

Andreas Warntjen/Arndt Wonka (eds.)

Governance in Europe - The Role of Interest Groups

Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2004

From the Preface (Chapter summaries)

As an introduction, the first chapter argues for the complementary usage of tools developed in the literature on decision-making in the European Union (EU) and the literature on interest intermediation aimed at conceptualising public policy-making in the EU. In his contribution, *Volker Schneider* first sketches the theoretical origins of the governance concept along the conflict/integration dimension as well as the micro-/macro-analytical dimension. The central hypothesis is that the governance debate is a modern variant of the theory of the state, or social coordination in general, which adds micro-foundations to prior theorizing. His overview lays the foundation for an actor-centred theory of governance, which explicitly takes structuralist elements and various forms of regulation into account. *Madeleine Hosli*, *Andreas Noeke* and *Jan Beyers* provide an account of political economy perspectives on the role of interest groups in governance and discuss the particular characteristics of the European Union within this context. They conclude that policy-making in the EU is biased towards producer interests and that this bias might be reduced by an increased role of the European Parliament. The chapter by *B. Guy Peters* maps out a normative standpoint by critically assessing the effects of the involvement of interest groups and the increasing degree of extra-parliamentary politics in public policy making and its ramifications for the democratic accountability in the European Union. The empirical section of the volume starts with *Amanda Sloat's* discussion on the debate on European Governance which gives an insider-account on the drafting of the Commission's Governance White Paper, which the author extends to the debates on an EU constitution in the European Convention. The launch of the White Paper on Governance was one of the strategic priorities of the Prodi Commission. It was subsumed, however, by the discussion on institutional reform leading to the Convention on the Future of Europe. *Irina Michalowitz* provides a detailed account of the EU's interest group system, which she characterizes by the logic of influence and membership. By applying an exchange perspective, she focuses on the types of resources which different types of lobbyist groups can offer and public actors can demand in EU interest intermediation. In the subsequent chapter, *Christian H.C.A. Henning* formulates a formal political exchange model with transaction costs, combining sociological and economic theory, in which multiple interest groups and multiple political actors interact to exert influence on a policy. He applies his model to the largest policy field administered by the European Union, agriculture. Using the MacSharry reform in 1992 as an example he shows that interest groups do possess a considerable amount of political

influence, which is, however, moderated by clashes between interest groups with heterogeneous policy preferences. *Christine Arnold* and *Paul Pennings* scrutinize in their chapter new tools of policy harmonization and discuss the likely impact of interest groups in European social policy, a policy field which is traditionally considered to be at the very heart of the (nation-) state. They argue that while the formal opportunity of interest groups to voice their concern has increased, their impact on public policy has decreased, although the open method of coordination allows for social policy to be discussed at a European level. The contribution by *Gerald Schneider* and *Konstantin Baltz* links national governance processes in four EU member states to European decision-making. Their chapter compares the influence of different types of interest groups on the formation of national positions regarding EU policies. Drawing on a large n-study their finding for all countries which they examine is that specialised (producer) interest groups are - to a varying degree - more successful in lobbying their government than interest groups representing diffuse (consumer) interests. As long as the deliberations in the main decision-making body of the EU, the Council of Ministers, are not subject to public scrutiny and debate, this asymmetry between producer and consumer influence is likely to prevail. *Jan-Erik Lane* and *Svante Ersson* investigate the relationship between interest group (trade unions) influence and public spending by comparing EU member states to other OECD countries. They investigate, in particular, whether trade union influence depends on the size of their membership or their position in the negotiation process. EU membership is found to have only a limited effect on this relationship.