

Mag. Daniel Spichtinger
Schlüsselgasse 3/12
A-1080 Vienna, Austria
dspichtinger@yahoo.de
0043 676 924 7111



Civil Society and the EU.
An Analysis Focusing on the Interactions between the
Commission and Civil Society Organisations, with Particular
Emphasis on Research Policy.



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Department of European Studies and Modern Languages,
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Supervisor: Alan Butt Philip

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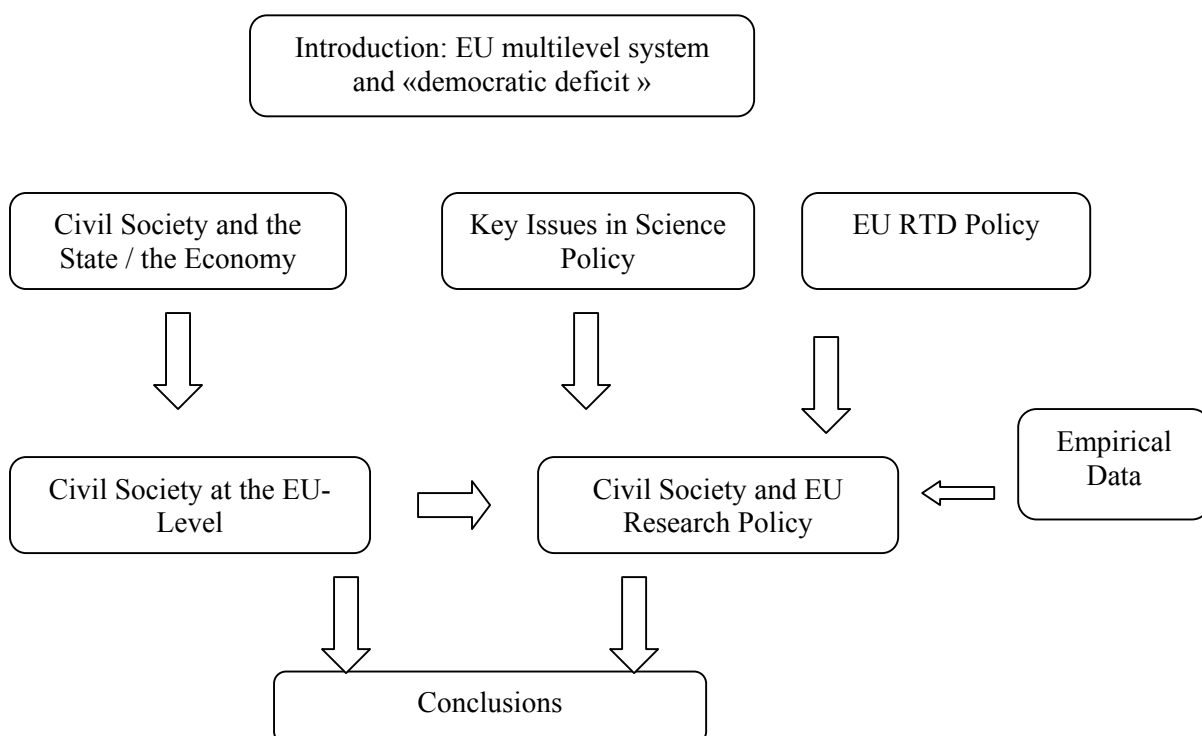
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Introduction

General Overview and Methodology

This thesis has the goal of analysing the role of civil society in the multilevel system of European governance in general - with particular emphasis on its interaction with the Commission - and specifically in research policy. Clearly, an exhaustive treatment of this topic would require at least the volume of a Ph.D. dissertation. My aim is thus not to provide an in-depth analysis of the nooks and crannies of EU decision making instruments (comitology!) but a (hopefully) informative study of the major challenges and opportunities that civil society is faced with at the EU level. I believe that it is desirable to transform the present system into a more reflexive, deliberative and participatory one. Hopefully, I will at the end of this essay be able to provide some useful suggestions what could be done to enhance the role of civil society in such a transformation. The general outline of my thesis can be visualised as follows:

Graphic 1: Study Outline¹



¹ There is not always a one to one correspondence between the thematic issues as visualised by the boxes in the graphic and actual chapter headings.

