the existing funding sources of the organic seeds, just one out of nine twits concerned the topic directly. The rest of the twits were about organic seeds market, mainly increasing the demand and taking them out of the niche sector, by people who are already active in the organic agriculture. So people just posted what supported their view so far, which confirms partly the idea of lack of real debate at the event.

### **The bypass**

I first explained the various instruments of European Union that allow stakeholders to participate in agricultural policy-shaping in order to show how communication between civil society and policy-makers is seen from an institutionalized point of view. But the views from

the field reveal that the concept is not working as it was planned to. These official instruments developed and used by the EC and EP are disregarded both by the representatives of the ENGO sector and representatives of the institutions. There are various defects in assuring good participation of the ENGOs as stakeholders in agricultural policy processes.

First of all, as one NGO representative put it “in DG Agri we participate in their advisory groups and so on, but in general the DG has a different policy orientation”. The DGs are bounded by the political program of the commission, by their mandate.

After conducting a study on the representativeness of interest groups within consultative committees, Mahoney (2004) concluded that “surprisingly” there are many groups that were not granted consultative role at all, while others are present in a dozen groups. She identified the winner in frequency of appearance among all the advisory groups in EC in 2004 as COPA – Committee of Professional Agricultural Organizations – an important stakeholder in agricultural policy-making representing the interests of European farmers. Currently Copa is present in the European arena in coalition with COGECA - General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives in the European Union, as COPA-COGECA with a merged secretariat and common voice in European Lobby (COPA-COGECA). Even though mentioned by all my interviewees, both from NGOs and European institution as one actor, in the Civil Dialogues Groups they are always registered as 2 different organizations, having separate number of representatives in each of the groups, which can contribute to their voice being doubled in discussions compared to other representatives. “We always struggle with COPA-COGECA and things like that in terms of how much influence we can have in the decision-making process” (Augusto). This struggle was mentioned by several NGO representatives. Moreover COPA-COGECA representatives are invited as the only experts at some of the Councils meetings on the agricultural topic (Augusto). Thus the disproportionate participation is determined by the fact that the main stakeholder in the agricultural topic are

considered farmers, so farmer unions are mainly consulted, while environmental NGOs and public health organizations are marginalized on this issue. Even though access is not sufficient to achieve influence in policy-shaping, it is a necessary condition in advocating a case and performing lobbying strategies (Mahoney 2004).

Moreover, as the Laura, a policy-advisor and interest representative of a large network of farmers in Brussels, with a PhD and extensive experience in seed policy, reported their organization was not accepted as part of the advisory groups, needing to wait to the next selection period. “Here everything works in cycles, so you have to wait.” Therefore, the 7-year life of the groups can be very restrictive when it comes to certain interest groups. Even though access is not enough to assure impactful participation in policy-shaping, lack thereof considerably restricts their voice and participation (Mahoney 2004). I did not hear other similar comments on the selection period, mainly because the rest of NGOs I interviewed were part of the advisory groups, so they were not so sensible to the topic.

On the other side there is the problem of representativeness of the message of stakeholders consulted. As Silvia from DG Agri mentioned, most of the stakeholders both in advisory groups and consultations like to come and complain about their specific problem, which is neither geographically nor topically interesting from the policy point of view. She felt there is a lot of energy spent on listening and responding to cases that are not relevant when it comes to issues that are decided at European level.

This discrepancy on the views on the various consultation and communication tools appears mainly because the need for these tools are very different from the institutional point of view and from the stakeholder point of view. As Rasmussen (2012) mentions, lobbying has the goal to educate policy makers. The contradiction between what space institutions offer and what NGOs need is probably exactly in this statement, because policy-makers want expertise in the domains they need at the moment, while NGOs require space for maneuvering around

larger topics and with more opportunities for input in order to be able to influence (educate) the policy-process deeper at the root and in the direction they need. From another perspective, policy-makers have more at stake when making decisions. Beyers *et al.* (2008) mention that interest groups cannot be punished for any negative externalities flowing from the implementation of their proposals, while politicians can be, by losing votes. Thus European institutions have a bigger pressure in the value of the final decision, are heavily responsible for the final policy outcome and thus are the ones that define the rules and terms of consultation mechanisms. In the description of the different consultation mechanism I accentuated on purpose the contrast between the high-level expertise and input expected by the Commission and the expectancy of receiving it for no remuneration from the stakeholders. This also shows the misbalanced role and power dynamics between actors in the consultation process.

Heavily institutionalized state-group relations in capitalist democracies are an important element in the lobbying process. This, however, does not stop interest groups from frequently interacting informally with the bureaucrats and politicians (Beyers *et al.* 2008). It seems like NGOs use the official channels just for networking and to make themselves visible. Neither policy-makers (DG Agri, DG Envi) nor ENGOs seem to base too much on these official instruments. “At the end of the day, the personal element is always very important” (Richard), as summed up by one lobbyist. That is why also so many NGOs have a representative in Brussels, to be able to develop their own network connections (Ruse 2016).

Thus, in order to turn the balance to their interest in the communication with policy-makers, ENGOs access some less traditional tools of interaction. For example there are various half-official events that optimize communication. There are breakfast and lunch-time conferences that appeal to the tight schedules of the policy-makers (Laura). In contrast to classical



conferences, lunch-time conference are in a smaller setting and there is more direct exchange of information.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> of June I had the chance to visit “Food Communities for Local Development” lunch-time conference organized by SlowFood. This conference had allocated almost half of the time to the Q&A session, and even though there were only around 20 people present, the representativeness was very varied ranging from students, trainees, journalists, representatives of EC, representative of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Development (CTA), representative of an investment bank and others. Unfortunately I did not visit lunch-time conferences that are organized within DGs that are solely targeted to policy-makers, but based on the descriptions, they seem to be encouraging informal communication as they are “opportunities for debates and exchange of ideas” (SlowFood 2016), and initiating policy-makers in a certain view or position of the presenters. On the lunchtime conference organized on 29<sup>th</sup> of June within DG Envi, policy-makers had the chance to meet two small scale producers, hear their stories, ask questions and try out their production: cheese and beans. But ENGOs have also used wine-tastings, cheese-tasting and other similar events to create an informal atmosphere for exchanges with policy-makers.

