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# Transnational activism of social movement organizations: The effect of European Union funding on local groups in the Czech Republic

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## Abstract

Focusing on social movement organizations (SMOs) in the Czech Republic, this article explores the level of transnational activism of these actors. Although knowledge exists on domestic interest groups' choice of European Union (EU) venues for lobbying, the influence of EU funding on protest and public campaigning by actors such as SMOs remains under-studied. We show what the level of transnationalization of SMOs is, what types of transnational strategies SMOs employ, and what explains these choices. Specifically, the article examines the effect the EU has had on Czech SMOs. We are interested in whether EU funding contributed to their de-radicalization and co-optation by the political elite, or rather empowered them to engage in transnational protest. The results of our analysis support the empowerment hypothesis.

## Keywords

Comparative politics, European Commission, international relations

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## Introduction

Political activism at the transnational level has recently dwarfed its nationally bound counterpart in terms of both political and research attention. Since the beginning of the 1990s the European Union (EU) has supported various interest groups and movements in order to address its 'democratic deficit'. The persistence of this problem has at least partly resulted from the skewed structure of EU interest groups, among which business clearly dominated (Greenwood, 2007). Thus a new conviction emerged: the more civil society organizations became involved at the EU level, the greater the chance for European citizens to follow suit and the higher the legitimacy of the EU (Greenwood, 2010; Mahoney 2004; for a recent assessment, see Mahoney and Beckstrand, 2011).

Although detailed knowledge exists on the access of domestic interest groups to individual EU institutions and their choice of EU venues for lobbying, the influence of EU funding on various other transnational activities, such as protest and public campaigning, performed by other actors such as social movement organizations (SMOs) remains rather under-studied. Also, the available empirical evidence on the effect of EU funding on transnational political activism is limited to West European countries. There is little systematic knowledge of what is happening in the new member states of East Central Europe (but see Stark et al., 2006). Although these countries have become democratic, political participation is not high and civil society is not very active. Furthermore, domestic political elites are not particularly supportive of citizen activism, especially since it has been heavily dependent on foreign funding from the EU and other sources.

We explore in this light how EU funding influences various types of transnational activism by the domestic SMOs that represent several social movements in the Czech Republic. In order to answer this query the study draws mainly on social movement literature, supplementing it with findings from interest-group-based research. It first shows how Czech SMOs externalize their strategies and act transnationally, and whether their transnational activities form specific types of repertoire. In regard to the effect of EU funding, we are particularly interested in its influence on protest activities by local SMOs. The literature disagrees about what kind of effect we can expect. Whereas critics expect EU funds to work as a demobilizing and depoliticizing element, thus suggesting a negative effect, others consider them to be an empowering factor enabling SMOs to engage autonomously in political battles (Bell, 2004; Bruszt and Vedr s, 2012; Císař, 2010; Fagan, 2004, 2005; Hallstrom, 2004). They therefore anticipate a positive effect instead. For conventional types of activities, the study tests the non-controversial hypothesis that more EU funding facilitates lobbying and similar types of activities.

The analysis uses data from an organizational survey of 151 SMOs in eight social movements in the Czech Republic; the period covered is 2005–2006. The Czech Republic represents a new EU member state that differs from the old Western democracies on many dimensions. The country is characterized by substantial barriers to political and social activism, where the EU is not only a

financial supporter but also an important political actor providing symbolic recognition to activists and their demands (Císař, 2010). Although we acknowledge that the Czech Republic is not necessarily representative of the other East Central European countries, it provides a suitable basis for testing Europeanization theories in a new context. The study shows that, contrary to the demobilization perspective, sufficient EU funding facilitates transnational protest activities by SMOs as well as public persuasion strategies such as networking. In contrast to the widely shared expectations, EU funding does not affect transnational lobbying.

### **Transnational activism of social movement organizations in the Czech Republic**

Transnational activism is conceptualized as an externalization of SMOs' strategies (Della Porta and Tarrow, 2005: 5; Klüver, 2010: 188), which simply means political activism performed abroad. Thus, we operationalize transnational activism as acting abroad. As Tarrow (2004, 2005) explains, under certain conditions SMOs and interest groups externalize political pressure and start working in a different political arena from the nation-state they originate from. Specifically, while pursuing their political goals such as striving to change the policies of international institutions and states, under certain conditions SMOs are capable of moving their activities beyond the borders of their nation-state to increase their leverage over their opponents (see Beyers and Kerremans, 2007, 2011; Della Porta and Caiani, 2009; Della Porta and Tarrow, 2005; Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

According to Tarrow (2005: 25), opportunities for transnational activism have become abundant enough in contemporary international politics to justify its characterization as 'a dense, triangular structure of relations among states, nonstate actors, and international institutions'. Nowhere are such opportunities as developed as in the EU. However, is the transnationalization of social movement activities generally widespread within the EU member states, or is it instead a pattern specific to only a minority of elite activists? The literature on interest groups (for example Beyers, 2002; Beyers and Kerremans 2007, 2011; Callanan, 2011; Eising 2007; Klüver, 2010) has brought robust empirical evidence. Nevertheless, its attention is focused primarily on lobbying and does not deal with other strategies such as protest. This study aims at extending these findings by examining a wider range of the SMOs' transnational repertoire, particularly protest and public campaigning.

