



**The Monitoring Capacity of Civil Society Networks
A Social Network Analysis in the Case of Gender Equality Policy**

Schrama, Reini Margriet

Published in:
Journal of Civil Society

DOI:
[10.1080/17448689.2019.1598628](https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2019.1598628)

Publication date:
2019

Document version
Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (APA):
Schrama, R. M. (2019). The Monitoring Capacity of Civil Society Networks: A Social Network Analysis in the Case of Gender Equality Policy. *Journal of Civil Society*, 15(2), 123-142.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2019.1598628>

The Monitoring Capacity of Civil Society Networks:

A Social Network Analysis in the Case of Gender Equality Policy

Reini Schrama

Postdoctoral researcher

Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen;

Address for correspondence: reini.schrama@ifs.ku.dk

ABSTRACT: The role of civil society organizations (CSOs) as a watchdog in the implementation process is widely acknowledged. However, little is known about what determines their capacity to monitor EU policy implementation and how it differs across member states. This study accounts for social capital as well as human and financial capital to determine the monitoring capacity of CSOs. To capture sources of social capital, a network analysis is applied in a comparative case study on the monitoring networks of national platforms of the European Women's Lobby across eight EU member states. The analysis reveals that CSOs in western member states are rich in human, financial and social capital, while CSOs in CEE member states compensate for this lack of resources by linking up with the Commission.

KEYWORDS: Civil Society; EU implementation; Gender Equality Policy; Monitoring; Social Capital; Social Network Analysis

Introduction

Civil society organizations (CSOs) provide an important watchdog mechanism in the European policy process (Sissenich 2007; Sudbery 2014). Due to limited resources to systematically monitor policy implementation, the EU Commission relies on societal actors to mobilize against ineffective implementation and pull EU policy down to the domestic level (Börzel 2000). By detecting implementation problems, CSOs can increase transparency throughout the implementation process and advance policy implementation in practice. While this decentralized monitoring system enables the EU Commission to enhance its control over the full implementation process, CSOs can use it to support policy reform at the national level (Pleines 2010).

Particularly CSOs in the new member states have prioritised the monitoring of EU requirements both during and after accession (Stark et al 2006). During accession, monitoring was aimed at ensuring that national legislation included enforcement mechanism and correctly reflected the terminology of EU directives. After accession, the focus of monitoring shifted towards the institutional efforts required to implement EU policies on the ground. Monitoring the efforts of institutional mechanisms to implement EU legislation on gender equality has become a critical task for women's rights groups across the EU and in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region in particular. To support national policy reforms and institutional efforts towards gender equality, CSOs utilize a variety of monitoring strategies. They take stock of the implementation of related EU legislation, monitor government strategies to ensure equal treatment in employment and social protection, speak up against fall backs concerning institutional mechanisms for gender equality and publish shadow reports to provide input on infringements on women's rights at the national level (EWL 2015).

To effectively monitor and assess whether institutional mechanisms are in place to ensure the implementation of EU gender equality policy in practice, CSOs need the capacity to engage in these type of activities. The question is, what determines the monitoring capacity of CSO and how does it differ across member states? CSO strength may not be equally distributed across Europe (Petrova and Tarrow 2007). Civil society is reported to be particularly weak in the CEE countries as a result of low levels of civic participation and a lack of institutionalization in the standard political process (Howard 2003). However, other studies have pointed out that CSOs in the CEE region may be able to compensate for these weaknesses through inter-organizational relations (Foa and Ekiert 2016; Petrova and Tarrow 2007; Císař and Navrátil 2014). Instead of having high levels of civic participation, civil society consists of staff-driven advocacy organizations that develop inter-organizational relations among other interest groups and between political parties, power holders and other institutions (Petrova and

Tarrow 2007; Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Keck and Sikkink 1998). These inter-organizational relations, instrumental for the exchange of information and other resources, are especially prevalent in the new social movements, such as the networks of human rights and women rights groups (Walker 1991; Baldassari and Diani 2007). This type of resources makes up for a different kind of capital than the more classical measures of civil society capacity, such as financial capital (funding) and human capital (staffing and volunteers) and formal access to policy-making (consultation).

This study takes a network approach to capture the monitoring capacity of CSOs in all its facets. By defining monitoring as the collection and dissemination of information on issues of implementation of EU gender equality law and conceptualizing a monitoring network as a pattern of exchange, a network approach has the potential to analyse monitoring capacity in terms of social capital. Monitoring entails coordination among stakeholders at different levels of the policy process and the gathering and transmission of information about the implementation performance can help CSOs gain credibility and leverage over policy-makers (Fox 2001; Andanova and Tuta 2014).

Monitoring requires CSOs to engage with all kinds of actors. First, civil servants and political actors collect background information, regularly review priorities and reflect on activities in relation to policy implementation. Second, transnational CSOs can provide input for the data collection process, report on implementation efforts across the EU and widely distribute information. Third, local CSOs can provide specific knowledge and feedback on the concrete impact of policies in practice. Lastly, independent research institutions contribute through extensive data collection and external evaluations (Beetham and Popovic 2009). By mapping out the networks of eight national platforms of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) used for monitoring the implementation of EU policy on gender equality in both western and CEE member states, this study intends to uncover what determines monitoring capacity and how it differs across member states.

Social capital in civil society monitoring networks

As proposed by Lin, Cook and Burt (2001) the network concept provides a useful representation of social structure to study social capital. Networks represent a pattern of interaction and exchange between individuals or organizations and can be seen as an informal institution that mediates the dynamics of interaction. The network of inter-organizational linkages of CSOs is a source of social capital as the structure of relations among and between actors facilitates collective action (Coleman 1988).

It is likely that the national platforms of the EWL in different member states vary in their monitoring capacity, not only because of financial and human resources, but

also due to a different organization of civil society. Moreover, this network structure does not result directly from country characteristics such as traditions in interest mediation or civic dialogue, it is shaped through the configuration of relations between civic actors, government actors, political actors and researchers. Monitoring capacity is conceptualized by looking at what relationship ties matter, what network structure likely enhances social capital and what network properties account for this.

Three types of relationship ties matter for the structure of a network of civil society actors. First, civic participation is considered to be an important aspect of CSOs (Howard, 2003; Stark et al. 2006; Carmin 2010). Connections to their constituency provide CSOs with information on their member's preferences and offer understanding of local priorities. Having a member-base and being in touch with local interests does not only make CSOs more representative, it also enables them to extract resources from their members. CSOs with a member-base enjoy the support of volunteers and are better able to mobilize their constituency into collective action. Local organizations like this make it possible to monitor information at a low cost.

Second, the extent to which CSOs are embedded in civil society by ties to other civil society actors on a national, regional and European level is important for their functionality. Cooperation among CSOs increases channels through which exchange of information can occur. Collaborating CSOs can increase their effectiveness by pooling resources and sharing relevant information in a timely matter (Stark et al. 2006).