One lobbyist explained that “[these events] eventually have an impact on the advocacy level, because a well-organized event in Brussels, where there are so many decision-makers living” has a big value. Such events can provide direct feedback of the impact by their direct or indirect participation in events (Anna). Thus tasting sessions and message spreading goes often out of the formal setting of EC rooms.

An informal approach is a value not only in events’ settings, but also in the virtual communication. “If you write officially then people feel they have to respond officially; they have to consult. Whereas if you talk to people unofficially then they can think about your

ideas and they may say *NO* at first, but then they will think about it and think maybe *WHY NOT*. So it's much better to keep it very relaxed from the beginning. Or if the relationship is not that good than send a paper with ideas in it but without asking for a specific immediate return... let them adjust a little bit, and then have a meeting ” (Marcel). This slow pace and informal promotion of ideas seems an important way of building up a new narrative and getting the policy-makers used to it, educated in its terminology and its impacts. It can take longer time due to slower pace, but the effect can a lot better since the lobbying itself is not very visible and pushy.

Moreover, it seems that informal contacts allow you to know the position of the DG on the CAP reform (Marcel), the voting transcripts (Laura), the agenda of the EP sessions in advance (Carl) etc. All these elements are crucial in the ability of the NGOs to react in a timely fashion, to know who and when should they approach and thus assure more chance for a successful advocacy campaign. On the other side, as Augusto mentions, it is hard to say whether all these informal meetings and contacts make ENGOs influential, because in contrast “COPA and Syngenta” have a bigger number of meetings within the DG Agri and are more influential.

Official channels of interaction with the institutions are very important. They reduce the burden of financial expenses for NGOs and are an important tool of identifying actors with similar views. But when the issues are really important and are part of the ENGOs priority then they prefer using unofficial ways, which require more staff involved on one issue.

There is also the option of opening up different influence channels by more targeted communication at national levels. Working at an individual level requires a wider use of the potential of the network, which through its levels can assure access to national ministers and political leaders. “We are working with national organizations so that they address national authorities.” These gives more space for informality and more individual approach (Richard).

“We ask the national members to write letter to their national MEP” (Anna) because being from the same country makes your voice more audible. Even though it is still a formal way of communicating with policy-makers, it is side way of influencing European policy-making which is not directly liaised by the EU institutions.

Summing up this chapter it is important to mention that in agricultural policy-making there are various official channels of communication developed by the EC that makes input from ENGOs possible. These channels are made to suit institutions’ needs. Studying them allows us to see NGOs more in the role of insider actors (Beyers *et al.* 2008) in policy shaping since they actively interact with representatives of both European Commission and European Parliament. Even though intended for transparency reasons, official channels of communication limit the participation of environmental groups by giving priority to farmers groups and companies. Therefore in order to fulfil their own aims of interest representation and make their vision visible both to policy-makers and large public, ENGOs have to go beyond the formal structures and develop new ways of communication. This chapter allowed to expend the usual attention given to the role of ENGOs in specific issue related policy-making processes and tried to delineate the characteristics and routines of communication process in the Brussels environment for them. Studying these various levels of communication are crucial in understanding the discussions going on within the DG Agri and the struggles present in introducing more environmental elements into the agricultural discourse.

## INFORMATION

From the previous chapter it is clear that communication has a central role in designing the approach environmental NGOs take in influencing agricultural policy. They use formal channels of communication for networking and being updated on the working agenda of the EC and EP, and develop informal channels of communication in order to get access to understand existing positions on different issues of particular policy-makers and well as trying to smoothly introduce own ideas and information to the decision-makers.

Communication is defined as “the imparting or exchange of **information** by speaking, writing or using some other medium” (online Oxford Dictionary). Therefore in this chapter I will proceed further in studying the communication process within agricultural policy-making by dividing it into two different flows of information - imparting of information by ENGOs and the information they need to access in return in order to make an informed advocacy. Even though the definition puts accent of the medium used to exchange information, I find it more important to analyze the process of producing information and the type of information itself.

Environmental information in the policy-making literature is described as having different types of flaws: impacts of agricultural practices are not supported with sufficient data (Louwagie *et al.* 2012); there is a lack of local area specific knowledge (Molnar 2014); there is no database of systematic reviews on the policy outcomes (Dicks *et al.* 2014); the language of presenting the information is too technical (Carneiro and da-Silva-Rosa 2011); there is often no clear answer to what the solution to a certain problem is (Carneiro and da-Silva-Rosa 2011). Both ENGOs and policy-makers have to struggle with these flaws in order to assure an effective agricultural and environmental policy, especially in the context that most MEPs are simply lacking the knowledge and time for always making informed policy decisions (Ringe 2010).

Therefore in this chapter I would discuss what makes a certain type of information to be considered as expert knowledge and see what kind of additional information, other than representing the interest of its members do ENGOs have to use in order to influence the policy outcomes. My main argument here is that the growing professionalization/specialization of the interest representation (Beyers *et al.* 2008) of ENGOs is mainly determined by the constant need to search and produce quality information, give it a digestible and attractive appearance for various target groups. Thus specialization is a result of the scarce resources in political environment with constant input needs. Moreover ENGOs apply creativity and diversity in dissemination instruments used (Twitter, lunchtime conferences, videos, infographics, food etc.) in order to make the technical language easier to grasp.

European and scientific institutions are good at producing new data, conducting new research, but are not effective in producing data that accounts for both the natural and human systems and communicating and assuring public access to this knowledge (Puntenney 1995) and information on agricultural state of things, especially its social and political dimension are often invisible or ignored.