The empirical evidence on the transnationalization of non-conventional types of activism remains fragmentary. When scholars focus on social movements, they usually select environmental, global justice and anti-war/peace groups (Císař 2010; Della Porta et al., 2006; Doherty, 2006; Meyer, 2003; Meyer and Corrigan-Brown, 2005; Poloni-Staudinger, 2008; Rohrschneider and Dalton, 2002; Teune 2010), which can be considered the most transnationalized issue areas of political activism. The available exceptions include studies in the volume by Imig and Tarrow (2001), who examined transnational and domestic protest events in 12 of

the 'old' EU member states in the period 1984–97. Further, there are studies by Kriesi et al. (2007) and Della Porta and Caiani (2009: ch. 3) who studied 77 social movement organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) representing three policy sectors in seven West European countries. In addition, there is Beyers' study (2002) on public interest SMOs and economic interest groups in Belgium. These analyses demonstrate that only a minority of the domestic actors studied are actually active at the EU level.

Focusing either on lobbying, as in interest group literature, or on protest, as its social movement counterpart, most available studies provide evidence on old Western democratic member states, but there are no systematic studies analysing transnational activism in the *new* member states. To our knowledge, only Stark et al. (2006) examined the effect of the transnational ties of Hungarian NGOs on their domestic networking.

In contrast to old West European democracies, East Central European countries might present a different context for how EU funding can matter (see Bernhagen and Marsh, 2007; Rueschemeyer et al., 1998; Tarrow and Petrova 2007). Although they democratized rather quickly in terms of their main formal institutions, these countries are behind old Western democracies in their level of political and civic activism (Bernhagen and Marsh, 2007; Howard, 2003;). Shortly after 1989, citizens turned out not to be interested in civic and political engagement and did not financially support local SMOs. The resources that have made it possible for them to survive organizationally have come from foreign funding, which still heavily supports civic activism in the region (Fagan, 2005). In the first half of the 1990s, the local SMOs were supported by US and European state and non-state actors; since the second half of the 1990s, EU funds have become the most important source of funding: 'The prospect of EU accession... meant that the civic sector across the region felt the pull of Brussels more keenly than Washington...' (Stark et al., 2006: 330; see also Císař and Vráblíková, 2010; Fagan, 2005). Because of the crucial role the EU played in the functioning of civil society and activism in East Central European countries, we can generally expect the effect of EU funding on SMOs' transnational activism to be exceptionally strong (see Alber et al., 2011).

This holds even more strongly in the case of the Czech Republic, where the powerful role of the EU contrasts with a rather hostile domestic environment for political and social activism (Císař, 2010; Fagan, 2004; Saxonberg, 2003; Vermeersch, 2006). The country had a relatively well-developed tradition of pre-1989 dissident civil society organizations, symbolized by the Charter 77 platform and its most notable speaker, the first post-1989 President Václav Havel, who after the collapse of Communism became a vigorous advocate of civil society and social movement involvement in public policy. However, soon after 1989 the general environment became rather unfavourable for activism by SMOs (Fagan, 2004).

First there were the right-wing governments of V. Klaus (1992–1997), who later became the country's President (2003–2013) and did his best to keep political power centres as close as possible to advocacy-oriented non-state actors. Various strategies, from limiting financial support for SMOs to disempowering social dialogue

institutions, and the launching of media campaigns targeted against public activism created a hostile environment for Czech SMOs. For instance, in the early 1990s several prominent environmental groups were put on a list of potential terrorist groups; others were called Communists. The whole concept of civil society had constantly been labelled as the enemy of free citizens. This domestic context, together with post-Communist citizens' apathy towards activism, makes the EU, as the main financial and symbolic supporter of political and civic activism in the Czech Republic, an even stronger actor, with the potential to have a great impact on local SMOs. In fact, a number of studies have shown how the organizational structure of SMOs and their domestic political strategies, networking, and so on have changed owing to the EU effect (Císař, 2010; Císař and Vráblíková, 2010; Fagan, 2004, 2005).

The Czech Republic is not necessarily a typical representative of the Central East European countries, since there are important differences among them (Flam, 2001; Toepler and Salamon, 2003). However, focusing on one country makes it possible for us to keep constant a number of variables relevant for transnational action, such as the level of international dependency, national political culture or resource endowment of the national social movement sector (for the definition see below). On the other hand, we recognize that we cannot examine the influence of the country context in greater detail and, like the other available studies, we can only speculate as to what characteristics make the Czech context specific for the EU funding effect on the transnational activism of the SMOs. In other words, we know that the results of our analyses may be conditioned by contextual factors we are not aware of.