Third, it is not only about connections within civil society, ties to relevant actors outside the civic domain matter as well. Collaboration or informal contacts with other types of actors relevant to the policy field are important indicators of the connectivity of civil society. These are valuable connections, since this kind of associativeness makes it more likely that an actor is recognized as a legitimate interlocutor by public authorities, resulting in influence and the ability to put information to action (Stark et al. 2006; Carmin 2010).

Participatory, embedding and associative ties lead to different patterns of relations, which can be studied with a network approach. Baldassari and Diani (2007) demonstrated that CSOs are embedded into dense clusters of exchange with cross-sectional ties integrating them into the broader network. These network properties of clustering on the one hand and segmentation on the other hand are also relevant for monitoring networks. I define monitoring networks as the pattern of linkages among actors used for exchanging information on the implementation process. This network requires that actors are able to gather valuable information, disseminate it in a reliable way and mobilise it by providing the relevant decision-makers with the information.

Hence access to information combined with the influence to disseminate and mobilise it are the crucial dimensions of the monitoring capacity of CSOs (Andanova and Tuta 2014).

Building on Coleman's (1988) and Granovetter's (1973) work on how network structure relates to social capital, Burt (2001) has theorized how it is exactly the combination of network closure (clustering) and structural holes (bridging ties) that facilitates coordinated action. The idea is that a network is in need of new information and ties that bridge so-called structural holes to disperse new information are the source of added value, while network closure is critical in realizing this added value by improving communication and enhancing trust. Clustering is the extent to which the ties in the network shape closed triads (Holland and Leinhardt 1971). This feature of transitivity can be summarized by the saying: "friends of my friends are my friends". Transitivity is expected to enhance trust in a network, as is argued Leifeld and Schneider (2012) in their study on information exchange in policy networks. The more shared partners, the more social trust there is between the actors and the more likely it is that information exchange and collaboration occurs. High centralization is also indicative of network closure, because communication can be channelled through central coordinating actor (Sandström and Carlsson 2008).

Structural holes in a network are a source of social capital because they create an advantage for the actors that span these holes in the sense that they can tap into new information that is circulating in either side of the network. Structural holes are an opportunity for actors to connect otherwise unconnected parts of the network through bridging ties. These bridging ties allow them to broker the flow of information and gain control over the dissemination of that information (Burt 2001). One way of capturing this type of connectivity is by betweenness centrality in a network. The more network actors connect to each other through other actors, the more open the network structure is (Freeman 1979).

In sum, I expect that other than institutional, human and financial resources, monitoring capacity depends on the social capital societal actors have at their disposal. Civil society networks need to be linked to their constituency, embedded in close-knit interactions in the civic domain and associative by linking up to a diverse set of actors outside their domain (Stark et al. 2006; Carmin 2010). This social capital can be captured by the combination of structural features of network closure and structural holes (Burt 2001). These features will bring about the most effective network structure of civil society monitoring networks. To be able to monitor the complex implementation process of multi-level policies such as the EU gender directives CSOs need to span structural holes to access variety of informational sources and

disseminate valuable information in a credible manner through close-knit interactions.

Research design

EU policy on gender equality

This study focuses on the policy field of gender equality and on the implementation of the EU gender directives in particular (as indicated in table 1). Central to EU gender equality law is 1) prohibition of direct discrimination and the instruction to discriminate for reasons of being male or female and reasons of pregnancy, 2) the prohibition of indirect discrimination on the condition that the apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice is not objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim is appropriate and necessary, 3) the prohibition of harassment and sexual harassment and 4) the option (but not requirement) to adopt measures to take positive action in order to ensure full equality between men and women in working life (Burri 2014).

This study focusses on how CSOs can monitor the implementation of these key concepts of EU gender equality law in practice. Practical implementation entails that institutional mechanism are set in place so that victims of discrimination are able to defend their rights and invoke the principle of equal treatment in national courts. National judicial systems should also ensure that the burden of proof lies with the respondent instead of the claimant and sanctions following from a proceeding should be effective, proportional and dissuasive. Furthermore, to assist victims of discrimination, provide information about the existence of anti-discrimination law, investigate discriminatory practices and publish reports and recommendations on issues related to discrimination member states need to designate equality bodies.

Practical implementation of the principle of equal treatment needs to be in accordance with EU law and is something that takes continuous institutional efforts. Problems regarding the practical implementation of the principle of equal treatment of women and men arise when judicial proceedings are too costly and lengthy, thereby constraining the ability of victims of discrimination to defend their rights and rely on EU gender equality law in national courts. In addition, lack of awareness of the required reversed burden of proof among judges and other members of the legal profession could lead to misapplication. Furthermore, due to legal traditions or lack of consideration, the range of sanctions available to judges may not be fully exploited. This potentially leads to unsatisfactory remedies that do not outweigh the costs of the proceeding or repair the damages inflicted upon the victim and to merely symbolic

penalties that are not considered to have a dissuasive effect. Finally, in practice, a lack of sufficient resources and qualified staff may hamper equality bodies to fulfil their required tasks (Milieu 2011; Ammer et al 2010).

Although the EU Directives needed to be transposed in national law a decade ago, their implementation in practice requires continuous fine-tuning and monitoring, even years after transposition. Reported threats of severe cuts in public spending in across Europe and a shift of priorities as a result of populist and conservative politicians in the CEE region in particular, make that monitoring the functioning of the institutional mechanisms towards gender equality is as pressing as it was just after transposition (EWL 2015).

Table 1 here

Gender equality is an area of social policy in the European Union that is relatively well developed and in which a variety of CSOs are actively involved. Both civic and political actors, including all sorts of women's groups, labour unions and political parties, interact with each other on further regulation concerning gender equality. The EWL is considered the largest and most influential transnational women's network in Europe with close ties to EU institutions (Lang 2009). It is a European umbrella organization initiated in the 1990 to promote coordination among women's groups across all member states and advocate gender equality on a European level. It is an encompassing association of national members, which in turn represent CSOs within the member states. In this sense, national member associations can function as gatekeepers, through which CSOs are formally linked to the European level.

Monitoring networks of CSOs in CEE and Western Europe

In this study, the personal networks of eight national platforms were mapped out for social network analysis. The selection of cases represents four of the founding members of the EWL, the national platforms in the Netherlands, Denmark, Luxembourg and Germany, and four members that have joined at a later stage, the Hungarian Women's Lobby in 2003, the Lithuanian Women's Lobby in 2004, the Czech lobby in 2005 and the Bulgarian coordination of the EWL in 2007. These cases allow for an analysis on CSO monitoring networks that potentially vary based on the strength and weaknesses of civil society, levels of state capacity and the perceived contributions by both the national government and EU institutions in tackling gender inequality.