There are layers and layers of information within the European apparatus that NGOs have to learn to deal with in order to be able to make the most out of their lobbying activity. NGOs have to manipulate the same information in various ways in order to deliver to the receivers the message that the NGO intended to and thus make an impact. On the other side they require timely information, scientific facts and insider/issue-related knowledge in order to assure the success of their activity and “make sure that there are as few barriers as possible for the represented interests’ and that these interests are taken into account in the policy” (Irina).

Most of the NGOs are membership-based, meaning that they also have to provide information and services to their network. Usually this role is secondary, first of all they represent the network's interest in Brussels (Ruse 2016). As one person put it "I am antenna for our association" – feeding information to the network on what is being discussed and decided here (Richard).

### **The (directed) inflow of information**

In order for NGOs to be able to successfully influence the decision-making process they have to "identify where the action is in the multi-level policy-making environment" (Cairney *et al.* 2016). Identifying means having access to information regarding what is discussed, by whom and what are their positions. In this context the individual contacts are very valuable. "In each [political] color, the Greens, the Socialists, EPP, they all have their own specialists, they have their own coordinators. These people are key to target" since they are the ones giving positive or negative command for the vote. The politician has the right to make the decision by himself, "but most of them just follow" the command (Laura). Therefore knowing the coordinators on the issues you are interested for each party, writing e-mails to them and maybe even having meetings can have a big impact on the lobbying success an NGO can have. The same is relevant for the Council where knowing each country's position help ENGOs plan their advocacy.

Another source of information used by the NGOs are the paid media like Agrofacts and POLITICO. I was lucky to have access to a free trial of the "POLITICO Pro" Agro and Food that provided every day a morning newsletter and "Pro Alert" e-mails on current issues. For example on the Glyphosate voting on 6th of June it provided an alert with the topic "Vote on EU glyphosate renewal fails, pushing it to appeals panel", specifying the countries that voted pro renewal and those that voted against. But in the various newsletters it also managed to

cover specific views on the reauthorization of the Glyphosate issue. Further I give some excerpts from the newsletters I received by email to exemplify what kind of information is actually paid for, and how it can be useful for the agri-lobbyists:

“Health and Food Safety Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis met with representatives from Brussels farm lobby COPA-COGECA to discuss glyphosate on Thursday. The position of the farming sector is, of course, very much in favor of extending authorization” (extract from POLITOCO newsletter on 3rd of June 2016)

“Less than six months ago, the member states and the Commission still thought it would be a piece of cake to reauthorize glyphosate in the EU,” French Green MEP Michèle Rivasi said.

“We proved them wrong.” (extract from POLITICO newsletter on 8th of June 2016)

“I’m fighting to prevent the reapproval of glyphosate, classified carcinogenic by the International Center for Research on Cancer,” Royal [French Environment, Energy and Sea Minister Ségolène Royal] said. (extract from POLITICO newsletter on 10th of June 2016)

These information sources “send very timely updates” and “condensed email with all the latest updates” (Maria). They help the NGOs track the people and opinions involved in the discussion and now who is sharing their position and who is not. It is also a good indicator on the meeting the farmers unions have and who do they target. The trouble is that price of these sources are pretty high. The POLITICO costs around 6000 Euro/subscription/year, a crazy amount for a non-governmental organization. Most of them create groups of NGOs that subscribe, share the price and share then the access to the data.

But there are information that even journalists cannot access. For example the dates of the Parliament meetings and votes are public, what is unknown is “which kind of split votes, or separate amendments will be decided. These are decided by the parties”. And it is possible to get those information only from the internal contacts in the parties (Laura). In this context

NGOs can know on what exactly to focus when writing e-mails to the MEPs sending emails very targeted to the issues on vote. Important is also to send the email several days in advance, so that it's neither "too early, and the person forgets, or too late and the person in charge has already his own decision on that". This constant fishing of the information seems the routine for all the NGO representatives I met. During my interviews there were several times when my interviewees have to answer to some urgent calls, check constantly the emails and be alert waiting for some piece of information. Having access to timely and specific information helps ENGOS invest their resources very targeted in only some actions.

Moreover, from my observations but also supported by Busby, European institutions' very particular way of functioning depends on the people involved. Also from my interviews was clear that the practices are a flowing process that change continuously with changing of the Commissioners, changing of experts, leading to changing positions and political priorities. All these elements are so inter-connected in the small Brussels bubble that it is crucial to keep a close eye on its fluctuations and implications to the agricultural topics.

"To influence our colleagues in the agricultural part of the Commission to do best for the environment involves not only knowing about the environment but understanding how CAP works really quite well. Because there is no point in proposing stuff that certainly is going to be totally impractical and or hard to manage" (Marcel).

Therefore ENGOS have to focus their attention on a lot of small details that are popping up constantly, but also follow up closely the decision-making process, especially in the context that it is always hard to say when latent interests become manifest and enter the political process (Beyers *et al.* 2008). As a confirmation of the environmental activists busyness in Brussels during my stay I got several rejections for interview from NGOs with similar explanation that "they have nobody to take care of your [my] research topic, answer questions



and make it a worthwhile experience to our [their] standards” and also I had 6 interviews postponed due to pop-ups of other more important things in the meantime.

As a result of being well informed on the processes going on, policy-makers positions on the issue and the state of art of the advocated issue the ENGOs proceed to feeding back information to the policy-makers.