### **Specifying the role of EU funding in transnational activism**

How, specifically, does EU funding contribute to or suppress the various types of transnational activities of Czech SMOs? From the beginning of the 1990s, lack of accountability and democratic responsiveness began to be perceived by European citizens and politicians as one of the main obstacles to the continuation of the common European project. Since then, the EU has deliberately supported external, especially non-business, groups and organizations in its effort to fight the 'democratic deficit' (Greenwood, 2007, 2010; Mahoney, 2004; Marks and McAdam 1999). The EU not only provides non-state actors with opportunities for political action, but also directly finances them. The EU hopes to include all concerned interests and bring its own policies and decision-making closer to European citizens. Hence the European Commission spends over €1 billion each year to support NGOs that advocate public interest – post-materialist – issues (Greenwood, 2007; Mahoney and Beckstrand, 2011).

By consensus, the literature has pointed to the EU as the main factor in the transformation of Czech activist organizations, including their action repertoire (Bruszt and Vedr s, 2012; Císař and Vráblíková, 2010; Fagan, 2005; Vermeersch, 2006). Regarding transnational conventional strategies such as lobbying, information provision and communication campaigns, there is general agreement that

EU funding has had a positive effect on Czech groups, which thus acquired resources to mobilize and eventually get access to EU affairs, at least in the form of providing consultations and attending seminars. In general, this has long been one of the main arguments of the theory of multilevel governance (Fairbrass and Jordan, 2001; Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Marks, 1993; Marks et al., 1996).

However, the available literature has also demonstrated a ‘critical resource dependency effect’ that conditions the multilevel-governance-based argument. Specifically, Beyers and Kerremans (2007) show that, if interest groups are more dependent nationally in their funding, they tend to act solely at the domestic level. Nevertheless, from a general perspective, if interest groups’ action is guided by money, we can expect that their dependency on EU resources will prompt them to engage in transnational action. Organizations need to demonstrate their capacity in the eyes of their donors and are consequently encouraged to act at the international level. By providing know-how and prioritizing issues that are relevant to EU institutions and/or across EU member states, we assume that EU money works as an ‘elevator’ to transnational politics.

Based on these contributions, we expect EU funding to have a positive effect on conventional non-contentious forms of action in the case of groups receiving a substantial part of their revenues from the EU. By supporting domestic organizations, the EU directly contributes to their professionalization and their capacity to act and become involved not only in national but also in European politics. In order to qualify for funding, domestic groups must fulfil a wide range of formal criteria and accommodate EU requirements on various dimensions, most importantly in their organizational structure, goals and cooperation with other organizations (Fagan, 2004, 2005). The EU even conditions eligibility for its programmes on the ability of recipient organizations to establish inter-organizational cooperative ties, which further increases their capacity for transnational action. As some authors have pointed out (Fagan, 2004, 2005; see more below), EU pressure also concerns the strategies SMOs pursue; in this view, the EU simply supports only conventional action.

**H1:** The more an SMO relies on EU funding, the more it engages in conventional action internationally.

Unlike in the case of conventional action, there is disagreement on the effect of EU funding on protest-based forms of action. There are two major perspectives on how EU funding actually works. One group of researchers identifies moderation/cooptation as the main effect or by-product of EU influence and associates it with the de-politicization and de-radicalization of SMOs (Bell, 2004; Fagan, 2004, 2005; Hallstrom, 2004). The other group instead sees the SMOs’ increased empowerment as the main result of EU funding, contributing to their ability to engage in protest activities transnationally (see Bruszt and Vedr s, 2012; Císař, 2010). This debate mirrors the generally established debate on the effect of external funding on interest groups’ and social movements’ autonomy and action militancy in the

nation-state context. Whereas one group of authors views external patronage as the disempowering force, the other group either does not identify any effect, or sees a positive influence instead (see Brooks, 2000; Brown and Troutt, 2004; Chaves et al., 2004; Froelich, 1999; Gazley and Brudney, 2007; Jenkins, 1998).

*Cooptation.* The literature usually assumes that external funding dependency results in the de-radicalization of SMOs (for a review, see Jenkins, 1998, and Froelich, 1999). This suggests that, by providing funds, external institutions either intentionally or more often unintentionally contribute to the cooptation of SMOs by political elites. The external dependency of social movements results in their professionalization, which ‘siphons movement activists from grassroots organizing, thereby diverting them from their original goals and demobilizing the movements’ (Jenkins, 1998: 212). Hence, according to this general thesis, external agents help through their funding to transform militant movements into more moderate and less contentious actors.

The critics of foreign patronage in East Central Europe had already taken up this argument in the early 1990s. Nevertheless, as EU funding gained in importance in the second half of the decade, in the view of the critics the pressure towards further moderation of local SMOs and their involvement in ‘institutional procedures – lobbying, consulting on draft legislation, researching and writing reports and opinions, attending public meetings’ – increased even more (Hicks, 2004: 225).

According to the cooptation thesis, international patronage in general and EU funding in particular impede popular contention and protest by creating professional NGOs whose main goal is grant-seeking instead of helping to establish independent and autonomous non-state actors (Fagan, 2004, 2005; McMahon, 2001; Narozhna, 2004). Owing to its need to obtain policy-relevant information, the EU is interested in what SMOs think. It is, however, not primarily interested in their autonomous capacity for staging public collective action. Therefore, although the EU prompts SMOs to engage in conferences, seminars, round tables, policy consultancy and individual contacts with European institutions, it is not concerned about contributing to the collective or protest capacities of these organizations (Marks and McAdam, 1999; see also Beyers and Kerremans, 2007; Imig and Tarrow 2001).

