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IGPOL Project

PROTOCOL OF COLLECTING THE POPULATION OF NATIONAL INTEREST
GROUPS IN POLAND

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How to cite:

Kamiński, P., and P. Rozbicka (2019) *Protocol of collecting the population of national interest groups in Poland*; Cracow: Institute of Political Science and International Relations, Jagiellonian University, Birmingham: Aston Centre for Europe, Aston University.

Cracow and Birmingham, January 2019

Contents

- 'Building' interest groups' population3
- 1. Definition of interest groups.....3
- 2. Source3
- 3. Selecting the units7
- 4. Survey's deployment summary9

'Building' interest groups' population

1. Definition of interest groups

We follow the definition of interest groups agreed at the meetings at the University of Antwerp, Belgium, on 21st January 2016 and at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 17th February 2015, discussed in detail in the Slovenian protocol.¹ We defined interest groups unilaterally as: 'organized groups which have some sort of constituency either in the form of supporters or members and which represent the interests of their members and supporters or the interests of others who cannot represent themselves, such as children, animals, and the environment'. These groups are either politically active or their political activity is latent. Latent activity refers to a situation when groups have an interest in being active and a capacity to act, but most of time their activity is not political. When they encounter a new political issue of interest, they may become politically active. This definition of interest groups included business organizations, professionals associations, trade unions, identity and cause groups (including religious groups and to a degree leisure groups). We excluded law firms, consultancy firms, and all types of private companies. We only took into consideration national level groups and excluded those from the regional and local levels.

2. Source

To identify a representative population of Polish interest groups, we followed a mixture of a top-down and bottom-up approach. Our main source of information on the Polish interest organizations was the National Court Register (KRS Online),² supported by the voluntary non-governmental organizations' registration page fundacje.org, the lobbying

¹ Fink-Hafner, D., Hafner-Fink, M., Novak, M., Kronegger, L., and D. Lajh (2015) 'Protocol on Defining Population of National Interest Groups in Slovenia', Ljubljana: Centre for Political Science Research; available at <http://www.cigsurvey.eu/data/>, last accessed: 25/05/2017.

² KRS Online Page <https://bip.ms.gov.pl/pl/rejstry-i-ewidencje/krajowy-rejestr-sadowy/elektroniczny-dostep-do-krajowego-rejestru-sadowego/> (accessed 18 May, 2017).

registry within the Polish Parliament (based on the Law on Lobbying Activities, 2005),³ and the registry available at the website of the Polish Ministry of Justice. Contrary to the other teams within the CIGs Project (in particular, in case of Slovenia or the Netherlands), after testing, we resigned from using the page of Ministry of Justice as a primary source. We encountered technical issue, namely: the website did not allow us to download the whole dataset, preventing extensive datamining. Moreover, the search engine listed maximum 200 results at once, significantly reducing our chance to map the whole population, risking the omissions and repetitions.

Instead, we used the KRS Online database. The Registry was created based on the 1997 Act on the National Court Registry and has been operational since 2011. Its main function is the provision of information on economically active, registered organizations, including for example their financial situation and way of representation. KRS Online includes all entities of interest and separates them on the basis of legal form (i.e. companies and corporations, associations of professionals and trade unions, foundations, but also NGOs and civil society organizations). Hence, the different kinds of interest groups could be easily found and undergo the verification process. KRS Online proved to be the most reliable source of information, but not perfect. We initially confirmed the reliability of the source by: inquiries with the webpage developers, by monitoring how and when the database was being updated (every 6 months), and by comparing its content with information available in the governmental database when available. However, in practical terms, we encountered a number of problematic issues: a substantial number of repeated entries (e.g. any adjustment in the situation of the organization, new status, financial situation update, new contact detail, resulted in the new entry in the registry without

³ Act on Legislative Lobbying (2005) as published in the OJ 2017 poz. 248: Ustawa z dnia 7 lipca 2005 r. o działalności lobbingsowej w procesie stanowienia prawa (tj. Dz.U. 2017 poz. 248).

removal or update of the old one), the registry maintained in the database also organizations which ceased to exist or were in the process of liquidation (e.g. some of the trade unions which went through process of centralisation 2011 were still visible in the set), and incomplete information (e.g. lack of address, information on the organization's type of activity). At this stage, we did not exclude corporations, companies, governmental agencies or local groups, aiming for as comprehensive overview as possible.

