

Key findings:

- The New Member States are more optimistic about the EU, while the Old Member States are more engaged in EU matters.
- Out of 4 NMS – Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland – the citizens of Bulgaria and Poland feel that they have gained the most out of EU accession.
- The representatives of NMS are perceived as (on average) being more active, enthusiastic and having a fresher perspective.
- The NMS have less presence as chairs of EP committees, leaders of EP political groups and as Brussels lobbyists.

## Baseline study on EU New Member States' Level of Integration and Engagement in EU Decision-Making

Author: **Iveta Kažoka**, Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS, LATVIA

15 October 2013

*The baseline study was conducted within the framework of a PASOS Project „Enlargement and Citizenship: Looking to the Future”, funded by Europe for Citizens programme. Partners: PASOS; European Institute (Bulgaria), Centre for Public Policy Providus (Latvia); Centre for Democracy and Human Rights – CEDEM (Montenegro), Institute of Public Affairs (Poland), Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies (Serbia). A more in-depth comparative study will be produced until 30 March, 2014.*

The purpose of this study: to present short baseline conclusions on EU new member states' (NMS) level of integration and engagement in EU decision-making that will form the background for a more in-depth comparative study. The conclusions have been formulated on the basis of:

- 1) two opinion surveys: the most recent Eurobarometer (of spring, 2013), and an opinion poll of September 2013 conducted in 4 NMS specifically for this study;
- 2) desk research on the concept and indicators for measuring the engagement of the NMS versus the Old Member States (OMS);
- 3) interviews in Brussels conducted with 3 representatives of 3 different permanent representations (Latvian, Polish, Bulgarian); 2 advisors to 2 different European Parliament groups (greens; liberals); 1 Cabinet staff member in European Commission, previously employed in European Parliament, 1 long-time (30 years) lobbyist in EU; 1 member of Council of Minister's Secretariat; 4 representatives of European Economic and Social committee (members and administrative staff).

For the purposes of this study the division line between the NMS and the OMS is taken to be the 2004 Eastern Enlargement. Croatia is not accounted for in this report as Croatia has joined EU only in 2013 and there is not yet much meaningful data on the engagement of this new member state. The comparative report that will be drafted on the basis of this baseline study will look more closely into two accession countries as well – Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia.



The comparative research would also look more closely into the issue that was mentioned in several interviews: that the categories of NMS versus OMS might not be as relevant to explain the differences between EU member states as, for example, a) small/large countries; b) rich/poor countries; c) Nordic working style/different working styles.

## I Public opinion

### 1.1. Eurobarometer

Analysis of data provided in Standard Eurobarometer 79 (based on public opinion survey field work of May, 2013)<sup>1</sup> shows that there are several differences between the OMS and NMS. The NMS as a category is on average more optimistic about the EU (trusts the EU more, sees it in a better light, believes more often that things are going in the right direction in the EU and envisions a better future for the EU). Meanwhile, the OMS as a category is more engaged in EU matters: the citizens of the OMS on average believe more often that they exert an influence on the EU (both as citizens and as member-states), have a clearer sense of belonging to EU citizenship and discuss EU matters more frequently with their friends and relatives. There are no distinct differences between the OMS and the NMS regarding the attitudes towards leaving EU, and neither category has more knowledge on the basic institutional structure of the EU.

	OMS <sup>2</sup> <i>(the median of all answers)</i>	NMS <sup>3</sup> <i>(the median of all answers)</i>
Discuss European political matters with friends or relatives	<b>72%</b> <i>(variance: 51% Spain; 78% Austria, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Sweden)</i>	<b>66%</b> <i>(variance: 46% Romania; 76% Cyprus)</i>
Optimistic about the future of the EU	<b>55%</b> <i>(variance: 28% Portugal; 72% Denmark)</i>	<b>59.5%</b> <i>(variance: 28% Cyprus; 64% Estonia, Lithuania)</i>
Agrees that his/her voice counts in EU	<b>33%</b> <i>(variance: 11% Greece; 56% Denmark)</i>	<b>24%</b> <i>(variance: 9% Cyprus; 45% Malta)</i>
Agrees that his/her country could better face the future outside the EU	<b>30%</b> <i>(variance: 21% Denmark; 53% UK)</i>	<b>30%</b> <i>(variance: 17% Bulgaria; 46% Cyprus)</i>
Feels oneself to be a citizen of the EU	<b>68%</b> <i>(variance: 44% Greece; 88% Luxembourg)</i>	<b>61.5%</b> <i>(variance: 45% Cyprus; 81% Malta)</i>