How is the EU said to accomplish this goal? As in the case of conventional strategies, the primary tool is funding. In addition to supporting transnational lobbying and public campaigns, the same mechanisms are believed to simultaneously suppress transnational protest (Bell, 2004; Fagan, 2004, 2005; Hallstrom, 2004; Hicks, 2004). According to the cooptation perspective, SMOs adjust their repertoire, agenda and organizational structure to EU requirements in order to get funded. As a result, in terms of their action repertoire these organizations abandon more contentious forms of claims-making (see also Kriesi et al., 2007). Specifically in the case of the Czech Republic, EU enlargement and the increasing dependence on EU funding have been interpreted as the main factor in the general demobilization and de-radicalization of environmental groups (Börzel and Buzogány, 2010;



Carmin and VanDeveer, 2004; Fagan, 2005; Hicks, 2004) as well as women's groups (Hašková, 2005).

**H2:** The more an SMO relies on EU funding, the less likely it is to protest transnationally.

*Empowerment.* Jenkins (1998: 212) argues that funding agencies' 'goals are complex'; thus it is not possible to see them merely as tools of strategic moderation. In his research on US social movements, Jenkins shows that external foundation funding did not necessarily lead to cooptation and goal displacement, that is, grant-seeking on the part of SMOs. Rather, it contributed to the professionalization of some components of the movements and 'allowed them to consolidate their gains and protect themselves against attack' (Jenkins 1998: 215). Similarly, Chavesc et al. (2004) have shown that external funding does not actually suppress the political activity of NGOs. According to them, external funding either has no effect or else has a positive effect on political activity.

In the Czech context, international funding has been the only viable strategy for SMOs, particularly those active in the fields of human rights and environmental protection, to ensure their existence and organizational survival, since it was difficult for them to achieve resonance locally. For example, regarding the issue of minority rights, the overall context can be seen as non-conducive in terms of support from both the domestic elite and the general population (Vermeersch, 2006). It was EU funding that helped activate some of these groups to gain autonomy and assist the implementation of EU anti-discrimination policies. Given the rather negative attitude of post-Communist populations towards the Roma minority, it is doubtful whether these organizations would use active strategies, or even survive, if they were to rely on national support. Similarly, a qualitative comparative study of two Czech environmental SMOs (Císař, 2010) shows that the group that depended on foreign patronage was actually more contentious than the one financed from 'independent' sources, that is, individuals. Although not primarily interested in social movements, Bruszt and Vedrès (2012) show a similarly positive relationship between local actors' autonomy to act and their exposure to EU funding for an even wider group of domestic organizations and groups.

Regarding transnational protest, a spillover effect of EU funding can be expected. According to our argument, a certain action repertoire is not restricted to a particular actor; on the contrary, lobbying and protest are components of a political action repertoire from which individual organizations select according to a particular situation. As social movement literature has shown, protest strategies have diffused among all kinds of actors who have adopted them as a standard component of their strategic repertoire (Meyer and Tarrow, 1998). Therefore, although not intentionally supporting transnational protest, the EU's support for the involvement of public interests in consultations and public campaigning necessarily also facilitates more contentious forms of action as its by-product. Once it

supports the non-contentious style of communication with SMOs, it invites these organizations to use all strategies, including protest, if conventional strategies do not work. Thus support for conventional strategies can spill over into protest.

**H3:** The more an SMO relies on EU funding, the more likely it is to rely on all forms of transnational activism including protest.

**Controls.** Although interested in the impact of EU funding, we control for other factors derived from the resource mobilization theory as well as internationally mobilizing grievances/issues. Probably most important among the factors facilitating transnational activism are transnational organizational ties, that is, ties of domestic organizations to transnational structures (Doherty, 2006; Tarrow, 2005). Generally, the network sharing of moral, cultural and material resources dramatically reduces the costs of collective action and contributes to mobilization (Diani and McAdam, 2003). Thus transnational ties can be expected to reduce the costs of transnational activism for domestic groups. They facilitate information exchange and strategy coordination and bring additional resources from international partners. They mediate direct communication between the national and transnational levels. Since we expect groups with more transnational ties to be more transnationally active, we control for membership in transnational networks and for SMOs to have access to a European-level office.

Second, although important domestically, material and financial resources play an even bigger role in transnational activism. It is more costly for an organization to act politically internationally than in its domestic context; thus only the most well-resourced national activists are usually expected to be active at the international level (Marks and McAdam, 1999; Tarrow, 2005). We therefore control for SMOs' income/size of budget.

Third, mobilizing grievances can be an important determinant of social movement mobilization and strategy choice. Grievances can be defined as collectively shared and perceived problems serious enough to lead to a social movement mobilization (Snow and Soule, 2010: 24). In the case of transnational activism, it makes a difference whether the grievance a group deals with originates primarily at the national or international level. For instance, Rohrschneider and Dalton (2002) show that a focus on international issues over national ones has a positive influence on the transnational cooperation of environmental NGOs. We therefore control for the effect of the international grievance/issue.