First, several studies have pointed out weaknesses of civil society in CEE countries,

due to their communist heritage (Howard 2003; Raiser et al. 2001). Women's groups in particular have experienced problems getting public support and institutional access, as the general assumption was that gender equality was already achieved under socialism (Císař and Vrablikova 2010). Moreover, because of this association with the old regime, compared to other human rights, gender equality was not considered a salient issue by the anti-regime mobilization (Heitlinger 1996). Compared to western member states civic participation is demonstrated to be consistently lower in CEE member states. A systematic analysis on the weakness of civil society in post-communist Europe by Howard (2003) points out that citizens in these countries have lost trust in political institutions and rely on their private networks instead. This is in contrast with the much more institutionalized social movements in western member states that resulted in professionalized CSOs that are seen as legitimate stakeholders in political processes (Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Della Porta and Diani 2006). Still, recent studies demonstrate that CSOs in CEE member states are not that powerless if you take into account other indicators of strength (Foa and Ekiert 2016). CSOs may have adopted a different strategy to compensate for their lack of members and volunteers (Císař and Navrátil 2014) by gaining legitimacy through the formation of partnerships and ad-hoc coalitions as staff-driven advocacy organizations (Petrova and Tarrow 2007). These different patterns of civil society strength are likely to reflect in distinct arrangements of CSOs monitoring networks.

Second, state capacity is particularly low in CEE member states. Due to their low government effectiveness¹ (mean = 0.74, min = 0, max = 1.02), CEE member states have less capacity to implement policies accordingly and may not be able to provide credible access to CSOs and accommodate societal demands in interest intermediation. Western member states, on the other hand, benefit on average from more effective governments² (mean = 1.41, min = 0.40, max = 2.02). Strong bureaucratic capacities prove to provide a scope condition for CSOs' ability to positively affect policy implementation (Schrama and Zhelyazkova 2018). When governmental actors are not able to facilitate meaningful access to the policy process, this may affect the monitoring strategies CSOs will use. Instead of direct channels to national governments, CSOs can choose to bypass the state and try to use the influence of EU institutions instead.

¹ Scores of government effectiveness were taken from the Worldwide Governance Indicators by the World Bank (2014).

² Some western member states do score low on government effectiveness, such as Italy (0.38) and Greece (0.40). However, a majority of Italian and Greek citizens do think that in the past 10 years their own governments have contributed more to tackling gender inequality than the EU institutions.

Figure 1 here

Finally, in order to put the CSOs monitoring efforts into context, it is helpful to look into the degree to which member states fail to correctly implement key provisions of the Equal Treatment Directive, the Gender Directive and the Recast Directive in practice. To assess how the level of implementation of EU gender equality policy in practice I rely on evaluation reports (Milieu 2011; Ammer et al 2010) about member states' implementation performance regarding the key provisions of these directives. Practical implementation is measured as the share of provisions that is implemented correctly. Figure 2 displays two important patterns. First, it can be observed that member states in the West indeed do a better job at ensuring that victims of discrimination are able to defend their rights in court, judges correctly apply the reversal of the burden of proof and equality bodies are properly funded and staffed. Second, and more interestingly, Bulgaria's implementation performance regarding these provisions resembles much more that of its western counterparts than that of the other CEE member states.

Figure 2 here

Data collection and methodology

Data was collected by structured interviews combined with a computer-assisted telephone survey using the egocentric network data collection program EgoNet (McCarty 2003). The individuals that took part in the survey were representatives of the national platforms at the General Assembly of the EWL and considered to be experts on their organization and its network. The survey took place in two stages. In the first stage, experts of the national platforms were contacted over email and asked to name all the actors in their network. In the second stage an online meeting was planned to question on the characteristics of their organization (ego), the type of relations they maintained with the named actors (alters) and the relations their alters maintained with each other.

The definition of a tie between actors in the monitoring network is: "a regular exchange of information about affairs related to the implementation of the EU gender directives". The experts were first prompted to name all relevant actors with whom they had such a relation. Afterwards, the respondents were asked which alters were *very likely* to maintain a relation with each other. Relations between ego and alter were valued by relation type. Relation type was indicated by: one of *information sharing* or also one of *collaboration*. A relation of information sharing is defined as the sharing of

information only when it is advantageous to either or both of you. A relation of collaboration implies in addition to information sharing that they pooled resources and worked together towards a common goal.

Based on the ego networks, a clustered graph was created by excluding ego and grouping the alters from either or both the same *type* (civic actors, political actors (parliamentarians), government actors (ministries, the EU Commission or UN bodies) or researchers/experts (equality bodies, think tanks, research institutes or academics)) and polity *level* (National, EU or International) in classes. Both the size and the density of the inter- and intra-class ties is calculated to visualize clustered graphs (Brandes et al. 2008). The circles are proportional to the total number of actors belonging to that class and its colour reflects the density and is proportional to the weight of the corresponding intra-class ties. The colour of the edges is proportional to the weight of the corresponding inter-class ties and reflects the density of ties between classes. The width of the edges is again proportional the number of ties connecting the different classes. In other words, the larger the class, the larger the circle and the circle gets darker the more actors within the same class are connected. Additionally, the more actors are connected to actors from another type, the wider and darker the edge.

In order to capture the network structure properties such as network closure and structural holes, levels of transitivity, degree centralization and betweenness centralization were measured for each ego network.³ The difficulty of comparing such properties across different networks is that they interact with the networks' size and density (Anderson et al. 1999). To see whether levels were significantly different from what is randomly expected of a network with that particular size and density, I performed conditional uniform graph tests. For each network, a reference distribution with the same size and density is created using Monte Carlo methods. Whenever the observed network property is significantly different from similar sized and dense networks from the sample distribution it can be stated that levels are higher (or lower) than expected by chance. This way, I can compare these properties for different sized networks.

Moreover, the attributes of ego that were expected to influence the monitoring capacity of the national platforms were defined as their involvement in *formal consultation* with the national government, the *human and financial resources* and the *size of their member-base*. First, the involvement in formal consultation was indicated on a categorical scale (*annually, bi-annually, quarterly, monthly or more often*) for the time period *in the past five years* and *in the past year* to allow for a more

³ Again, ego was excluded from the network matrix for the social network analysis, since ego would bias the results, as all actors are by definition all connected to the national platform.

reliable indicator. In addition, it was specifically asked whether the organization was ever excluded from formal consultation. Second, human resources were defined by how many in people were currently working for the organization (paid and unpaid) as part of their staff, bureau and/or board. Their financial resources were measured by taking the annual budget of the organization from the year 2014 in Euro. Furthermore, the size of the member-base of the national platforms is taken to account for their representativeness of their constituency.