<sup>1</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 79, Spring 2013. Tables of results. [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb79/eb79\\_anx\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb79/eb79_anx_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this indicator, a "new member state" is Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this indicator, an "old members state" is Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, UK,

Believes that the things are going in the right direction in the EU	<b>23%</b> <i>(variance: 13% Greece, Portugal; 35% Denmark)</i>	<b>29%</b> <i>(variance: 12% Cyprus; 48% Lithuania)</i>
Tend to trust the European Union	<b>34%</b> <i>(variance: 17% Spain; 51% Denmark)</i>	<b>45%</b> <i>(variance: 13% Cyprus; 54% Bulgaria)</i>
EU conjures up a positive image	<b>29%</b> <i>(variance: 16% Greece; 38% Luxembourg)</i>	<b>34%</b> <i>(variance: 17% Cyprus; 54% Bulgaria)</i>
Considers that the interests of his/her country are well taken into account in the EU	<b>44%</b> <i>(variance: 14% Greece; 66% Luxembourg)</i>	<b>34%</b> <i>(variance: 13% Cyprus; 53% Malta)</i>
Gave correct answers to a small test on EU institutions (average of correct answers)	<b>67%</b> <i>(variance: 53% Spain; 77% Greece, Luxembourg)</i>	<b>68%</b> <i>(variance: 54% Cyprus; 75% Slovenia)</i>

During the spring of 2013, Eurobarometer surveyed six accession countries (Croatia – now an EU member state, Turkey, Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Montenegro and Serbia). Out of those six countries, this study focuses on Serbia and on Montenegro. The most interesting data on those two countries was the following:

- In Serbia 39% and in Montenegro 55% believe that his/her country's membership in EU would be a good thing;
- In Serbia 46% and in Montenegro 61% believe that his/her country would benefit from being a member of EU;
- In Serbia 68% and in Montenegro 56% discuss European political matters with friends and relatives (NMS – 66%, OMS – 72%);
- In Serbia 59% and in Montenegro 66% gave correct responses to a small tests on EU institutions (NMS – 68%, OMS – 67%)
- In Serbia 39% and in Montenegro 51% considers that EU conjures up a positive image (NMS – 34%, OMS- 29%)

## An opinion survey on 4 NMS

For the purposes of a deeper study, opinion polls were conducted in four of the NMS: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Latvia, and Poland. The fieldwork for the study was conducted in all of those countries in September, 2013.

The survey indicates that out of these 4 countries the population of Latvia and the Czech Republic are consistently the most pessimistic regarding the results of the accession of their country into the EU. They also assess the activities of the European Parliament and European Commission the lowest and do not believe that the EU takes into account the interests of citizens of their countries and national

priorities. Only a third of population of these two societies know how the European Parliament is elected (unlike 40% in Poland and 57% in Bulgaria). Latvians and Czechs are the least likely to make use of the European Citizen's initiative. The Latvian population is by far the least satisfied with the way Latvia's interests are promoted by national government on EU level, and how the MEPs from Latvia promote their needs as citizens at the EU level, while the Polish population is the most satisfied.

	Bulgaria	Czech Republic	Latvia	Poland
Believe that integration with the EU has brought more losses than benefits	17%	34.9%	29.3%	12%
Believe that integration with the EU has brought more losses than benefits for democracy in that country	13%	27.5%	25.8%	12%
Believe that integration with the EU has brought more losses than benefits to the quality of life in that country	13%	29.2%	20.3%	12%
Believe that integration with the EU has brought more losses than benefits to the status of that country internationally	14%	26.2%	16.3%	10%
The activities of the European Parliament have been good	52%	31%	27.1%	48%
The activities of the European Commission have been good	47%	32.9%	21.2%	47%
The extent to which the EU takes into account the interests of citizens of that country and national priorities has been good	33%	25.4%	21%	43%
The extent to which MEPs from that respective country effectively promote his/her needs as citizens at EU level has been good	30%	27.1%	17.2%	42%
The extent to which national government promotes his/her needs as citizens at the EU level has been good	26%	26.6%	12.4%	39%
Have heard of the European Citizen's initiative	20%	16.1%	13.6%	15%
Have participated as a signatory of a European Citizens' Initiative	1%	4.7%	2.9%	9%
Would be willing to participate/make use of the European Citizens' Initiative	27%	15.9%	22.8%	31%
How are Members of the European Parliament nominated in your country (correct responses)	57%	32.3%	34.8%	40%