## Data and method

The article aims at analysing the whole population of SMOs in one country – the Czech Republic. In other words, the article concentrates on the country's social movement sector (SMS), defined by McCarthy and Zald (1977: 1220) as consisting 'of all SMIs [social movement industries] in a society'. The SMI includes 'all SMOs

that have as their goal the attainment of the broadest preferences of a social movement' (McCarthy and Zald, 1977: 1219). In short, it is a social movement. Finally, an SMO is a 'complex, or formal, organization, which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals' (McCarthy and Zald, 1977: 1218). We use the abbreviation 'SMO' interchangeably with the words 'activist group' and 'organization'.

Several strategies can be used to determine which specific SMOs constitute the SMS and/or SMI. Authors usually either rely on official directories such as NGO yearbooks and various registers, or draw on data coming from protest event analysis in order to determine which SMOs belong to a specific SMI or SMS. This article uses a somewhat different strategy. Our research did not go to the official directories, since the goal was to also include informal groups that are not officially registered. Besides, in the Czech Republic there is only a general list of thousands of registered NGOs; these organizations might not undertake any political activism, focusing only on service provision, or they may even be defunct or non-existent. This study is focused on social movements, which form a more specific category – networked organizations sharing a common identity/interest with other organizations and actively involved in public issues (Della Porta and Diani, 2006).

In order to study the Czech SMS, the most important SMIs were selected on the basis of the results of a protest event analysis executed in 2007, as well as previous case studies, and according to the industries that are usually studied by social movement literature (see Císař et al., 2011). Hence, environmental, women's rights, gay and lesbian, civil rights, agrarian, social services and radical left and right groups, and trade unions were selected on the basis of the number of protest events organized in the Czech Republic, combined with additional information from the literature. Owing to the inaccessibility of the radical right, our research was able to study all of the industries but theirs. Within the respective SMIs, we followed Diani's definition of social movements as 'a network of groups, associations, and individuals' (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 4) to decide on the sampling method of individual SMOs. Specifically, the snowball sampling method was used to capture the networks of activist organizations and include organizations relevant from the point of view of political actors themselves. The snowball question ('Please name groups or organizations that belong to the same movement or industry') enabled us to include only the main actors actively involved within a particular movement that meet our definition and leave aside peripheral organizations. The snowball started simultaneously with five key SMOs in all SMIs shown to be the most active by previous research and according to expert opinion. An individual SMO was included as a member of a specific industry if it (1) was mentioned at least twice by other members of that SMI and (2) identified itself with the SMI or the goals this SMI focused on (see McCarthy and Zald, 1977: 1220).

As a result, the dataset of the Czech SMS comprises 151 organizations, distributed between the individual industries as follows: environmental (26), women's rights (29), gay and lesbian (18), civil rights (24), agrarian (9), social services

(15), radical left (16) and trade unions (14). The response rate was high, ranging from 69 to 80 percent in individual industries. In order to take into account our sampling method, when particular industries and subsequently individual organizations were first selected the analysis used multilevel modelling (Hox, 2002). The selected organizations constitute the first level of analysis, and their industries are included as the second-level structure (the so-called random effect).

Our organizational survey was conducted in the period October 2007 – December 2008. Key informant face-to-face interviewing using a standardized questionnaire was employed in order to obtain information from the representatives of the selected organizations.

### *Dependent variable*

We asked the SMO representatives whether their organization had performed any of the listed activities abroad within the last two years: 1 = yes, 0 = no. In order to study specific modes of transnational activism, factor analysis using the principal component method was conducted. The predicted factor scores for three obtained dimensions of transnational activism are used as dependent variables for the subsequent regression analysis. Transnational lobbying ranges from  $-1.1$  to  $4.0$ ; transnational protest from  $-1.0$  to  $5.4$ ; and transnational public persuasion from  $-1.8$  to  $3.1$ . Since there is left and right censoring in the three dependent variables, Tobit multilevel regression is used. It should yield a better estimate than classic linear regression.

### *Independent variables*

*Percentage of EU grants in SMOs budgets.* In order to indicate the level of EU funding, we use the proportion of the budget covered by the EU, which the SMO representatives were asked to estimate. Using the proportion instead of the absolute amount shows the relative importance of EU funding from the perspective of the organizations themselves. SMOs that did not receive EU grants were coded as 0.

*Membership in a transnational organization.* This is a dummy variable measuring whether the organization is a member or belongs to any foreign or supranational organization, with 1 indicating membership.

*Office at the EU level.* This variable is measured by the question on whether the SMO has a multilevel territorial organizational structure. Those groups that indicated having an EU-level organizational unit were coded 1; the rest were coded 0.