Results

Traditional measures of CSO capacity

This section introduces the findings the more traditional measures of CSO capacity of the national platforms representing the European Women's Lobby to engage in monitoring activities. First, all organizations, except for the Bulgarian platform, regularly take part in formal consultations with the national government, varying from biannual meetings to quarterly meetings. The Bulgarian, the Hungarian and the Czech women's lobby state they were excluded from formal consultation at least once in the past five years. The Bulgarian coordination of the EWL is still in the process of its registration as an NGO under national law, meaning they are operating as a non-formal coalition for now. Dialogue between their organization and the members of government exist, but only on an informal basis. In the Czech Republic relations with the government improved since a coalition of the Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats formed the cabinet in 2014. Previous to this government, many CSOs were excluded from consultations. Instead, the Czech Women's Lobby would try to influence the policy process by shadow reports to the EWL and meetings with EU Commissioners to provide feedback on policy reforms and the state of gender equality in general⁴. In Hungary, the women's lobby still has a troublesome relation with the government, since Orban's elected government threatened them with audits and to suspend their tax number if they would not cooperate with this. The Hungarian women's lobby was among the list of CSOs working on anti-corruption, human rights and gender equality that were accused of political meddling, because they were partly supported by the Norwegian Civic Fund. The crisis led to an intervention by the EU Commission, opening up a dialogue between Hungary and Norway, during which the Hungarian government agreed to respect the implementation of the Norwegian NGO

⁴ Personal interview with representative of the CZ Women's Lobby, Smiggels, J. (2015/December 18).

program.⁵ In the end, the Hungarian women's lobby was cleared from allegations after cooperating with an audit. However, some of their members are still blacklisted on a secret ministerial note and often attacked as foreign, Soros agents in the government friendly media.⁶

Second, funding evidently divides the cases of national platforms of women's groups in either CEE member states or in western member states when it comes to both financial and human resources (see upper panels in Figure 3). Not only do the women's groups in the latter have an annual budget that is double or triple (or in the case of Germany at least six times as much⁷) than in their CEE counterparts, the type of sponsor is also different. Whereas in the Netherlands, Denmark, Luxemburg and Germany women's groups mainly count on annual subsidies by the government, the national platforms in the Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Hungary are dependent on funding on project basis from the Norwegian civic fund. As a result, budgets of the national platforms in the CEE member states fluctuate much more. The Bulgarian women's lobby is even fully reliant on the funding their members receive for projects, since they work as an informal coalition not alleageable for separate funding.

Third, this lack of budget and continuity also reflects on the ability of the women's lobby in CEE to staff their bureau and board. Not only can women's groups in western member states count on more volunteers, more or less continuous annual funding enables them to make use of considerably more human resources in terms of staffing and board members.

Figure 3 here

When it comes to institutional, human and financial resources, the national platforms in the western member states are indeed better equipped than their counterparts in CEE member states. The picture is more mixed looking at the relational resources national platforms have to their disposal. First, this includes the size of the member-base of these national platforms for women's groups (left lower panel in Figure 3). The women's lobby in Germany has by far the biggest member-base

⁵ The minutes of the meeting between the EEA and Norwegian Grants and the Hungarian Prime Ministers' office in Brussels were obtained by Politico and published online: URL: <http://www.politico.eu/article/orban-backs-down-in-battle-with-norwegian-ngos/>

⁶ Personal interview with representative of the Hungarian Women's Lobby, Juhász, B. (2016/April 16). Bloomberg and Politico (2017) report on recent developments that indicate the Hungarian government is introducing new legislation that requires NGOs to register how much foreign funding they receive: URL: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-01-10/trump-s-win-prompts-hungarian-call-for-crackdown-on-soros-groups>

⁷ Although funding and activities of the German's women's council remain on the federal level, the member organizations of their members may also include CSOs on Länder level. This adds another layer to the organization and could explain the large annual budget relative to their member-base.

(59), followed by the platform in Netherlands (50). Of course, as these countries also have the largest population it can be expected that they also count more women's groups and associations. However, the national platform of the women's lobby in the relatively low populated Denmark also counts 44. This is a notably large member-base compared to the higher populated Czech Republic (28), Hungary (20) and Bulgaria (10). Interestingly, Lithuania's national platform has a relatively large member-base (21) for its country size as well. Luxembourg is of course by far the smallest country and its national platform also only counts 12 members.

Second, the lower right panel of Figure 3 shows both the number and type of relations each national platform has with the actors in their monitoring network. First, the platforms in Netherlands (21), Denmark (20) and Germany (15) have the largest monitoring networks. The national platform for women's groups in Bulgaria might not have a large member-base; they do manage to link up to a relatively high number of actors (9). This finding underscores the ability of Bulgarian NGOs to compensate for lacking civic participation with activism based on linking up to all kinds of relevant policy actors. Except for Luxembourg and the Czech Republic, platforms do not only engage in information exchange, but see themselves as partners working together towards a common goal with most of the actors in their network. This indicates that most of the monitoring networks are quite cooperative in character.

Network visualizations

Diving deeper into this other type of capital benefitting the capacity of CSOs to monitor the implementation EU gender equality policy, network analysis tools can be used to visualize the structures of the monitoring networks of national platforms of women's groups. Both closely knitted clustered interactions (network closure) and exchanges across different parts of the network (structural holes) are important structural features of social capital. One way of looking at network closure and structural holes is by looking at the intra- and inter-class ties within a network. First, I created a class on the basis of the type of actor only. This clustered graph (Figure 4) visualizes the presence of actors belonging to the class of civic actors, political actors, government actors or researchers and experts, and the extent to which actors are connected with actors belonging to the same type or a different type within the eight monitoring networks. The monitoring networks in the Netherlands, Denmark, Luxembourg, Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria consist of all four types of actors, whereas in the Czech Republic and Lithuania political actors are not present.

In the Netherlands and Denmark especially, civic actors are well represented in the monitoring networks. As indicated by the size of the node, it is the largest share of

actors the national platforms exchange information with. Regarding all other monitoring networks, the national platforms exchange information mostly with governmental actors.

Figure 4 here

Except for the Czech Republic, in all monitoring networks governmental actors are relatively close connected in terms of intra-class ties, signified by the darker colour of these circles. In the Czech monitoring network, none of the actors are densely tied within their class. One explanation for the lack of information exchange on issues regarding the implementation of the EU gender directives could be a lack of priority given to the principle on gender equality by the Ministry of Social Affairs⁸. As a result, there is little interaction between the relevant governmental actors on these matters. In Germany and the Netherlands, the actors within the government class are tightly linked, however the connections among the actors in the political class are even denser.

Moreover, the different type of actors in the networks in the Netherlands and Germany are all connected with inter-class ties. All inter-class ties are relatively dense in the Netherlands, whereas in Germany information exchange occurs mostly among the governmental, political and researchers/experts class of actors and to a lesser extent between civic actors and the rest. This indicates that these networks are not only closely connected within classes, but also well balanced in terms of spanning structural holes between types of actors. Although the monitoring network in Denmark demonstrates quite some inter-class ties, particularly connecting civic actors to the other types, the ties are not as dense. In addition, in the Danish monitoring network political actors only seem to exchange information with the civic actors.

An obvious feature of the monitoring networks in the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Hungary is the central role government actors, since they are involved in all inter-class ties. This provides these government actors with a strong position in the monitoring network, since they can broker information exchange across the different type of actors. However, once the polity level of the actors as well as their type (as visualized in Figure 5) are accounted for, it becomes apparent that it is actually the EU Commission that is fulfilling this central broker position in the Czech, Lithuanian and Hungarian monitoring network. Although the Bulgarian platform of the women's lobby exchanges information with the EU Commission as well, their national government actors are still the most central actor in their monitoring network. In

⁸ Personal interview with representative of the CZ Women's Lobby, Smiggels, J. (2015/December 18).

contrast to their counterparts in the East, none of the platforms in western member states exchange information with the EU Commission directly.