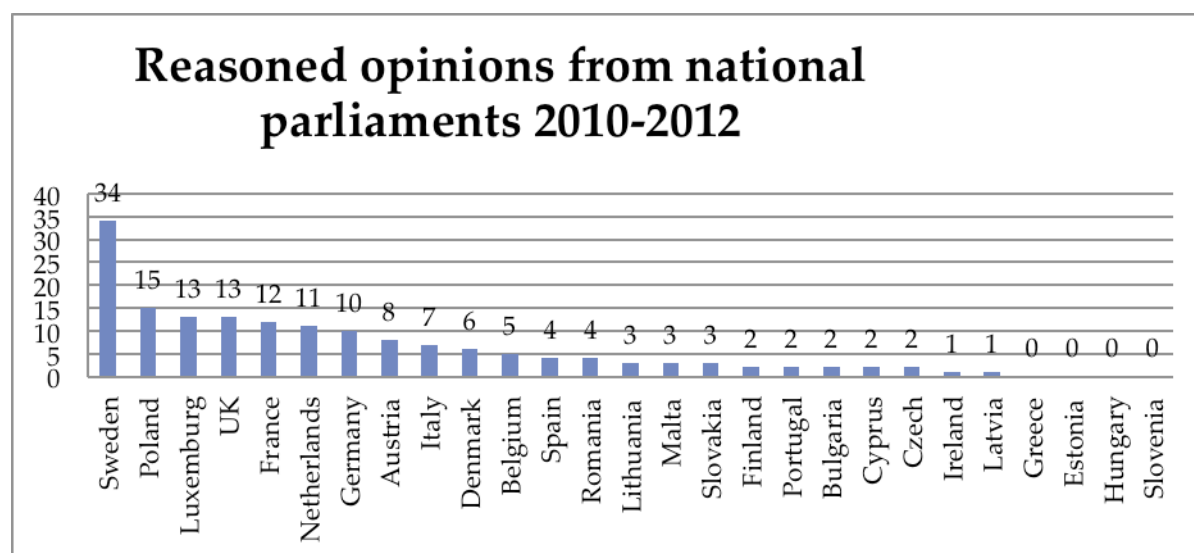
## II Other indicators

### 2.1. Engagement in EU matters on the national level

One of the indicators that could be used to compare the engagement of NMS and OMS in EU matters on the national level: how often the national parliaments send reasoned opinions to European Commission regarding the subsidiarity control<sup>4</sup>. For the purposes of this study, the number of such

<sup>4</sup> The source of the data: Reports from the Commission on Relations Between the European Commission and National Parliaments of 2010, 2011, 2012. Brussels, 30.7.2013 [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat\\_general/relations/relations\\_other/npo/](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/relations/relations_other/npo/)

reports sent from 2010-2012 was compared. The results show that the parliaments of the OMS have been relatively more engaged than the parliaments of the NMS: only two of the parliaments of the NMS had sent five or more reasoned opinions while there had been ten OMS who had used the subsidiarity control mechanism as often. And yet, there are states in both categories that send subsidiarity reports rarely. There had been 2 or less reports from 3 OMS and 7 NMS.



The other indicator where the data is not readily available, so this should be further researched in the more in-depth study: whether the national positions prepared by the NMS are of the same quality as those of the OMS. The responses received during the interviews in Brussels seem to suggest that the NMS suffer from smaller and less educated workforce „at home” to prepare arguments of exceptional quality (that, for example, the French and British civil service is capable of preparing), so there might be a problem of evidence based arguments.