As my thesis does not in all respects follow the orthodox model, a few more words on its make-up are necessary. To begin with, there will be no review of the available literature simply because there are no standard reference works on “civil society at the EU level” to consult. Rather, this enquiry is fuelled by a multidisciplinary approach: our initial discussion of the term civil society will take into account material published within a national perspective. Later we will make use of policy documents from the Commission and the Economic and Social Council as well as lobbying literature. All these different strands will be discussed critically at the place deemed appropriate; to mix them all together in a review section would in effect mean to tear apart the essay’s structure. However, one danger inherent in using sources from a variety of disciplines is that they end up contained in separate chapters without sufficient proof of their interaction. I hope to have avoided this pitfall and that it will become apparent in the course of this essay how the chapters and the thematic issues interact and support themselves (as a first indication see also the graphic above).

I would now like to introduce my research questions and main themes. The overarching problem I will be dealing with can be summarised in the question: how do civil society and the Commission interact? It should be noted that, while the background to this question is a normative and transformative one (see above), the essay is to a large extent descriptive. For the rest of this first introductory section I will proceed to give an overview of the issues and questions derived from this primary question: the essay proper starts with the second part of the introduction in which I briefly survey the debate on the so-called “democratic deficit” and the nature of the EU system, so as to set the background for the rest of the discussion. It will be argued that opportunities for the democratisation of the EU can be found within the EU system. Chapter one will then focus on the question how civil society can be defined in relation to the state and the economy. Rather than making a normative claim in favour of one or the other definition, it will be necessary to keep in mind that conceptions of civil society vary and that a distinction between broad and inclusive and narrow and exclusive concepts of civil society needs to be made. After this theoretical analysis, chapter two will deal in more detail with civil society involvement at the EU level. The following questions will be asked: why is civil society necessary at the EU-level, what constitutes civil society at the EU-level, how is civil society involved in EU decision making processes, what are the dangers of civil society involvement, and to what extent does a truly European civil society exist? Regarding

the institutional framework I will focus on the interactions between civil society and the Commission. It will also be discussed whether economic interests are dominant in EU-decision making.

The second part of the essay takes one step down from the general overview and looks in more details at the involvement of civil society in one specialised area, namely research policy. Again, the main emphasis will be on the interactions between the Commission and civil society, particularly regarding the sixth framework programme (fp 6) and the creation of a European Research Area (ERA). To answer the question “how is civil society involved in EU research policy” it will first be necessary to look at science policy. After an overview of fp 6 and the ERA the levels of decisions making in EU research policy will be discussed, with particular emphasis on the question of open or closed policy networks. Recent efforts by the Commission to take societal concerns into account will be analysed as well. This discussion will include the findings from two qualitative interviews conducted with Commission officials concerned with the interrelation between science and (civil) society.

These interviews belong to the empirical part of my study which I decided to include for two reasons: first of all, secondary literature on civil society participation in research policy is virtually non-existent. Secondly, while several Commission proposals exist on the involvement of civil society (most notably the *Science and Society Action Plan*) empirical data is needed to answer the question whether the proposed “pluralisation” (my term) of actor networks is already taking place. In order to arrive at valid conclusions about the nature of policy networks in research policy two complementary approaches will be used. Firstly, the data available in the CONECCS database will be compared to the list of actors that have published an opinion on fp 6 and / or ERA on the CORDIS website.² The most important question in regard to this analysis will be whether a plurality of actors was represented or whether some groups were able to “capture” research policy. Secondly, this evidence will be augmented by qualitative interviews conducted in Brussels. The organisations selected for these interviews were chosen according to the pattern of interest representation deducted from the CONECCS / CORDIS data.³

² This study can therefore also be seen as a test for the transparency of the EU’s information system, particularly of CONECCS.

³ See the relevant chapter for an elaboration of the selection criteria.

My study is thus a mixture of insights gained from an analysis of secondary sources from multiple disciplines and of empirical data derived from EU databases and qualitative interviews. In the final discussion these two strands of inquiry will allow us to make viable statements regarding both the reality and the promise of civil society as a source of democratic legitimacy. Let us start the enquiry by looking at the EU multilevel system and the debate surrounding the so-called “democratic deficit”.

Background: The EU-System and the “Democratic Deficit”

Both Euro sceptics (like Shore 2001) and ardent believers in further integration (like Fischer 2000) use the concept of a “democratic deficit” to demand either the renationalisation of competencies or the parliamentarisation of the EU system. Recently, even the EU institutions themselves have addressed the topic (Commission 2001a; Prodi 2001; European Council 2001).⁴ However, most actors in the discussion use (usually implicitly) the model of national parliamentary democracy as a yardstick (see the analysis of Weidenfeld and Giering 2002). However, such a view disregards important historical facts. As has been frequently pointed out (Dahl 1991: 72, 1999: 915-8; Schmitterer 1999: 933-4), democracy was for a long time seen only as possible in the small city-states of antiquity. The invention of the current parliamentary system and the connection of this system with the nation state is a comparatively recent development.⁵ To transform democracy to fit the national level it was not possible to use the mechanisms of the democracy of Athens; rather new and unique procedures had to be invented. Similarly, a growing number of scholars hold that the yardstick of nation-state democracy is not suitable for the European level (Decker 2002; Hix 1998: 20; Kohler-Koch 1997: 54; Lord 2001: 642; Pfetsch 1999: 510-512).⁶ This does not mean that there is no need for democracy at the EU level, but rather that a “third transformation” of democracy to suit the EU level is required (Dahl 1994 qtd. in Rhinard 2002: 186, 190; Töller 2000: 156; Schmalz-Bruns 1997: 77).