Figure 5 here

In light of perceived contributions in tackling inequality between women and men, it becomes clear that in those cases where a majority of society attributes these efforts to EU institutions rather than to their own government, national platforms do indeed directly exchange information with the EU Commission. The exception is the case of Luxembourg; however, this could relate to the fact that perceived contribution by their own government to gender equality is still relatively high. This indicates that monitoring the implementation of European equality law is less of a domestic undertaking in the CEE region than it is in western member states. A lack of institutional efforts by national governments and limited access to the domestic policy process requires domestic women's groups to bypass the state and exchange information on the state of implementation with the EU Commission directly.

More generally, it appears that the monitoring networks of the platforms in the western member states are more embedded into their national civil society. Especially in Denmark and the Netherlands the role of civic actors on a national level is prominent. Not only are they strongly connected among other civic actors, they also maintain dense ties with multiple actors outside the civic domain across different types and levels. In Germany, civic actors outside the member-base of the national platform of the women's lobby do not form a large class, however, the civic class is well connected to both national and EU level political actors and the national government. In Luxembourg, the relatively small network indicates a strong triadic relation between the civic domain, the political domain and the government on a national level. Neither the Czech, nor the Lithuanian or the Hungarian monitoring network features national civic actors outside the member-base of their national platforms of the women's lobby. In Bulgaria, there are other national civic actors within the monitoring network, however they are an isolate within the network and do not exchange information with any of the actors except for the Bulgarian platform. The lack of other civic actors present in the monitoring networks in CEE member states indicates that civil society is indeed less developed and less involved in political processes.

Focusing on the multi-level structure of the monitoring networks, it can be observed that EU actors are present across all of them; however, in the Netherlands, Denmark, Luxembourg, Germany and Bulgaria the monitoring networks consist of a majority of actors within the national polity domain. Although inter-class ties across levels do

occur, actors tend to exchange information within actors of the same level. In contrast, the monitoring networks in the Lithuania and Czech Republic consist of an equal share and majority of EU actors respectively. Here, information exchange across polity level is more likely to occur. The same holds for the Hungarian women's lobby; even though national actors are in the majority, information exchange is predominantly multi-level and national governmental and political actors are isolated in the network.

In sum, comparing the composition of the different monitoring networks provides insights into differences across member states in the type of actors prominent in the networks and the embeddedness and associativeness of actors in a multi-level space. First, whereas networks in western member states seem to be centred on civic actors and embedded into the national domain, it is the EU Commission that is central to the monitoring networks in CEE member states. Moreover, especially in Lithuania, the Czech Republic and Hungary multi-level information exchange is an important part of their monitoring networks. This is fitting for a monitoring strategy to bypass governmental actors on a national level unwilling to open up to input from civil society. In contrast, although all monitoring networks in western member states do include EU actors, there is no tendency toward multi-level ties. However, when it comes to ties across different types of actors, the Dutch and Danish networks are particularly well balanced.

Testing for sources of social capital

Looking more closely to the manifestation of social capital through network properties such as network closure and structural holes I test whether the monitoring networks are significantly more clustered or open than you would expect by chance. By using conditional uniform graph tests I can check whether the features of network closure and structural holes are different from what you would expect of a network of that size and density.

The first indicator for network closure is transitivity, it is expected to improve cooperation and trust among actors that have shared partners and advance the flow of information. We can observe significant high levels of transitivity in four of the monitoring networks, namely in the Netherlands ($p < 0.01$), Denmark ($p < 0.05$), Germany ($p < 0.1$) and Bulgaria ($p < 0.05$) (see table 2). That makes the network of the Bulgarian national platform of women's groups the only network that exhibits a source of social capital in the CEE region. Both in the networks in Germany ($p < 0.01$) and Denmark ($p < 0.05$) the observed degree centralization exceeds chance levels as well. This indicates hierarchy in their network as well as transitivity, enabling actors with relatively high degree to coordinate information flows in the network. Consequently,

actors are better able to mobilize information quickly; hence this feature could also be characterized as network closure.

On the other hand, significant levels of betweenness centralization reveal the extent to which actors are able to span structural holes in the monitoring network. Two of the monitoring networks that also show high network closure also demonstrate significant high levels of betweenness centralization: those in Germany and in the Netherlands (both with $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the ability to broker indirect connections between actors characterizes the monitoring network in Luxembourg, as signified by its relatively high betweenness centralization ($p < 0.1$). In contrast, whereas Bulgaria does show signs of network closure, its monitoring network has a significant low level of betweenness centralization ($p < 0.1$). It appears that actors in the Bulgarian monitoring network are not as able to span structural holes to access and control new and valuable information.

Table 2 here

To sum up, measures of network closure and structural holes demonstrate there are sources of social capital in some, but not all of the monitoring networks. Particularly monitoring networks in the West are rich in social capital. All national platforms of women's groups in the West have at least one source of social capital at their disposal. However, the combination of both network closure and structural holes is rarer: only the monitoring networks in Germany and the Netherlands exhibit both features. Whereas most of the networks national platforms of women's groups use for monitoring in the CEE region are lacking these sources of social capital, the Bulgarian monitoring network's exceptional high levels of transitivity display how closely knitted and trusted interactions potentially provide the national platform of women's group in Bulgaria with the social capital needed to monitor the implementation of EU gender equality policy. To be sure, a direct causal link cannot be drawn from this analysis, as there are many factors at play regarding implementation performance that cannot be accounted for in this study. Still, these findings may point in the direction that Bulgarian CSOs may indeed be able to compensate their lack of formal access to the policy process, extremely low funding and small staff by building a more informal network of trusted exchange of information with government officials, politicians, CSOs and experts.

Conclusion

This study systematically analysed the capacity of CSOs to monitor the implementation of European policy across member states using a network approach. By employing social network analysis to study the capacity of CSOs to monitor policy implementation, not only member-base, financial and human resources can be taken into account, but also their social capital. The aim was to demonstrate how network properties such as network closure and structural holes in networks of CSOs matter for their monitoring capacity and find how the configurations in their network differ across both CEE and western member states. While network closure increases collaborations and improves collective action within a network, the ability to span structural holes within a network expands the access to new valuable information. Since monitoring requires both the access to information and the ability to mobilize it, the source of social capital for monitoring networks is the combination of closure and openness.

Whereas evidence for the existence of network closure was found to be more common among monitoring networks in western than in CEE member states. Furthermore, indicators for structural holes were only significant in three monitoring networks, all of which from western member states. This suggests that generally CSOs in CEE member states are not only lacking financial and human capital, but are also less endowed when it comes to social capital. The monitoring networks of women's groups in Germany and the Netherlands seem to be particularly rich in social capital, as they have both significant high closure and actors are able to span structural holes.