*International grievances/issues.* SMOs that indicated at least one of the following issues from the list of issues regarding their thematic focus were coded as working on international grievances: globalization, third world development and defence,

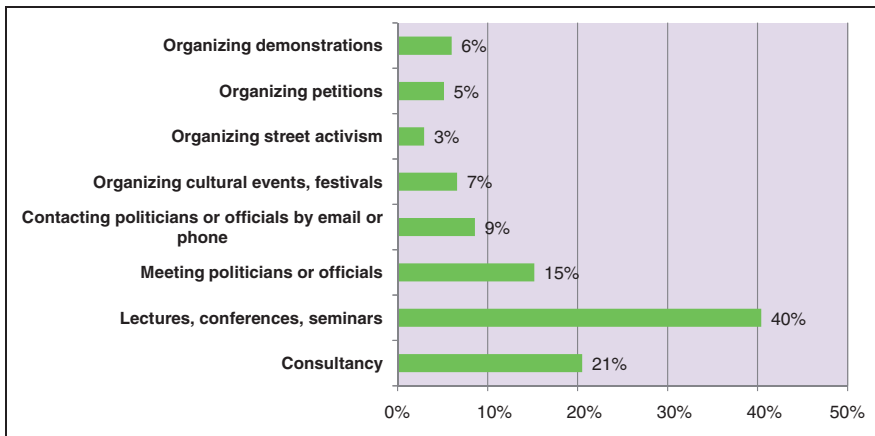
national security, and foreign affairs. These issues are the ones most clearly identifiable as international problems from the list of all covered issues.

**Budget.** Budget is indicated by the question on the total income/size of the SMO budget in 2006. Because this is the only variable for which there is missing data, mainly in the case of trade union organizations that refused to answer this question, the values of this variable were recoded so as not to lose the number of cases. The new coding consists of 10 values that represent 10 groups of equal size. A qualified estimate on the basis of publicly available annual reports was made to measure the cases with a missing value on this new 10-value scale. Most of the estimated organizations ended up in the tenth group, consisting of organizations with the biggest budgets, which are very transparent in terms of their information disclosure. The results of the analyses do not change if run with missing values. Further, the results of the analysis are pretty robust regardless of the measure used; using the number of full-time employees yields the same results. However, it would be hard for us to make a qualified estimate for missing values on this variable. Descriptive statistics for all variables are shown in Web Appendix I.

## **The transnational activist repertoire in the Czech Republic and its types**

Representatives of the studied SMOs were asked whether their organization had performed various types of activities abroad within the last two years. Figure 1 shows that none of the observed activities was performed by a majority of the surveyed groups. Only one activity is performed by a substantial proportion – yet still a minority – of activist groups: giving lectures and attending conferences and seminars were done by 40 percent of organizations. The second most common activity is consultancy and advisory activities, carried out by 21 percent of the organizations. Meeting politicians abroad is the third most common activity, with 15 percent of organizations having engaged in this activity. Only 3 to 6 percent of organizations said that they had organized petitions, demonstrations or performances abroad. Similar to studies focusing on Western Europe (Della Porta and Caiani, 2009; Imig and Tarrow, 2001), our results do not provide any evidence of a broad transnationalization of social movement activism. Only a minority of Czech SMOs engage in political action at the international level.

Focusing on the transnational action repertoire, including a wide range of activities from demonstrations to lobbying, the conceptual and empirical question of its internal structuring emerges. Is transnational activism a one-dimensional phenomenon, consisting of a number of activities, or should we rather speak of its specific types, formed by certain strategies that ‘go together’ more than other activities? A similar question has been dealt with in the literature on individual-level political participation. A long time ago Verba, Nie and Kim (1978) showed that individual-level political participation is a multidimensional concept comprising various modes of participation such as protest, political consumerism and individual



**Figure 1.** Transnational activism ( $N = 151$ ).

Source: Czech survey of SMOs.

contact with officials/lobbying (see Dalton, 2008; Verba et al., 1978). These modes shape people's individual participation so that, if individuals perform one activity from a specific mode, they are also likely to perform other activities included in the same type of mode (Verba et al., 1978: 51–55). Based on the individual-level findings, we can expect that a similar pattern also exists at the organizational level of SMOs and their action repertoire (see also Tilly, 2008).

Table 1 presents the results of the factor analysis for six transnational activities.<sup>1</sup> The activities 'meeting politicians or officials' and 'contacting politicians or officials by email or phone' load significantly on the first factor, which can be interpreted as *lobbying*. Lobbying consists not of collective but of individualized activities that are not public and usually express an explicit political demand. The second factor corresponds to the activities 'organizing petitions' and 'organizing demonstrations' and represents *protest* action. In contrast to lobbying, it is based on collective action and is public; together with politicians it targets media and public opinion. Similarly to lobbying, protest usually has a clear political claim: when employed it expresses a political demand that bears on someone's interests (Tilly, 1995; Tilly and Tarrow, 2007). The third factor is composed of 'giving lectures, attending conferences and seminars' and 'organizing cultural events, festivals' and can be called transnational *public persuasion*. These activities tend to be public and are aimed at influencing public opinion or selected segments, or the media or individual politicians and officials. Compared with the other two types, the main purpose of public persuasion is usually not to express a specific political demand. This type of action can and usually does carry some political message, as in the case of an exhibition of photographs from a war zone, but it is not typically politically oriented in terms of targeting a specific institution and expressing a specific demand.