⁴ Banchoff and Smith (1999: 7-9) isolate two distinct categories in the discourse: first the reference to dropping support in public support of the EU and second the criticism of the make-up of the EU institutions.

⁵ As Schmitterer points out this connection is largely a fiction: “[the nation state] has been much more the product of civil and international wars or dynastic accidents and marriage than anything resembling democratic collective choice” (1999: 934).

⁶ Although, as Pfetsch notes, some minimal requirements are applicable to both levels, for instance free elections, civil rights, a free press and the existence of political parties (1999: 512).

Instead of seeing the EU either as unfinished business (the integrationist view) or as going too far (the sceptical view) Warleigh (2002: 103) argues that the system should be accepted in its own right. Opportunities for democratisation can be found within the EU system, which has been described as pluralist, multilevel, and consisting of policy networks (Scharpf 1999: 677; similarly Banchoff and Smith 1999: 2; Cram et al. 1999; Fairbrass und Jordan 2001).

Summing up current research on this system, Peterson and Bomberg distinguish the following levels of EU-decision making:

Table 1: Multi-Level EU Decision Making⁷

Level	Decision type	Dominant actors	Bargaining mode	Rationality	Example
Super-systemic	History-making	European Council, governments in IGC, European Court of Justice	Intergovernmental	Political	Endorse white paper on internal market
Systemic	Policy-setting	Council, COREPER, European Parliament (co-decision)	Interinstitutional	Political; technocratic	Agree directives to create an internal market for motorbikes
Sub-systemic	Policy-shaping	Commission, Council working groups, EP committees	Resource exchange	Technocratic; consensual	Propose that all motorbikes licensed in the EU must observe specified power limits

Source: Peterson and Bomberg (1999: 4, 9)

Because of this multi-level structure, (relatively) open access through a multiplicity of access points is possible, which in turn has led to a large number of different actors being represented at the European level, including “civil society” (a term that will be defined below). The key towards establishing an reflexive, deliberative and participatory system lies thus not primarily in a history-making reshaping of how the EU works, but rather in a modification of the present system⁸ by “pluralisation” (my term), that is through the systematic opening up of the policy-making process to include previously neglected actors such as (but not limited to) civil society.⁹ How far along is this project of democratising the EU by the means inherent in the

⁷ In the following, it will be assumed that the reader has a working knowledge of EU institutions. Peterson and Bomberg (1999: 272-273) review some academic reactions on this model.

⁸ This conforms to the ideas of Karl Popper (1944) who advocated a slow “bit by bit” approach to social change.

⁹ Such an approach sees civil society as an important part of a pluralist system but would also take other previously rather neglected actors, such as regional and local players, national parliaments and individual citizens, into account (compare Governance Team 2001).

system? Hopefully, we will be able to provide a first answer to this question in the conclusion of this thesis. First and foremost, though, we need to develop a better understanding of what is meant by civil society and how its interactions with the governmental and the economic sphere can be conceptualised.

1. The Interaction of Civil Society with the State and the Economy: Some General Theories.

In its most general sense civil society is defined as an intermediary space between the private sphere (the family) and the state (Croissant et al. 2000: 16; Jary und Jary 1991: 73; Thiery 2002 [2001]: 593; White 1994: 379). Beyond that vague core definition, however, White notes that the term “means different things to different people and often degenerates into a muddled political slogan“ (1994: 376). In the context of this essay it will be necessary to deal with two principle questions regarding the “nature” of civil society: first its demarcation from the realm of the state and second the question according to which criteria entities are regarded as part of civil society (which entails the controversy over the membership of economic actors).

Regarding the relation of civil society and the state, the first relevant tradition stems from Eastern Europe. Within the communist dictatorships of that area civil society developed in opposition to the state; consequently this tradition sees civil society as “anti-politics“, as an “embodiment of social virtue confronting political vice” (White 1994: 376). Not the state, but civil society itself is the seat of democratic legitimacy (see Baker 1999: 1,3; Fehr 1995: 42, 44; compare also White 1994: 378). For the purposes of this essay, which looks at the interconnections between civil society and the EU institutions, however, this concept is of little help, as it disregards any constructive relations between civil society and the state. Thus, I will concentrate on Western liberal, or rather non-radical republican, traditions of civil society for the reminder of this essay.