Clearly, social capital and other sources of capital are to a certain degree related. Those platforms of women's groups that gained formal access to domestic policy-making through consultation and were recognized by their government as a legitimate interlocutor were also more likely to receive government funding and able to spend this on staff. The more funding and better staffed their organization, the more time and resources they could spend on engaging in interactions with various actors to exchange information for monitoring purposes. However, the Bulgarian case does show that with virtually no funding, staff or formal access to policy-making they were still able to engage in monitoring activities through the use of their network. This demonstrates that social capital indeed enables CSOs to compensate for their lack of institutional, financial and human resources and underscores that there are alternative measures for civil society strength (Petrova and Tarrow 2007; Foa and Ekiert 2006). Nevertheless, the fact that we only observe this pattern in Bulgaria poses questions on whether all CSOs in the CEE region are sufficiently able to compensate for their

reported weakness of civil society as found by other studies (Howard 2003; Raiser et al. 2001).

However, what does potentially benefit the monitoring networks in the CEE member states is their access to the EU Commission. This points to an interesting pattern in the monitoring networks of these national platforms, namely the possibility to bypass the state and exchange information directly with the EU Commission. The networks of the national platforms in these member states show much more of a European route to monitoring than their western counterparts. This implies that in countries in institutional efforts are considered weak and in which CSOs have limited access to domestic policy-makers, monitoring networks indeed show patterns of information politics as described by Keck and Sikkink (1998). It also indicates that the decentralized monitoring mechanism of the EU Commission mostly relies on domestic institutions to resolve their own implementation problems on a national level, unless they do not have the state capacity to do so. Rich in human and financial resources, aided by national funds primarily, the national platforms in the Netherlands, Denmark, Luxembourg and Germany are more rooted in their national context. In addition, these national platforms have a much more cooperative relation with their national government, enforced by a stronger institutional position as formal partner in dialogue with the state. As such, in member states with an effective government that empowers CSOs through subsidies and provides CSOs with the opportunities to influence the policy process through both formal consultation and informal relations, monitoring at the national level is most effective.

These findings implicate a different strategy for monitoring implementation of the EU gender Directives by CSOs in CEE and western member states. In line with Petrova and Tarrow's (2007) study on transactional activism, the results indicate that while CSOs in western member states might have developed more roots to their national constituencies, CSOs in CEE member states do seem to compensate for this deficit by linking up to influential actors on a European level. Still, this might empower civil society monitoring of European directed policy in the advantage of the EU Commission; the high dependency of the networks of CSOs on the EU Commission does not increase their social capital more generally.

However, these implications should be treated with caution, as the study is limited to eight member states and only applies to the personal networks of the national platforms of the women's lobby. Another limitation to the research design is that it only takes a snapshot of the monitoring networks, whereas monitoring the implementation of EU directives is a longitudinal process. It should also be noted that this study focussed on an area of policy-making that is well established within the EU,

but might be particularly controversial in the CEE region due to its communist past and conservative backlash. Monitoring the implementation of EU policy on gender equality should therefore be considered as a hard case in CEE countries especially. The differences between East and West might not be as pronounced in other policy areas; but if social capital proves to be of value here, it will be *a fortiori* in easier cases. Still, this study was not suited, nor set out, to establish a causal relation between monitoring activities of CSOs and the implementation performance of domestic governments. Further research is needed to study how these network patterns lead to effective monitoring and translate into more transparent and successful policy implementation.

References

Ammer, M., Crowley et al. (2010). *Study on Equality Bodies set up under Directives 2000/43/EC, 2004/113/EC and 2006/54/EC*.

Andanova, L. B. and Tuta, I. A. (2014). Transnational Networks and Paths to EU Environmental Compliance: Evidence from New Member States. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 52: 775–793.

Ansell, C. (2006). Network institutionalism. *The Oxford handbook of political institutions*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Anderson, B.S., Butts, C.T. and Carley, K.M. (1999). The Interaction of Size and Density with Graph-Level Indices. *Social Networks*, 21(3), 239-267.

Baldassarri, D., and Diani, M. (2007). The Integrative Power of Civic Networks¹. *American Journal of Sociology*, 113(3), 735-780.

Beetham, G. and Popovic, N. (2009) Putting policy into practice: Monitoring the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. *A FOKUS and UN-INSTRAW Conference background paper*, Oslo.

Börzel, T. A. (2010). Why you don't always get what you want: EU enlargement and civil society in Central and Eastern Europe.

Börzel, T. A. and Buzogany, A. (2010) Governing EU accession in transition countries: the role of non-state actors, *Acta Politica*, 45, pp. 158–182

Brambilla, P. (2001) *Gender and Monitoring: A review of practical experiences*. BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, London.

Brandes, U., Lerner, J., Lubbers, M. J., McCarty, C., and Molina, J. L. (2008). Visual statistics for collections of clustered graphs. In *2008 IEEE Pacific Visualization Symposium* (pp. 47-54). IEEE.

Burri, S. (2014). *EU Gender Equality Law, Update 2013*. European Union.

Burt, R. S. (2001). Structural holes versus network closure as social capital.

Carmin, J., 2010. NGO capacity and environmental governance in Central and Eastern Europe. *Acta Politica*, 45 (1–2), 183–202

Císař, O., and Navrátil, J. (2014). Promoting competition or cooperation? The impact of EU funding on Czech advocacy organizations. *Democratization*, 1-24.

Císař, O. and Vráblíková K. (2010): The Europeanization of social movements in the Czech Republic: The EU and local women's groups, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, pp. 209-219.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American journal of Sociology*, S95-S120.

EWL (2015). Factsheet of the EWL CEBBS Task Force on the current women's rights agenda in the region. Brussels: Author.

Fox, J. (2001). Vertically integrated policy monitoring: a tool for civil society policy advocacy. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 30(3), 616-627.

Freeman, L.C. (1979) Centrality in social networks: conceptual clarification. *Sociometry*. 40:35-41

- Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American journal of sociology*, 1360-1380.
- Heitlinger, A. (1996). Framing feminism in post-communist Czech Republic. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 29(1), 77-93.
- Holland, P. W., and Leinhardt, S. (1971). Transitivity in structural models of small groups. *Comparative Group Studies*.
- Howard, M. M. (2003) *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*. Cambridge, UK
- Keck, M., and Sikkink, K. (1998) *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca : Cornell University Press.
- Lang, S. (2009). Assessing advocacy: European transnational women's networks and gender mainstreaming. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, 16(3), 327-357.
- Leifeld, P., and Schneider, V. (2012). Information exchange in policy networks. *American Journal of Political Science*, 56(3), 731-744.
- Lin, N., Cook, K. S., and Burt, R. S. (Eds.). (2001). *Social capital: Theory and research*. Transaction Publishers.
- McCarty, C. (2003). Egonet. Personal Network Software.
- Meyer, D. S., and Tarrow, S. G. (1998). *The social movement society: Contentious politics for a new century*, Rowman and Littlefield.
- Milieu (2011) *Comparative study on access to justice in gender equality and anti-discrimination law*. Brussels Belgium.
- Petrova, T., and Tarrow, S. (2007). Transactional and participatory activism in the emerging European polity the puzzle of East-Central Europe. *Comparative Political Studies*, 40(1), 74-94.

Pleines, H. (2010) Is this the way to Brussels? CEE civil society involvement in EU governance. *Acta Politica*, 45(1/2): 229–246.

Della Porta, D., and Diani, M. (2006). *Social Movements*, Malden, MA.