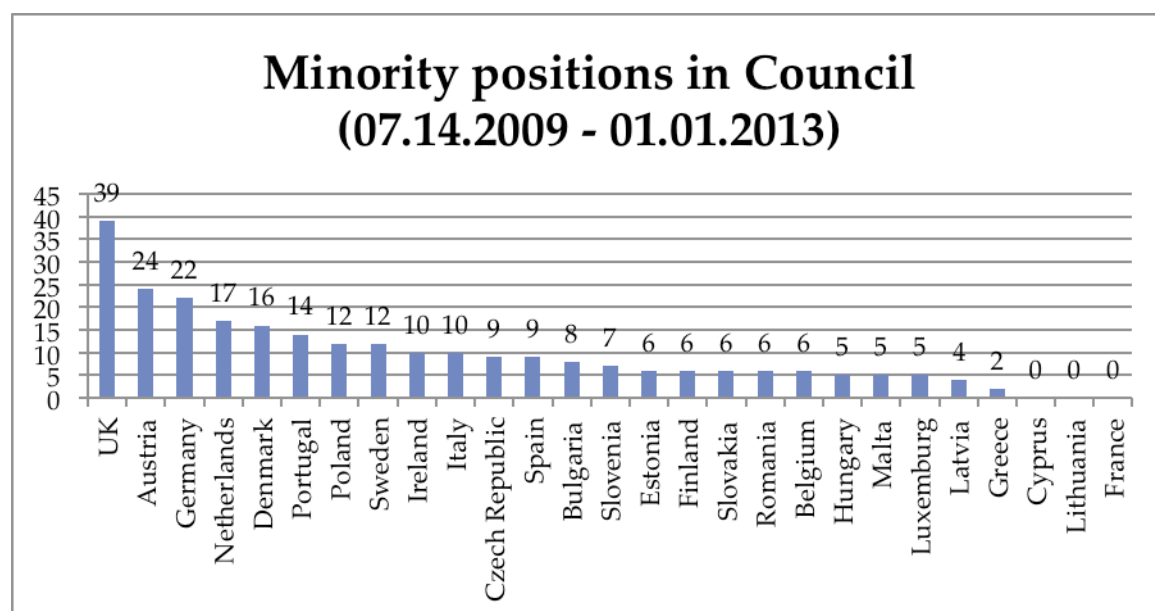
## 2.2. Engagement on EU level

Some of the problems with shaping EU policy are as characteristic for representatives of the NMS as they are for the representatives of the OMS. During the interviews, three such factors were mentioned: 1) English language skills (on average the NMS are perceived to be slightly better than the OMS); 2) Difficulties in working together as a team (such a problem could be encountered by both OMS and NMS); 3) Lukewarm contribution due to insufficient financial incentives (more characteristic for the OMS) or some other reasons (for example, being in Brussels for several decades and having a “burnout” – more characteristic of the OMS).

In general, the interviews show that the NMS are perceived as on average being more active, enthusiastic and having a fresher perspective – this was especially mentioned in the context of European Parliament and EESC. According to the interviews, it seems that the NMS have a sufficient level of capacity to contribute to common EU decision-making. Many good rapporteurs in European Parliament and EESC originate from NMS.

### 2.2.1. Voting, coalition building

Due to specifics of EU institutional structure, it is hard to obtain meaningful data to compare the engagement of NMS versus OMS in specific decision making. The right of legislative initiative is in the hands of the European Commission that is bound to represent the interests of the EU as a whole rather than the specific states. The voting in European Parliament rarely can be meaningfully analysed in the categories of member states (rather than, for example, trans-European political groups). So the only indicator that is readily available: how often do the various member states vote in minority in the Council of the Ministers of the EU? If we compare such data<sup>5</sup> (from 07.13.2009 -01.01.2013), we would notice that there is a difference between NMS and OMS: there has been a median of 6 minority votes from NMS and 10 from OMS. So the NMS seems to be more consensus-oriented than the OMS, at least as far as the Council is concerned: the reasons for this difference still need to be explained. It is consistent with what was indicated in the interviews: the NMS seem to be more flexible in the Council (including COREPER) regarding their positions, while in the European Parliament it is the other way around<sup>6</sup>.



### 2.2.2. Representation in Brussels

According to the interviews in Brussels, numerically the staffing for the permanent representations is nearly equal for all the member states (around 80-120).