**Table 1.** Dimensions of transnational activities (principal component analysis,  $N = 151$ )

	1st component: lobbying	2nd component: protest	3rd component: public persuasion
Meeting politicians or officials	<b>0.845</b>	-0.174	0.147
Contacting politicians or officials by email or phone	<b>0.829</b>	0.137	0.046
Organizing petitions	0.393	<b>0.704</b>	-0.232
Organizing demonstrations	-0.214	<b>0.878</b>	0.228
Giving lectures, attending conferences and seminars	0.109	0.193	<b>0.762</b>
Organizing cultural events, festivals	0.051	-0.083	<b>0.748</b>
Percent variance	35.0	19.6	17.6

Note: Entries are factor loadings from a pattern matrix, Oblimin rotated solution of principal component analysis. Loadings larger than 0.7 are in bold.

Source: Czech survey of SMOs.

For further analysis, three dependent variables – transnational lobbying, protest and public persuasion – were created as three predicted factor scores. The correlations between the three factors are positive, ranging from  $R = 0.2$  to  $R = 0.4$ . This means that organizations undertaking transnational protest are also likely to lobby and undertake public persuasion at the international level.

## The effect of EU funding

How does EU funding affect SMOs' engagement in transnational lobbying, public persuasion and protest? Table 2 shows the results of EU funding's influence on the three types of transnational activism. Surprisingly, reliance on EU grants has no effect on transnational lobbying. This finding goes against the general expectation that the EU supports transnational conventional political action (H1). Czech SMOs engage in transnational lobbying regardless of their reliance on EU money. Taking into account other factors, it is not EU funding but representation in Brussels that determines SMOs' lobbying. The positive effect of an office at the EU level and membership in a transnational network or an umbrella organization corresponds with the findings of the available case studies (Císař, 2010; Doherty, 2006; Imig and Tarrow, 2001). Robustness checks have shown that it is not the case that transnational networks mediate the effect of EU funding. The non-effect of EU funding even pertains if transnational networks are not included in the model.

The second model shows results for transnational persuasion. The coefficient of EU money is significant and positive, which means that the more individual SMOs depend on EU grants, the more they engage in transnational public persuasion activities. This result supports the first hypothesis. Given the EU effort to motivate

**Table 2.** EU funding and transnational activism

	Transnational lobbying	Transnational public persuasion	Transnational protest
Percent EU grants	0.003 (0.003)	0.005* (0.003)	-0.013 (0.008)
Percent EU grants squared			0.001** (0.001)
<i>Controls</i>			
Member of transnational organization	0.351** (0.163)	0.376** (0.169)	0.376** (0.151)
Office at the EU level	2.700*** (0.542)	-0.819 (0.587)	1.532*** (0.514)
International grievances	0.542** (0.209)	0.060 (0.205)	0.804*** (0.183)
Income	-0.002 (0.029)	0.020 (0.029)	-0.031 (0.027)
Constant	-0.407* (0.200)	-0.406** (0.190)	-0.215 (0.170)
<i>Random effect parameters</i>			
SOMs variance	0.870	0.961	0.855
SOMs variance	0.146	0.001	0.001
N	149	150	149
Log-likelihood	-195.074	-208.230	-190.344
Wald $\chi^2$	46.09	13.10	57.19
Prob > $\chi^2$	.0000	.0225	.0000

Notes: Results of multilevel Tobit regression with random effects for the SOMs. It shows maximum restricted likelihood estimates, unstandardized coefficients and standard errors in parentheses.

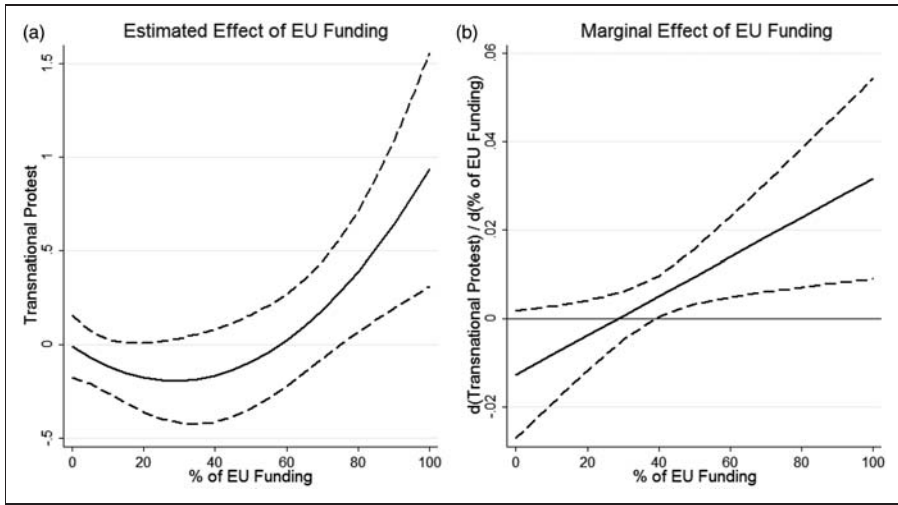
\*Significant at the .1 level, \*\*significant at the .05 level, \*\*\*significant at the .01 level.

Source: Czech survey of SOMs.

SOMs to become engaged in information exchange and resource-sharing across borders, this finding is not at all surprising and is in line with general expectations.