Raiser, M., Haerpfer, C., Nowotny, T., and Wallace, C. (2002). *Social capital in transition: a first look at the evidence*. London: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Ruzza, C. (2014). Civil society actors and EU fundamental rights policy: opportunities and challenges. *Human Rights Review*, 15(1), 65-81.

Sandström, A., and Carlsson, L. (2008). The performance of policy networks: the relation between network structure and network performance. *Policy Studies Journal*, 36(4), 497-524.

Schrama, R., and Zhelyazkova, A. (2018). ‘You can’t have one without the other’: the differential impact of civil society strength on the implementation of EU policy. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25(7), 1029-1048.

Sissenich, B., (2007) *Building States without Society*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007.

Stark, D., Vedres, B., and Bruszt, L., (2006) Rooted transnational publics: integrating foreign ties and civic activism. *Theory and Society*, 35 (3), 323–349.

Sudbery, I. (2014). The European Union as Political Resource: NGOs as Change Agents?. In: Magdalena Góra and Katarzyna Zielińska (eds.) *Democracy, State and Society*. pp. 201-220. Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press.

Walker, J. L. (1991). *Mobilizing interest groups in America: Patrons, professions, and social movements*. University of Michigan Press.

Tables and figures

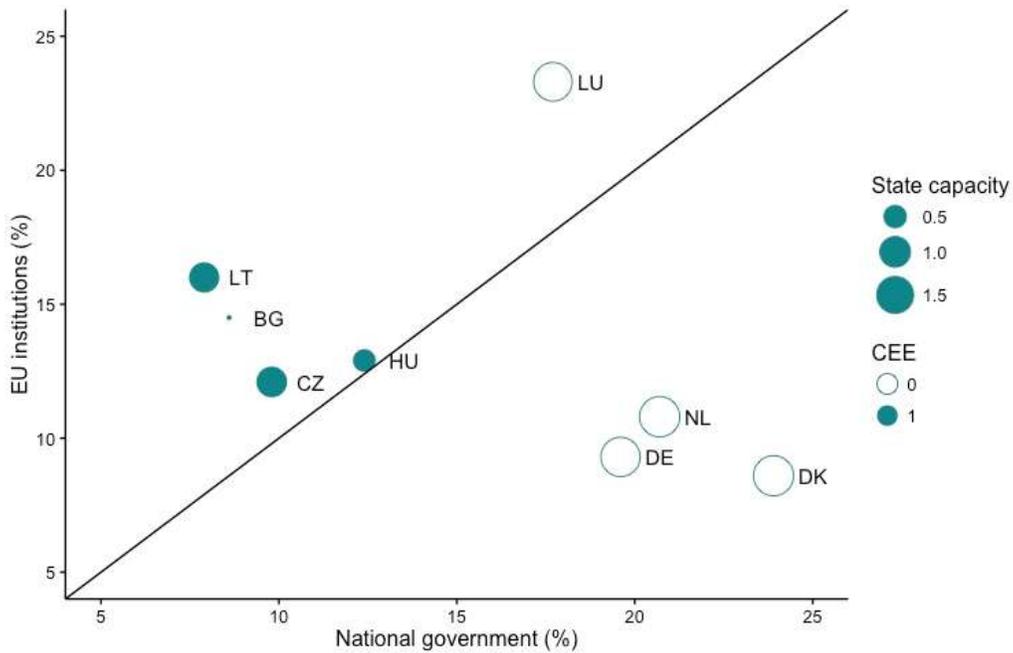
Table 1: *EU gender directives*

Directive 2000/78	<i>Employment Equality Framework</i>
Directive 2004/113	<i>Gender Directive</i>
Directive 2006/54	<i>Recast Directive</i>

Table 2. Results of conditional uniform graph tests for graph level indices

<i>MS</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Density (ties per node)</i>	<i>Transitivity</i>	<i>Degree centralization</i>	<i>Betweenness centralization</i>
NL	21	19.2	H*** (0.73)	- (0.24)	H*** (0.17)
DK	20	13	H** (0.39)	H** (0.38)	- (0.11)
LU	7	5.1	- (0.45)	- (0.57)	H* (0.56)
DE	15	8.3	H* (0.43)	H*** (0.65)	H*** (0.41)
CZ	6	2.7	- (0.60)	- (0.50)	- (0.20)
LT	4	2	- (0.60)	- (0.67)	- (0.67)
HU	7	3.4	- (0.30)	- (0.53)	- (0.42)
BG	9	4	H** (0.57)	- (0.32)	L* (0.14)

L = significantly low value observed; H = significantly high value observed; - = Observed value not significantly different from the sample distribution. * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.



Note: Percentage of the Eurobarometer respondents (2014) that mentioned the EU institutions or the national government as contributing the most to tackling inequality between women and men over the past 10 years.

Figure 1. Confidence in institutional contributions to tackle inequality between women and men



Figure 2. Percentage of correctly implemented provisions of key EU Directives in practice in both western member states (left) and CEE member states (right)