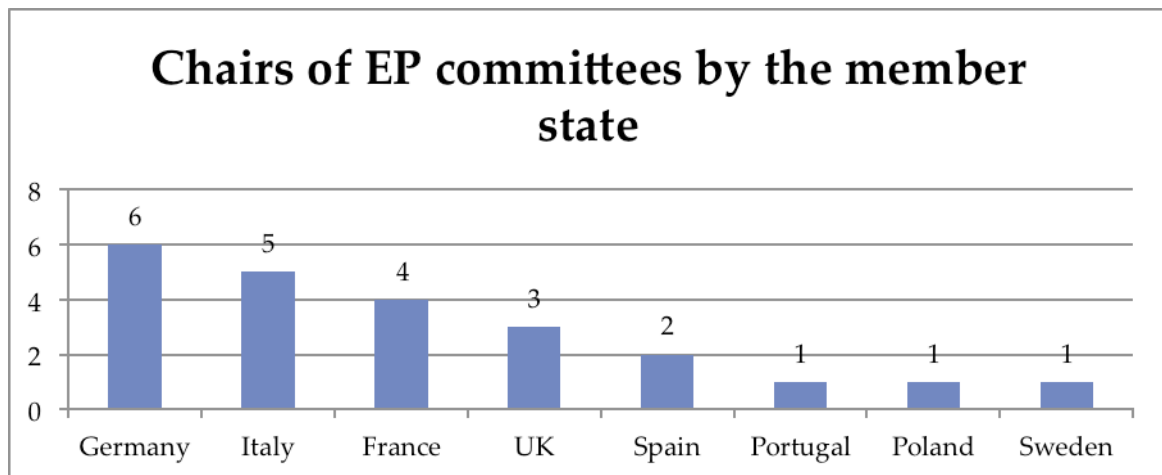
The Members of European Parliament elected from the NMS are currently under-represented as the chairs of European Parliament committees. Out of 23 standing committees there is just one representative of the NMS<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Data on 399 specific votes cast in this period is aggregated on the [www.votewatch.eu](http://www.votewatch.eu) website. <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/council-minority-votes.html>

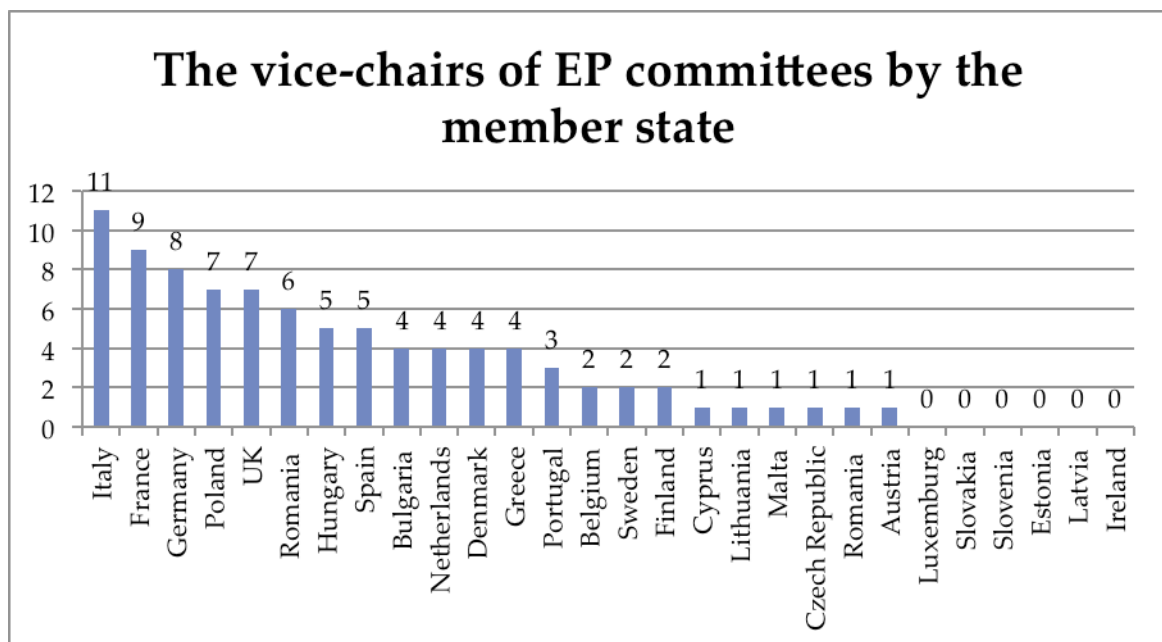
<sup>6</sup> Some of the persons interviewed for this study suggested that in EP the members from the NMS tend to be more worried about national interests, their campaigns being based on national issues that cannot be solved by the EP, and, therefore, spend a lot of time on issues that is not productive for EP.

<sup>7</sup> The data on European Parliament (composition of committees, political groups as of 14.10.2013) has been taken from the European Parliament website - <http://www.europarl.europa.eu>





Among the vice-chairs this is the other way around: the NMS, relative to their population size, seem to be over-represented. The MEP who have been elected from NMS have a bit less than one third of all the vice-chair offices even though they represent only a bit more than one fifth of EU population. This is also something that was mentioned during the interviews in Brussels – the quota system used by several EU institutions favours the small member states (and the NMS are predominantly small), so they may get relatively more representation and more discussion time.