### **Information outflow**

An approach used to inform policy-makers, praised both by the NGOs themselves and by the policy-makers are the use of case-studies. And this is a clear example of how the members of the network feedback examples of existing good practices or observed negative impacts, by bringing real field experience to discussion tables. A way of presenting the case studies can be bringing real practitioners to tell their stories. For example at the end of June 2016 Slow Food presented two examples of domesticated biodiversity and preserving local varieties (SlowFood 2016; Richard). The examples of the Polizzi Badda beans growing from Sicily and the making of raw-milk Stichelton cheese in the UK were backed up with study on the sustainability of the practices and study on the emission of these products compared to their industrial equivalent. In this way the NGO could go beyond theoretical arguments. The achievement of these events is by giving credibility and shape to the messages the network is promoting: “This is what we mean, this is how it works, it’s not just an idea, and it does exist” (Richard). Similar examples I witnessed at the public event “Who Pays for seeds” and the conference on “Bees caring for Europeans. Europeans caring for bees” where there were special time-slots dedicated to interventions from practitioner breeders, farmers, bee-keepers and other relevant stakeholders. Even though considered as narrow and sometimes irrelevant for considerable area of EU (Christian from DG Agri) these case studies presentations help pointing out the main idea through an easy understandable story, but also allow interaction

between stakeholders that do not often interact at the European level - agricultural policy-makers and small scale farmers. These meeting were also identified as useful “reality-checks” for the people working in the Commission.

A lot of the NGOs representatives said that even though they represent the voice of the people, the core element that helps them to be of interest to the policy-makers are the expertise they possess (Laura, Richard, Maria, Augusto) both by understanding well the issues discussed and by being able to transfer those knowledge into policies. As argued by Coen (2007) “NGO influence is achieved by building expertise in areas diplomats tend to ignore and by revealing information economic interests tend to withhold”. This is supported by the fact that some NGOs are being addressed directly by policy makers in order to be updated on their position and knowledge on certain issues they have expertise in.

The expertise needed is so narrow and technical usually that “if you don’t have a staff member who would follow up on this topic, if you don’t have anybody who has an idea about the seeds for example, than you cannot basically do anything about it”. This technicality and difficulty of issues determines the fact that even big ENGOs like Greenpeace, WWF, BirdLife choose to focus only on few policy areas in order to be really well-informed and thus able to have an influence. “Some EU legislative proposals may be of such a technical nature that only very few interest groups are able to provide decision-makers with the detailed information they need regarding the state of the market and the likely effectiveness of a proposal. The level of technicality both influences decision makers dependency on outside expert information as well as the number of interest groups holding this information.”- (Rasmussen 2012, 243). There is a need of well-trained and fully-engaged staff in order to follow and do lobbying on an issue. Two people from the ones I interviewed have a doctoral degree in the area of policy they are working now, one has worked as a scientist on pesticide prior to

working now on the pesticides and endocrine disrupting chemicals. As Busby (2011) mentions, “those who specialize in a very narrow range of issues end up determining the shape of policy” (p. 14). Being regarded as an expert allows also the ENGOs an easier way to getting into the advisory and consultation groups of the EC, but also assures some private meetings with the Commission representatives (Brigitte). Very often the solution is also using the group expertise of the network of members. Ask their support on policy issues and scientific support, but this is a more time-consuming process and cannot always be used when quick feedback is needed.

In conclusion, due to the complexity and interdisciplinarity of the environmental issues, NGOs have to specialize to only certain narrow topics and allocate the scarce resources to being well informed on it as well as equipped with evidence as case-studies, scientific facts to back up their messages. There is a large volume of information they have to handle in order to be able to influence the agricultural policy, and the cooperation and more transparency of the policy processes could be one of the ways in which European institutions could take away some burden from the interest groups.

## NARRATIVES

A very specific type of message that is constantly present in the political debate is the narrative. In this paper I approach narratives as stylized positions build on the values, messages and the change wanted by the stakeholder who developed it (Jones and McBeth 2011). When referring to ENGOs based in Brussels, the narratives are build up on collected data, brainstormed internally in the network of member organizations aiming to point out in understandable language their position to the policy-makers, other stakeholders and large public. In this chapter I will analyze the narratives as an information tool and the way they are used and approached by the organizations I studied. Based on three examples, the debate of Glyphosate approval, the initiative report of the MEPs and the CAP reforms I will argue that one of the main goal of the narrative built by environmental NGOs is to counter-balance the existing or emerging narratives of the opposition. They often state their position on the arguments used by the opposition, often on issues that are not exclusively environmental: public health, precautionary principle, food waste and food crises etc.

Here is how Augusto described how they build narratives: “there is an issue, a problem and then there is the reason for the urgency articulated on that problem and then there is the suggested resolution which is normally the policy. So effectively our messaging is structured in that way that we illustrate something is broken, show why it is broken and then make the suggestion how is it fixed.” In this way it is clear that the narrative is built on an already existing problem and the need to promote the message on what solution does this specific organization imply. One of the characteristics of narratives is its “framing”, which is the way somebody chooses to portray a policy, how they select their key messages and the language they use (Cairney 2014). As a result, there are many ways in which policy problems can be understood and framed.

To illustrate it better I will incorporate a narrative debate I witnessed while in Brussels within the frame recommended by Augusto, meaning that I will decompose the narrative into the problem (the debated issue), the reasons for urgency and the solution they propose.

### **The double face of Glyphosate**

Glyphosate is an active substance used in the production of herbicides such as Roundup. The approval of an active substance is granted by the EU for a period of up to 15 years and in October 2015 the renewal of the Glyphosate approval should have taken place. In March 2015 the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) reported that there is limited evidence on the carcinogenicity of Glyphosate on humans, but there is sufficient evidence on its impacts on animals (IARC 2015), while the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) concluded that glyphosate is unlikely to be carcinogenic (EFSA 2015). In October 2015 the glyphosate approval was extended until June 2016. In June 2016 the qualified majority in the Council voting for the glyphosate approval was not reached. Under this circumstance on 29th of June 2016 the Commission extended the approval of glyphosate until the end of 2017 at latest (EC 2016c). I was present in Brussels until 18th of June, during the voting and before the Commission approval. This allowed me to witness ENGOs participation and use of information in the specific case of Glyphosate.