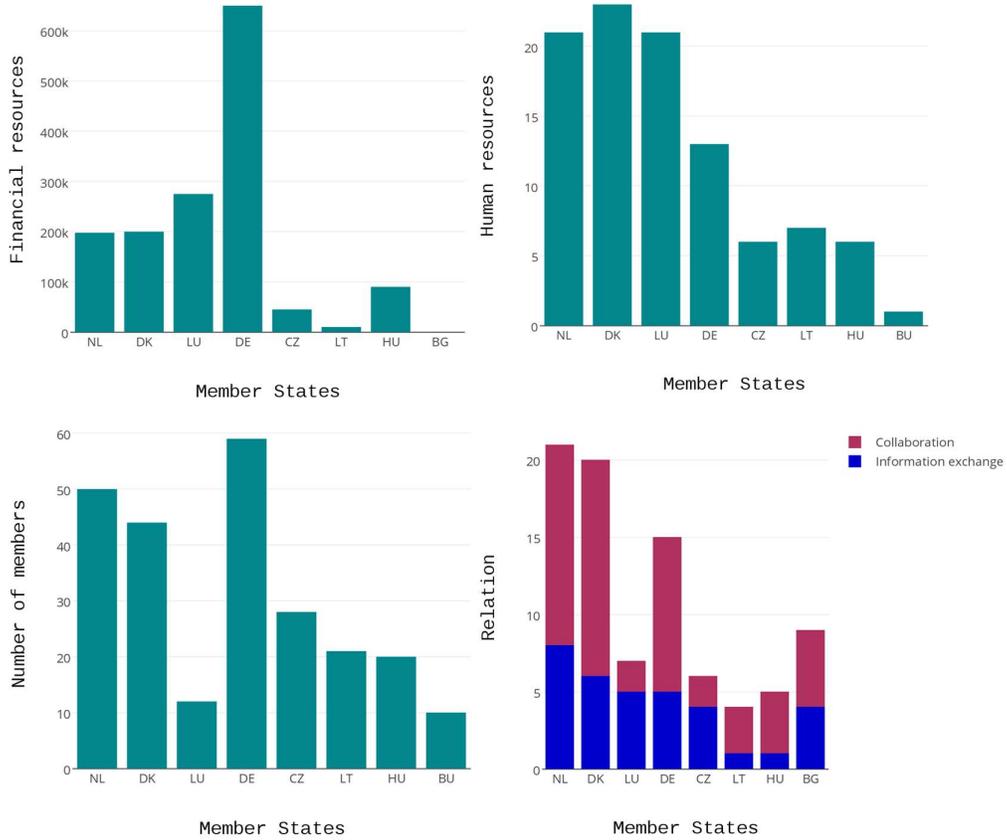
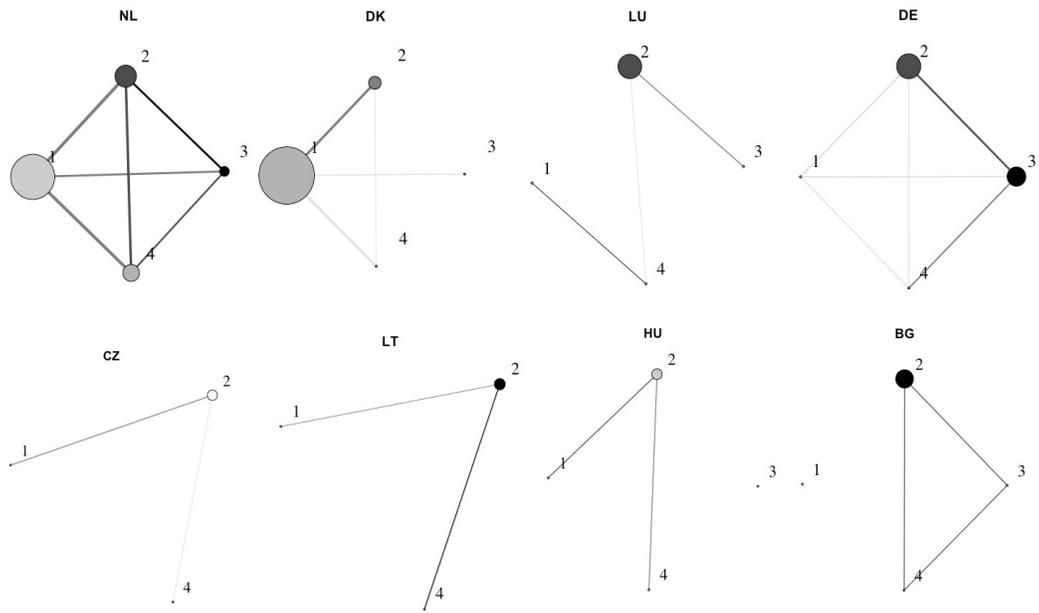
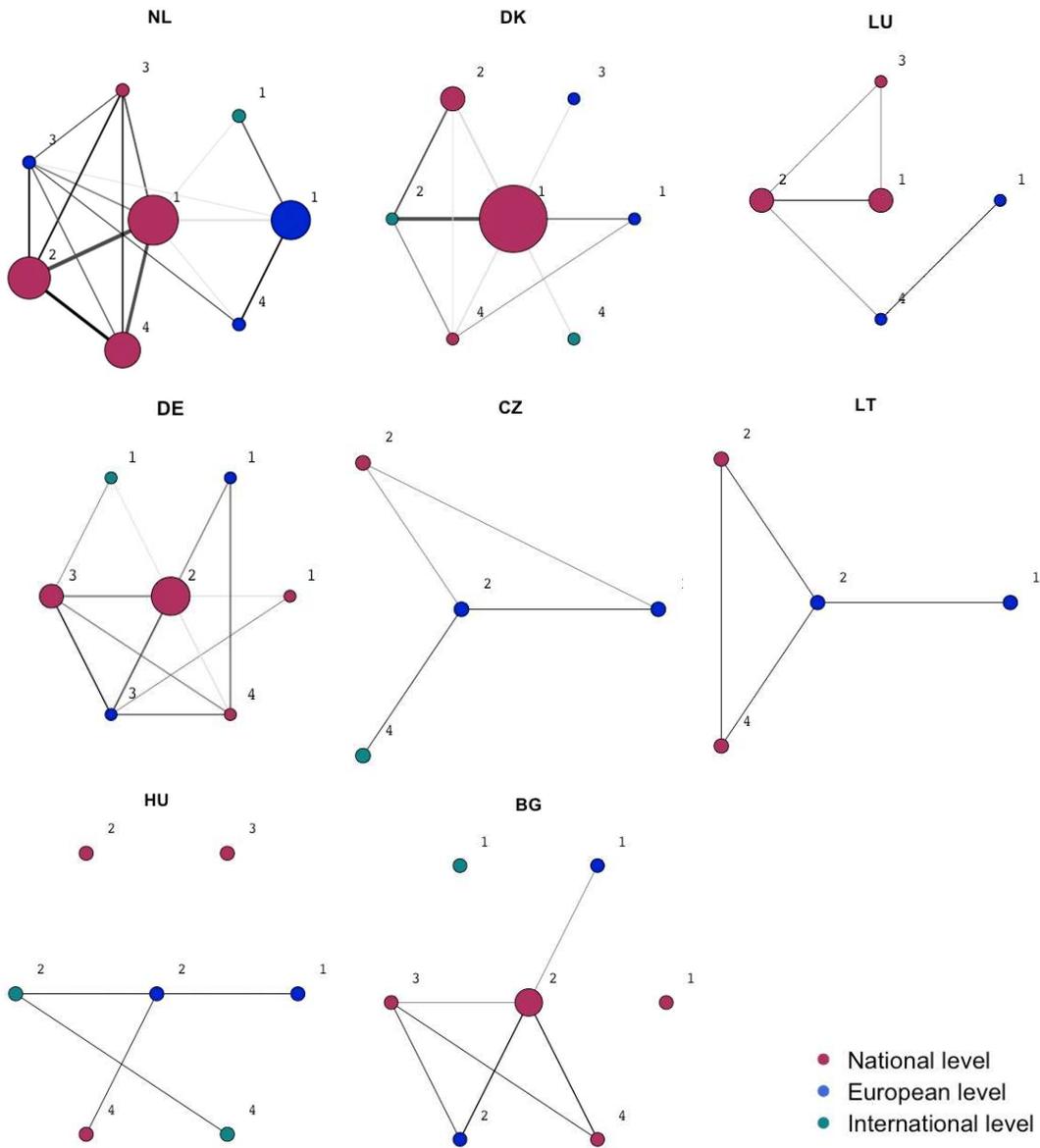


Figure 3. Characteristics of the national platforms of the EWL



Note: (1=civic actors, 2=government actors, 3=political actors, 4= researches and experts). Density is signified by the intensity of colour, while size is signified by radius and width.

Figure 4. Clustered graph visualization by type of actor



Note: (1=civic actors, 2=government actors, 3=political actors, 4= researches and experts), both on national, EU and international level. The radius signifies size of the class, while density of the inter-class ties is signified by the intensity of the colour.

Figure 5. Clustered graph visualization by polity level and type of actor