For comparability reasons (to make sure that our groups' population can be reliably equalled to other from the CIGs Project), we confirmed that identical databases were also identified in other CIGs counties. For example, the Crossroads Bank for Enterprises (Kruispuntbank) in Belgium similarly provides information on all economic entities, however its search system is better organized with specific sub-codes for different types of organizations. In Slovenia, the source of information on economic entities is the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Public Legal Records and Related Services,⁴ which had to be further supported by the data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. In Lithuania, due to a lack of official and publicly available interest groups register (similarly as in Italy), a directory of Lithuanian business entities, Rekvizitai.lt, with similar characteristic to Polish KRS was used.⁵ In contrast, Polish government (ministerial) webpages/data registries are far behind the ultra-transparent and public friendly Swedish system.⁶ There, access to all incoming mail to the government ministries is made public, providing a very solid overview of politically active interest organizations removing a need to double check groups' activity status.

⁴ Fink-Hafner et al, 2017.

⁵ L. Šarkutė, A. Krupavičius, V. Jankauskaitė, and V. Simonaitytė, "Sampling Procedure of Lithuanian Interest Groups Survey," Kaunas: Institute of Public Policy and Administration (2017).

⁶ F. Boräng and D. Naurin, "Swedish Interest Group Survey," Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg (2017).

Facing problematic issues with the KRS Online and informed by experiences of other teams, in the second step, we used the fundacje.org database (Nationwide Catalogue of Public Benefit Organizations), which covers foundations, associations, societies, unions and clubs. Operating since 2010, the portal is functioning based on voluntary registration by organizations and serves as a search engine for potential donor. It is user-friendly and allowed us to access the entire content without any geographical specifications (meaning, we were able to web-scrap the whole dataset at once without distinction on the group localisation per region). The expansion by groups from that particular source helped to cover organizations, which are not registered in the KRS Online, in particular: foundations and charities active on policy-making. Point of notice is however the voluntary character of this registry (similarly as in case of the Italian 'Guida Monaci', even if expanded by other types of groups). Organizations are encouraged to register, but there is no official obligation. Moreover, contrary to the KRS Online, the lobbying registry in the Parliament, or for example the EU Commission Transparency Register, the base of registration is not economic nor political activism, but rather any form of social activism (i.e. charity events, fundraising and provision of aid, next to potential engagement in political arena).

Third, we expanded our search to the webpages of the Polish Parliament listing actors active in the legislative lobbying and public hearings. While providing direct evidence of legislative activity, the actors identified on the list did not expand the group total number identified with the first two sources. The major issue of that particular source was lack of updates after 2014 and a primary focus on the individual lobbyists, rather than their institutional affiliations.

After downloading information from these sources and initial clean-up of repetitions and invalid entries (occurred due to technical issues with datamining), we identified ~25.000

organizations in the KRS Online, and from fundacje.org, we got the list of 5.600 NGOs and charities.

3. Selecting the units

In the next step, we applied the following CIGs' criteria.⁷ The organization in order to remain in the sample had to: (1) Operate on national level. All international, municipal, inter-municipal, regional or local organizations, whose focus is exclusively on a particular town or region of Poland, were excluded. (2) Show signs of activity. All inactive organizations were identified by use of internet mining. We identified groups as inactive and excluded them from the sample if: the organization had no website or a social media profile – Twitter, Facebook, the organization had a website, but we could not find any position papers, raised issues or news about the political activity of the organization, neither of the additional search confirmed any political activity. (3) Have website and contact details. This criterion was complementary to criterion 2, if we could not find the page, but if we were able to obtain information on group activity and contact details from other resources, in particular email, we kept them in the sample. The application of identical criteria guaranteed comparability between different interest group populations in the Project.