The analysis has shown that the effect of EU funding on transnational protest is complex and does not follow a simple linear trend. The quadratic function estimates the effect better. The significant positive quadratic term for EU funding demonstrates that it increases transnational protest, which gives support to the empowerment hypothesis (H3) and disproves the cooptation hypothesis (H2); however, this effect holds only after a certain point. Specifically, EU funding positively affects the propensity towards transnational protest after 29 percent of EU funding in the budget is reached. Approximately one-third of SOMs have this share or more of EU funding in their budget. Figure 2(a) illustrates the effect graphically. EU funding increases transnational protest only for organizations that have higher percentages of EU money in their budgets. According to the figure, until this breaking point the estimated effect seems to be negative. However, as the calculated marginal effects and conditional standard errors in Figure 2(b) show, the effect of EU funding is significant, with 90 percent confidence starting only at 40 percent of EU money in the budget of SOMs. This means that organizations having less than





**Figure 2.** EU funding and transnational protest.

Note: Figure 2(a) displays predicted transnational protest with 90 percent confidence intervals; Figure 2(b) displays the marginal effects of EU funding with 90 percent confidence intervals.

Source: Czech survey of SMOs.

40 percent of EU money in their budget do not show a significant effect of EU funds on their transnational protest.

This result is in line with the above-discussed resource dependency thesis formulated by Beyers and Kerremans (2007). EU funding begins to work as the facilitator of transnational activism only when individual SMOs begin to be critically dependent on it. This is probably due to the fact that only an organization that depends on EU resources is motivated to be really active on the European level. Activism follows money.

The results of the EU’s funding influence on transnational activism hold when controlling for international organizational connectedness, size of budget and focus on international grievances/issues. As displayed in the lower panel of Table 2, having a Euro-office and membership in a transnational or umbrella organization have the expected positive effect on transnational activism. Contrary to general expectations, which associate transnational activism with resource endowment, the size of SMO budgets has no effect. The non-effect of internal resources on multi-level venue shopping in the EU, measured as the number of full-time employees, is similarly demonstrated by Beyers and Kerremans (2007, 2011) in four West European countries (France, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands). Contrary to the expectations of resource mobilization theory, overall internal resources do not seem to be a condition for transnational activism at all, meaning that a particular organizational size is not a necessary condition for entering the EU arena. However, as the results show, it is the proportion of EU funds in the budget that facilitates transnational protest and public persuasion; the capacity to be connected

across levels of decision-making, measured by having an EU-level office and membership in a transnational or umbrella organization, contributes to lobbying. Unsurprisingly, perceived international grievances positively influence both transnational protest and lobbying.

## Conclusion

Although much attention has been paid to the issue of transnational/European civil society and lobbying, we still have rather limited knowledge regarding the wider scope of activities, including political protest, in the new member states of the EU. This article has aimed at partly filling this gap by looking at the various transnational activism repertoires of domestic-level SMOs in the post-Communist Czech Republic. Specifically, in addition to examining the level, form and types of transnational activism of the Czech SMOs, the study has focused on the widely debated issue of the effect of external patronage on political activism, and explores how EU funding contributes to the transnational activism of SMOs.

The analysis shows that only a small minority of Czech SMOs explicitly utilize political strategies at the transnational level, such as organizing demonstrations and lobbying politicians. The most frequent transnational activity of Czech SMOs is not a political strategy but, rather, participation in international conferences and seminars. Examining the structure of the transnational repertoire, the analysis shows that there are three specific types of Czech SMOs' transnational activism: transnational lobbying, protest and public persuasion. This typology has been used in our further analysis focusing on the role EU funding plays in transnational activism by the Czech SMOs.

Surprisingly, the analysis did not show that EU funding has any significant impact on transnational lobbying. To be able to lobby at the international level, the SMOs do not seem to need financial support from the EU, but they do need to be organizationally connected at the EU level. This result is in general agreement with the findings from the old member states; it is not EU support but organizational connectedness that contributes to lobbying (see Beyers and Kerremans, 2007, 2011). However, the results for transnational public persuasion underpin the generally accepted hypothesis that EU funding supports involvement by SMOs in transnational civil society through educational and communication strategies.

Contrary to EU critics who see EU grants as a demobilizing and depoliticizing factor, and who anticipate that EU funding will result in less transnational protest, this analysis gives support to the empowerment argument: the EU enables social movements to engage in transnational protest. Owing to the lack of systematic empirical evidence from old member states, we cannot say how specific this result is to the particular Czech context. We can speculate that the hostility of the domestic environment, in terms of both the low capacity to mobilize resources from the general population and the negative approach of political elites, may play a role in the EU funding effect. However, owing to our focus on only one country we cannot test this proposition.

By supporting underrepresented interests at the international level, the EU strives to fight its own perceived lack of accountability. Based on our findings, we can say that the EU has been rather successful in that mission, at least in the Czech Republic: thanks to one of its tools – money – it helps SMOs enter the international political arena even if they work with a challenging and potentially contentious repertoire. However, because of the nature of our data we are not able to say which specific demands these SMOs express and how autonomous and independent they actually are.

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### Note

1. The items ‘consultancy’ and ‘organizing street activism’ loaded significantly on more than just one factor and so were not included in further analysis.

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