There debate was divided between those who opposed the renewal of the pesticide: environmental, public health and consumer organization. While the position of business-as-usual was supported by those whose activity depend on the accessibility of the pesticide: the farmers' unions and farming corporations. ENGOs in coalition with health organizations were very active in this campaign, there where letter to the Commissioner signed by more than 50 NGOs, a lot of NGOs wrote articles on their website about the topic, Pesticide Action

Network created a cartoon on the issue, while WeMove.EU organized two protests and collected over 260.000 signatures on a petition calling to ban the chemical.

Written documents are a good instrument in order to observe the way the policy problem is framed by each of the actors. Thus next I focused on 3 letters from the behalf of some of the ENGOs and on press-release from the COPA-COGECA. In the table below are the arguments used in the debate on the prolongation of use of the herbicide in EU arranged by thematic divisions in arguments on: environment, public health, trade and market, food safety and agriculture.

	Topic	ENGOs	COPA-COGECA
ISSUE ("something is broken")		Glyphosate debate	Glyphosate debate
why is broken (for ENGOs) why it is not broken (COPA-COGECA)	Environment	<p>instead of protecting human health and the environment, the priority is given to the international market and private profit (2)</p> <p>contributes to a massive loss of plant biodiversity, which has far reaching consequences for the food web (1)</p> <p>it harms soil fertility and plant health over the long term (3)</p>	helps to ensure less greenhouse gas emissions and soil erosion (4)
	Public health	96 leading international scientists expressed reservations about the European Food and Safety Authority assessments of	EU Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has confirmed its safety (4) ensure consumer safety (4)

		<p>carcinogenicity, describing them as “scientifically unacceptable” (1)</p> <p>qualifies as dangerous to human health (1)</p>	
	Trade and market	<p>extreme lobbying from industries produces scaremongering reports on how Europe will be left out of international trade (2)</p>	<p>farmers and agri cooperatives need to remain competitive in the EU (4)</p> <p>without it, production would be jeopardized (4)</p> <p>the most widely used herbicide in the world. Not approving it would therefore just be to the advantage of non-EU countries that export to the EU (4)</p>
	Food safety and agriculture	<p>extreme lobbying produced scaremongering reports on how Europe will go hungry (2)</p>	<p>it is an important part of farmers’ tool box due to its availability and cost-effective price (4)</p> <p>help combat weeds that compete with cultivated crops (4)</p> <p>this would be disastrous for the EU given the current agricultural crisis (4)</p> <p>increasing world food demand (4)</p>

			chemical control is a prerequisite for some farming practices such as no-till and minimum-tillage (4)
solution		Phase out of the pesticide Glyphosate	EU Commission to prolong the authorization for the next 15 years

1. Letter to the Commission President Junker and Health Commissioner Andriukaitis. 31 signatories. June 10, 2016.
2. Letter to ministers. Subject: EU Health Commissioner chooses to protect the industry profit rather than the Health of Europeans. Signatories: European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility and PAN Europe. June 29, 2016.
3. PAN International letter to the JMPR for the assessment of glyphosate. May 6, 2016. (PAN 2016)
4. COPA-COGECA Press-release. April 13, 2016.

The table comprises the arguments used by various stakeholders in the Glyphosate debate. It is clear that most of the arguments of the ENGOs are developed around the issue of environment and public health, while COPA-COGECA makes most of its arguments in the topics of market and trade and food safety and agriculture. It is logic that they develop their arguments based on their expertise and positionality, thus each of them being stronger in the field naturally assigned to them. On the other hand, the ENGOs do not ignore totally the other to topic, building a 2 comprising arguments on the market and agriculture, by summing up their concerns that those interests are hardly lobbied.



In the policy theory, when studying framing it is a lot of accent on the ambiguity of facts (Cairney 2014). In the Glyphosate examples both ENGOs and COPA-COGECA, blame the ambiguity (lobbying, scientific evidence of the chemical safety) of the position presented by the other party.

This comparative table support the idea of building the argument based on the existing discourses already. “We have to always be mindful of the messages [of our opponents] that is because effectively they set the narrative, they set the agenda so to speak.” (Irina). “So our messaging is always based on the narratives that are defined by the other part and I think that often when it comes to the way we build our narratives and also the way we make our arguments for our policy positions they always have in mind these. Always have to and in agriculture we have to specifically be very mindful of it because we are not as influential as them” said one representative of the environmental non-governmental sector. Using the arguments build up on the counter-arguments is also very useful in helping the decision maker in comparing both sides, pros and cons, since the science of environmental problems is very complex (Hajer 2005). Moreover it is clear that the narrative debate is a part of a more comprehensive political debate and therefore they are being constructed with arguments from various topics. On the Glyphosate debate, based on these 4 documents I identified four topics: environment, health issues, trade and market limitations and food safety and agriculture. Moreover each of these categories can be fragmented into more specific subfields; as for example environmental issues in the table concern soil fertility and erosion, greenhouse gas emissions, plant and animal biodiversity.

### **Bringing new topics to the table**

Building narratives and counter-narratives are a usual practice in the EU communication. Hajer (2005) encourages the use of “story lines” to convey meaning and help policy-makers, that depend on expert interpretations, make their decisions.

One “important working and political instrument” for the EP is the production of own initiative reports by the MEPs. The goal is to initiate discussion on certain topics of interest (EP), express position on it and sometimes it can be seen as “an early phase of a legislative cycle”. The reports are a common work of the MEP and various think tanks (David), and they are being voted through plenary (Laura). “You have to lobby in the [political party name] in the Agri committee to explain why it is interesting to draft a report on this topic. So you need the approval of the party, the approval of the Agri Committee, and then the approval of the Council of Committees. So all the presidents of Committees in the European Parliament”. The rapporteur and the topic is made public and then the rapporteur is contacted by all interested stakeholders like think-tanks, farmers’ syndicates, ministries of agriculture, NGOs.