A particularly useful feature, which helped us to narrow down the population (from around 25,000 to 10,000) was a word search within the initial results from the KRS Online. Applying the criterion 1 from above (focus on the national level groups only), we retained in the population only groups which included in the name the following words:

⁷ The steps and criteria indicated above follow those defined in: (1) J. Beyers and B. Fraussen, "Who's In and Who's Out? Explaining Access to Policymakers in Belgium," *Acta Politica* 51(2016): 214; (2) D. Fink-Hafner et al, 2017.

“nationwide”, “national”, and Polish. We further controlled for groups’ names which had above mentioned words in the name, but they were used in a different meaning than referring to their activity level. Example: While, the Polish Association of Bee Keepers remained in the database (PL: Polski Związek Pszczelarski), the Lesser Poland Association of Polish Bee Keepers, was removed (PL: Małopolski Związek Pszczelarski). We further removed: governmental agencies and double checked for local groups. In the next step, we controlled for the remaining two criteria (2 and 3). The most radical drop in numbers appeared for the trade unions: Not only the national level representation was rather small, on top of that many groups still registered were in the liquidation process. We have conducted a similar search and application of the criteria 1, 2 and 3 towards the data obtained from the page fundacje.org. After removing organizations active at the international, regional, and local levels, the dataset dropped in numbers from 5.600 to 1.805. Then, we controlled for the repetitions between two sets. Additional 800 groups were removed.

The result of the application of all above mentioned criteria is summarized in Table 1. We ended up with 2.174 organizations which can be defined as national level interest organizations according to identical criteria applied across the CIGs Project countries.

Table 1. Interest organizations’ population after application of criteria 1, 2, 3 for *KRS Online* and *fundacje.org* database

Type	Results (no. of identified organizations) KRS Online	Results (no. of identified organizations) fundacje.org	Final
Employers and business associations	271		271
Trade Unions	56		56
NGOs	773	1,074	1,847
Sum	1,100	1,074	2,174

4. Survey's deployment summary

Stage 1. We sent all physical invites for the survey during period *28.09-02.10.2017*. The letter was sent to 1129 organizations for which we had available a corresponding address.

Stage 2. We sent 1st wave of emails to a total group of 1546 organization in two sessions due to technical limitation of the software. The first set of emails was sent on 11th October 2017 and the second on 15th October 2017. 23.04% of organizations had both available (physical address and email).

Stage 3. After corrections of some of returned emails, requests for email updates and similar, we have sent reminder to 1st email, on 24th October 2017.

At this early stage we have recorded a total of 126 valid responses (either fully completed or partially completed) and 106 partially empty, or only visited first few pages.

Stage 4. We sent emails to new email address (the backup email if available) on 06-07 November 2017.

Stage 5. Reminder emails were sent again to 2nd email, on 10 November 2017.

Stage 6. Phone calls to organizations who have not entered any answers; 13-24 November 2017.

Step 7. Final follow up phone calls to organizations that had not responded to the date and fulfilled one of the following criteria: entered first page, but have not filled in the questionnaire, answered 5 or less questions, 20 February – 1st March 2018.

Step 8. Final wave of emails to all those organizations that have not reacted previously to our invite in any way, 1st March 2018.

The survey was closed on *15th March 2018*.

Table 2. Summary of response rate

Category	Frequency	Percentage	
Email sent – unanswered (1)	745	54.42	
Email sent – error (2)	16	1.17	
Entered intro (3)	168	12.27	
Entered first page (4)	60	4.38	
Partially completed (5)	174	12.71	27.76
Completed (6)	206	15.05	
	1369 ⁸	100	

⁸ 6 and 7, further reduced numbers by those organizations that requested to be removed from the list, stopped

While we have started from 2.174 organizations, we were able to reach digitally only ~1500. The physical correspondence (on top of encouraging participation in the survey), also requested, for those groups that we had no email, to provide us with digital contact information. In this regard the physical request had not yielded any results and we were not able to reach all organizations. The phone calls conducted in two runs during steps 6 and 7 further reduced the list by organizations that: (1) requested to be removed from the database (i.e. have identified themselves as irrelevant) and/or (2) ceased to exist during the period from data collection (2016) to deployment of the survey (Autumn 2017).