There are currently 7 political groups in European Parliament. All of them are led by persons who have been elected in the OMS. It is not clear yet, why there is only 1 MEP from the NMSs chairing a parliamentary committee and why there are no leaders of political groups from the NMS. It might be, as was mentioned by several persons interviewed for this study, that it is because “you navigate EU better, if you’ve been here longer”. So the OMS have a natural advantage regarding their institutional memory and contacts. This should be further explored in the comparative study.

What about the administrative offices in European Commission: do the potential employees coming from the NMS have disproportionally smaller chance of getting employment there? The data on

European Commission administrators<sup>8</sup> (excluding assistants) show that there, on the contrary, the NMS – almost all of them being small states – have advantages. Out of Top 10 countries that have the highest number of their nationals employed in the European Commission (not in absolute numbers, but per capita), six are the new member states. This is consistent to what was said during the interviews in Brussels: in terms of appointments to administrative posts, the representatives of NMS have the same possibilities as representatives from any other state – except, if those posts are of large political relevance and subject to political bargaining (in those cases the large member states have advantages). Two of the persons interviewed for this study invited to explore in more depth the diversity of various nationalities at the top of Commission's DGs.

Member state	Population (Eurostat data of 2013)	Administrators in the Commission (Including DGs)	One administrator in the Commission per capita
Malta	417546	112	3728
Belgium	11094850	1320	8405
Estonia	1294486	129	10035
Luxembourg	524853	43	12206
Slovenia	2055496	160	12847
Cyprus	862011	65	13262
Latvia	2041763	148	13796
Lithuania	3003641	189	15892
Finland	5401267	321	16826
Ireland	4582707	232	19753
Bulgaria	7327224	353	20757
Greece	11290067	535	21103
Denmark	5573894	248	22475
Hungary	9932000	388	25598
Slovakia	5404322	200	27022
Sweden	9482855	330	28736
Austria	8443018	276	30591
Czech Republic	10505445	312	33671
Portugal	10542398	291	36228
Netherlands	16730348	436	38372
Romania	21355849	538	39695
Spain	46196276	1030	44851
Italy	59394207	1263	47026
France	65327724	1314	49717
Poland	38538447	725	53156
Germany	81843743	1382	59221
United Kingdom	63456584	709	89502

The Transparency Register data<sup>9</sup> indicate clearly that the OMS are better represented in private lobbying efforts than the NMS both in absolute numbers and as of per capita ratio. Several persons interviewed for this study explained this difference as being an objective measure of where the

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, Statistical Bulletin. Nationality & Grade. Data loaded: 01/10/2013.

[http://ec.europa.eu/civil\\_service/docs/europa\\_sp2\\_bs\\_nat\\_x\\_grade\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/civil_service/docs/europa_sp2_bs_nat_x_grade_en.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Transparency Register. Last checked on 14.10.2013. <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/info/homePage.do>



dominant economic activity in EU is located and where the “vested interests” are: predominantly in the OMS. One of the parliamentary group advisors had never even encountered a lobbyist from a NMS. This factor should be further explored in the comparative study.

Member state	Population (Eurostat data of 2013)	No of organisations registered in the Transparency Register (with headquarters in that particular member state)	1 lobbying organisation in Brussels per capita
Belgium	11094850	1475	7522
Luxembourg	524853	31	16931
Malta	417546	10	41755
Netherlands	16730348	284	58910
Denmark	5573894	88	63340
Finland	5401267	81	66682
Ireland	4582707	68	67393
Cyprus	862011	12	71834
Austria	8443018	116	72785
Sweden	9482855	103	92067
United Kingdom	63456584	599	105938
France	65327724	605	107980
Germany	81843743	715	114467
Italy	59394207	475	125040
Spain	46196276	330	139989
Hungary	9932000	65	152800
Latvia	2041763	13	157059
Portugal	10542398	61	172826
Slovenia	2055496	10	205550
Bulgaria	7327224	35	209349
Czech Republic	10505445	46	228379
Greece	11290067	45	250890
Estonia	1294486	5	258897
Lithuania	3003641	9	333738
Romania	21355849	62	344449
Slovakia	5404322	13	415717
Poland	38538447	69	558528