Here are all the current own-initiative reports within the Committee of Agriculture and Rural Development under the section of “work in progress”: Responsible ownership and care of equines (2016/2078(INI)); Minimum Standards for the Protection of Farm Rabbits 2016/2077(INI); CAP tools to reduce price volatility in agricultural markets 2016/2034(INI); How can the CAP improve job creation in rural areas? 2015/2226(INI); Annual Report on EU Competition Policy 2016/2100(INI); An EU strategy for the Alpine region 2015/2324(INI); Annual report 2014 on subsidiarity and proportionality 2015/2283(INI).

Each of them is a new narrative on the table of discussion and thus a new reason for NGOs to be on guard. “We are watching the reports and make behind the scenes work on them” (Irina): writing letters, having meetings with MEPs (Laura, Irina, Augusto). “Some reports are very biased towards the agro-chemical industry and basically are putting their demands in a Parliamentary resolution”. The issue about these reports is that if they are being voted for, even without a legal status “there can be dangerous stuff in it” (Laura), since they can be constantly be referred to as expressions used by the Parliament and “basically gives more legitimacy to their [meaning agro-chemical industry] demands” (Irina). On the other hand,

since Parliamentarians have a lot of things to decide on, they are not always able to be well informed on all of them and can over-look things. And this is where ENGOs can get involved on environmental concerns within the Agri Committee initiatives, by saying what they should vote for, and what should be out of the reports. Another reason for getting involved in the discussion of these reports discussion, sometimes even if the position stated there is in resonance with the one of the NGO is to keep yourself always associated with the topic “so that they know that you are still active, you work and they don’t forget you”. For example for the Arche Noah every time the word “genetic diversity” comes up, MEPs receive a mail from them. So NGOs take care to be associated with a certain topic and a certain narrative that they promote.

### **Putting on the right CAP**

The last narrative building that came up in several of my interviews that is crucial in agricultural policy, is building a narrative on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) itself. As stated on the European Commission website:

“CAP is aimed at helping European farmers meet the need to feed more than 500 million Europeans. Its main objective is to provide a stable, sustainably produced supply of safe food at affordable prices for consumers, while also ensuring a decent standard of living for 22 million farmers and agricultural workers” (EC 2012).

On the page called CAP at glance, this is the only bold written section that aims to underline the core of the CAP. Environment is not really an element of concern in this statement, it very much oriented toward the market, trade, prices, consumer rights. CAP is structured around 3 main support measures: direct payments (financial support for farmers), market measures (regulating demand-supply balance) and rural development programmes (investments in

individual agricultural projects at national or regional level). In the 2013 CAP reform there was brought a “major innovation” called greening, which supports financially farmers that practice environment-friendly farming within the direct payments scheme. (EC 2016a)

Some of the people I interviewed played a major role in promoting greening. The narrative used in order to introduce such a major new cost to the CAP but also support for the environment was built on several key ideas:

1. resonating with Commission's larger objectives
2. providing research on the connection between the decline of biodiversity and European policies
3. “Public money for public goods” - it is less of a scientific argument and more of a principled argument

(Comprised based on the encounters of Augusto, Marcel and Maria).

So the narrative build by the NGOs was basically stating that there is research that proves that agricultural policies do have a direct impact on the environmental state of art, especially on biodiversity, soil quality, water quality etc. Beside that European Commission has the rule of integrating environmental concerns in all the Directorate-Generals, regardless of its focus area. So these two should have manipulated the value side of the policy-makers. But The ENGOs had another powerful argument for pushing forward the idea of greening and that's the fact that DG Agri receiving the biggest amount of money in comparison with other DGs, which are public money. In this context the benefit should also go to the people and not only to a group of privileged farmers. This argument gives legitimacy to ENGOs as voice of the public and also assured an extra-argument DG Agri could have used to defend its high level of expenses.

NGOs imagined greening to be a mechanism of financial incentives for farmers to use environment-friendly practices. But the idea of greening, even if kept its name and some of its initial aims, deviated from what the NGOs imagined it to be. Greening was approved as part of the financing scheme and “50% of the CAP is now sent towards environmental aims, which is nonsense [...] because effectively greening measures do not deliver any biodiversity gain value”. The practices chosen to be incentivized within greening are often practices that do not benefit biodiversity at all.

The negotiations on greening ended up badly (Marcel, Augusto) because NGOs were efficient in communicating their arguments and convincing the Commission, but they failed to do the same with the European Parliament and the Council. Even if the narrative is good and it worked on one part of the decision making process it is important that it is communicated constantly and to all the possible stakeholders and influencing bodies. NGOs promoted their ideas and then the greening issue went to the Council:

“and the farmers lobbyists from each of the different ministers said ‘NO, we don’t want this’ and the Council tears it apart and there is nothing”

and then it went to the Parliament:

“To the Agri Committee that was just full of people who, as my Commissioner said ‘they each have a farm in mind’ [...] meaning they were growing up on a farm or they had a family who was a farming one. So they kept finding reasons why that particular farming sector should be an exception. So when everyone have taken away a brick there was nothing left.”

So the narrative debate is often at the level at individual level as well, and thus in this case an individual approach. Moreover “it was the first time when the Parliament has taken on a new role in co-decision applied to agriculture” (Marcel).

“So we ended up with a CAP that is much worse than i could have been and should have be”  
(Marcel).

It is clear that in promoting their narrative of greening NGOs and other actors involved failed to engage with all the decision-influencing actors and get involved in all the policy processes, that is what is arguable based on the fact that the NGOs focused their advocacy only on the Commission. Moreover, they got stuck in the power of values that the MEPs had, since policy-switch is heavily based on value transformation and therefore it is slow and difficult (Sabatier 1998). Greening of the CAP took place, now this practice is fully incorporated in the payment procedures, and even though it did not succeed in the way it was intended to, I consider it still important to have this word and concept echoing around the CAP. Because narratives, like stories have the ability to live long beyond the process of voting and decision making, and maybe increase its power by the next CAP reform.

ENGOS are already preparing for the next CAP reform that will take place in 2018. “Building a narrative on CAP is quite a lengthy process” said my interviewee from DG Agri. Some NGOs try “to identify what are the key contributors to the biodiversity loss within the policy”, others “identify the measures adopted by member states that support the conservation and sustainable use of plant agricultural biodiversity”, “create factsheets on greening measures on every single member state”, “organize capacity building and explanation seminars on CAP to the member organizations”, try to track what is the DG Agri view on the future CAP etc.

As Thomas put it there is a clear understanding on what has got wrong last time but it is not clear yet what they want the new CAP to look like. Therefore, NGOs are using their own networks and approaches to analyze the current CAP and prepare slowly with a clear message, clear vision, and connection within all the institutions by the next reform.

In these 3 examples of Narratives I touched 3 different situations of creating a narrative: creating a counter-narrative for another stakeholder, creating counter-narrative for the policy-makers and building up your own new narrative. It shows the complexity of interactions they have to have for each of the narrative development and narrative promotion. Each example has a very different timescale: the Glyphosate debate lasts already one year and is not finished yet, the initiative reports last around 4-6 months, including writing process, consultations and voting, while the CAP reform has a cycle of years. They also have to work various types of policy processes: some are legally binding Parliamentary decisions (approval of Glyphosate use in farming), some are initiatives of the MEPs (Own-initiative reports), and lastly the work on a whole policy package (CAP). What unites all these narratives is that through a thorough selection of what kind of information to use and to whom and how to communicate it, NGOs are active participants of the agricultural policy-making process and thus narratives building. Narrative derive from communication and information, but also guides the way NGOs approach communication and information production.

## CONCLUSION

Environmental non-governmental organizations are a small group of interest representation in the field of agricultural policy. In a world where policy-makers influence vastly the reality in which we live and agricultural practices are proven to have more and more negative impact on the environment, the introduction of environmental concerns of the negotiation table is crucial in assuring an environment-friendly policy, and thus Europe.

In my research I intended to investigate the role ENGOs play in shaping agricultural policy debates and what are the tools they use in their communication with other stakeholders. Using ethnographic approach of studying the inner process in the ENGOs activity I was able to reveal details on the importance of information and narrative building in the environmental policy advocacy.

ENGOs benefit from various formal communication channels developed by the European institutions to assure the participation and inclusiveness of the stakeholders on policy process. But these channels are limited to fulfilling the institutions' needs and thus often ENGOs require to find own informal channels for fulfilling theirs. These informal channels are a source of timely information on policy process, position of policy-makers on certain voted issues and opportunity of communicating directly to the policy-makers the vision and message ENGOs have on agricultural policy.

Further I focus on the type of information required for an efficient communication within policy-shaping. The analysis reveals the existence of two dominant flow of information: information required by the NGO for developing well-informed policy advices and information produced by ENGOs as high level expertise. Due to the high degree of technicality of agricultural policy and science-based evidence needed for defending



environmental ideas within EU, ENGOs have to specialize on narrowly on specific working areas. This enables them to be addressed as experts by the EC or EP and be actively involved in the policy debates.

Lastly, in the Narrative chapter focuses on how stakeholders in agricultural discussion build competing narratives when bringing their own arguments to the table. The arguments are build both on scientific evidence, but also aim at the values of decision-makers and large public.

As a result, I conclude that ENGOs take an active position in defending and promoting their values of a more environment-friendly agriculture policy in Europe and engage fiercely in constantly becoming better in this triathlon of policy influence: communication, information, narrative. Despite being marginalized in the policy decisions they work on presenting themselves as needed expertise providers to the policy discussions and develop counter-narratives to the ones' that dominate the agricultural discussion at the moment. The struggles encountered in environmental lobbying are multiple and further research on the activity of these groups in Brussels can reveal more ways of how European politics can ease the penetration of environmental values in the policy-making process, which is proven by the example presented here on the adopting of the greening mechanism in the Common Agricultural Policy. As a result, further research in communication channels and information types used in the agricultural policy in Brussels will allow to develop mechanism that would balance the dominant voices in the interest representation now, but also balance the market and food production core concerns of the DG Agri at the moment with the social and environmental one promoted by the Brussels-based NGOs, that represent widely the voice of European citizens.

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## APPENDICES

### Informed consent

#### Informed Consent

#### Research topic: NGO lobbying in environmental and agricultural topics in Brussels

This form details the purpose of this study, a description of the involvement required and your rights as a participant.

**Information and Purpose:** You are invited to participate in a research study on NGO lobbying on environmental topics in Brussels. In this research I will study the various strategies different groups use to influence environmental policy-making, the interaction between different actors and how they form networks around different issues.

(for interviews) If you decide to participate in the study you will be asked to participate in an interview. It will take you around 40 minutes.

(for shadowing and interviews) If you decide to participate you would agree that certain parts of your activity and advocacy of the NGO to be shadowed and to participate in several interviews on the topic. The interviews will take you around 30 minutes each.

There may be additional follow-up/clarification through email, unless otherwise requested by participant. Our discussion will be audio taped to help me accurately capture your insights in your own words. The tapes will only be heard by me for the purpose of this study. If you feel uncomfortable with the recorder, you may ask that it be turned off at any time.

**Confidentiality:** The data will be worked upon only by me and checked by my supervisor. Within the research the data will be presented partly in aggregated form, partly direct quote but your name and other identifiable features will be kept anonymous.

**Your rights as a research participant:** Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right not to participate at all or to leave the study at any time. You can do this by informing me about the wish of withdrawal directly at any time of the research and the interview/ work shadowing will be stopped and the information you provided will be omitted from the final paper.

**Contacts for questions or problems:** You are encouraged to ask questions or raise concerns at any time about the nature of the study or the methods I am using.

Call me Cernov Elena, master student on Environmental Sciences and Policy at Central European University, at \_\_\_\_\_ or email \_\_\_\_\_ if you have questions about the study, concerns about interpretation of data, confidentiality concerns.

Contact Guntra Aistara, Assistant Professor at the department of Environmental Sciences and Policy and Central European University, and thesis supervisor for this research at \_\_\_\_\_ or email \_\_\_\_\_ if you have any questions or concerns about the study.

## Interview guide

### 1. NGO representatives:

#### 1.1. Organizational management/capital

- Tell me about the history of the organization you represent? When did it start its activity and on what issues?
- What motivated you to open a Brussels brunch and what is its work specific? What is the goal of the activity?
- What activities do you work on now?
- Describe a typical working day in your office. Do you have a particular pattern of the day? What influences its dynamics?

#### 1.2. Strategies

- How do you define the success of a lobbying campaign? Can you tell me of an example of successful lobby campaign and what do you think determined its success?
- How do you choose the strategy you will use in a specific campaigning situation? With whom do you communicate first?
- Could you please describe a classical advocacy campaign? What kind of materials do you have to prepare? Whom do you contact first? What kinds of events do you organize?
- What is your strengths in your lobbying activity?
- Why do you think some lobby campaigns did not succeed? What were the main reasons for that?
- How do you usually choose an issue or policy to focus on? Describe this process for the last campaigns you did? How do they differ from each other?
- What do you focus on in lobbying? [Technical/scientific details, emotional/sensitive topics, business and innovation perspective (meaning to popularize certain alternatives as very profitable business idea or as very high-tech solutions in which everybody wants to invest)]
- How does the knowledge accumulation in your organization happen, how do you develop your lobbying strategies etc.?
- What was the longest lobbying campaign, and what were the components?
- Do you make lobbying outcomes visible, raising in this way visibility of your organization? How do you do that?
- What is the most difficult part of lobbying?

### 1.3. Network/stakeholders

- Who is involved in environmental decision-making? Whom do you usually approach and why?
- Who has the most important role in environmental decision-making?
- What DGs do you mainly work with?
- What other NGOs do you usually cooperate with, on what issues?
- Who else influences decision-makers on the issues you are working on? How do you interact with those actors?
- Who is the most influential interest group in your niche and why? Does it change in particular circumstances?

### 1.4. Processes/ transfer of knowledge/ complexity

- What kind of information are you working with? What are the main and trustful channels of information in your activity?
- How much time as NGO/ individual did you need to understand the rules of the game (policy-shaping in Brussels) and be part of it?
- When do you usually intervene in the process of policy making (early agenda setting; consultation period; legislative activity in the Parliament and Council; post-legislative and pre-implementation phase; monitoring and enforcement)?
- What events organized by NGOs do usually policy-makers attend? How does knowledge sharing between NGOs happen?
- At what EC/EP organized events did you participate last year? What is usually the atmosphere?
- How do representatives of EU institutions interact with you? What regulations govern exchange or procedures for engaging civil society? (Consultations on web portals, open public consultations, advisory groups, workshops etc.)

## 2. Policy makers:

### 2.1. Processes/Policy making:

- Tell me about yourself, what are your perspective on (CAP, Glyphosate, NGOs, policy processes in Brussels, other issues)?
- How do you make your decisions, what factors influence the decisions you make?
- Who are the main actors in agricultural decision-making?
- What is the role of NGOs and interest groups in your work?
- What policies do you think need more/less attention from NGOs and why?

## 2.2. Strategies

- How have NGO advocacy campaigns influenced your decisions?
- What kind of information/support would you expect from environmental NGOs to help you in your work?

## 2.3. Network/ stakeholders

- How often and how do you interact with NGOs? With other interest groups? And how would you describe these interactions?
- How is the access of interest groups towards policy-makers facilitated by EU institutions?  
How is the information transfer performed?

## List of interviews

	Date	Name	Position
1	19.05.2016	Richard	Advocacy Officer
2	23.05.2016	Richard	Advocacy Officer
3	26.05.2016	Anna	Policy Officer
4	31.05.2016	Gabriel	Policy Officer DG Agri
5	01.06.2016	Laura	Policy Officer
6	07.06.2016	Marcel	Policy Officer DG Envi
7	08.06.2016	Laura	Policy Officer
8	09.06.2016	Irina	Advocacy Officer
9	10.06.2016	Christian	Policy Officer DG Ari
10	14.06.2016	Carl	Advocacy Officer
11	16.06.2016	Augusto	Policy Officer
12	17.06.2016	David	MEP Assistant
13	23.06.2016	Brigitte	Research Officer
14	24.06.2016	Maria	Policy Officer

List of organizations: Slow Food, IFOAM-EU, Arche Noah, Greenpeace, European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), BirdLife, PAN Europe, European Environmental Bureau (EEB).

## List of events attended

1. 23.05.2016 “*Why women will save the planet?*”, book launch and panel debate organized by Friends of the Earth and European Women’s Lobby, Speaker Linnea Engstrom MEP (Greens). Location: Mundo B.
2. 25.05.2016 “*Who pays for seeds?*”, public event organized by Demeter, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), IFOAM-EU. Location: EESC.
3. 01.06.2016 “*Circular Economy. Can agriculture and forestry help to close the loop?*” seminar organized by Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party. Location: European Parliament.
4. 02.06.2016 “*Food communities for local development*” lunch-time conference organized by Slow Food. Location: Info point of DG for International Cooperation and Development.
5. 06.06.2016 “*Platform cooperativism*” hosted by Homo Cooperans 2.0. Location: CO.STATION.
6. 14.06.2016 “*Bees caring for Europeans. Europeans caring for bees?*” organized within the European week of bees and pollinators. Location: European Parliament.