Within the liberal democratic system most theorists see civil society as not in principle hostile to the state (Frankenbergs 1997 [1996]: 42 “mixta composita”). Even though the autonomy of civil society is stressed (Jary und Jary 1991: 73-4; Thiery 2002 [2001]: 593), it seems to be a relative and not an absolute autonomy (see White 1994: 380-1). Although participation in the political system is not the main objective of civil society organisations, these entities do

participate in various ways (such as being part of committees and quangos, providing expertise or lobbying for their cause). Indeed, Western democracies value civil society participation because its relative autonomy from the state enhances the legitimacy of decisions. Through their relations with the state civil society thus contributes to the stability and the efectivity of the system. However, civil society organisations also need the state to frame the environment in which they operate (see Walzer 1990: 62-66).

Yet, the term “dark side of civil society“ indicates that civil society should not be glorified. Firstly, some groups are not internally structured in a democratic way (the catholic church comes to mind) (Croissant et al. 2000: 20; Lauth und Merkel 1995: 20). Furthermore, tensions between directly elected representatives and parts of civil society can, *in extremis*, lead to the circumvention of the directly legitimised representatives.¹⁰ Civil Society can also be dangerous if it does not bridge but perpetuates societal cleavages (Croissant et al. [2000: 18] give the case of former Yugoslavia as an example). It is also argued that civil society can exert too much pressure on the state which can, particularly in transformation- or developing countries, lead to crisis and instability (White 1994: 384, 386; he gives the example of Chile). All these instances support a self-restriction of civil society, which, like the state, cannot be allowed to transgress its mandate (Croissant 2000: 40; Lauth und Merkel 1995: 30; Walzer 1990: 64).

Let us now discuss the question of membership. This is a complex topic which most authors address in a negative way, that is through defining what is not a member of civil society, namely governmental and economic entities (Jary und Jary 1991: 73-4; Lauth und Merkel 1995: 16; Thiery 2002 [2001]: 593). This approach arises out of the postulated autonomy of civil society from both the governmental and the economic sphere. At least in regard to the state we have already seen that this claim is porous. That an absolute autonomy from the economic sector is questionable as well becomes clear if we analyse the so-called “normative claim”, that is the question whether being part of civil society is dependent on exclusively serving the public good. Those who assert that this is indeed a condition for membership, exclude the economy (with the possible exception of the social partners). However, it can be easily shown that even companies are capable of acting in accordance with civil society, for

¹⁰ An example is the Austrian social partnership during the reign of the “grand coalition” between conservatives and socialists. At the time, the social partners reached decisions in secret negotiations and had them rubber stamped by the SPÖ/ÖVP majority in parliament.

instance through their sponsorship of art or science¹¹ (although at the same time such sponsoring also serves to enhance their image and is thus oriented towards increasing profits as well). Currently, the scientific community seems to be split on the issue: Croissant et al. (2000: 10) note that they were not able to achieve consensus about this question among their contributors.

One way around the “normative-claim problem” is to apply a functional distinction, as Croissant et al. (2000: 17) do. This is supposed to accommodate for the fact that unusual organisations can also be potential members of civil society (see Croissant et al. 2000: 18 for examples). In contrast to Cohen and Arato (1992 qtd. in Frankenberg 1997 [1996]: 50), such a functional approach does not make a distinction between “civil society” and “political society”. Rather, the act of drawing borders itself is perceived as the subject of political discussion (Frankenberg 1997 [1996]: 50). This definition allows for the fact that new forms of civil society organisations arise while others become less important (see Bukow 1999: 34). Applied to economic actors, such a functional approach does not count them as civil society *per se*, but it also does not per definition deny them civil society potential. Such a functional approach fits well with the notion of reflexive democracy, that is applying the democratic process to itself “concerning the who of participation, the how of decision making...and the what of legitimate political decisions” (Schmalz-Bruns 1995 qtd. in Abromeit 1998: 88).

Thus, one can in principle develop a wide and a narrow definition of civil society. A narrow concept of civil society is applied if one draws a strict distinction between state and the economy on the one side and civil society on the other. Practically, such a concept is not flexible enough to represent reality accurately. A wide concept of civil society, by contrast, acknowledges overlaps between the spheres of the state, the economy and civil society and loosens normative demands to include organisations that might only occasionally work for the public good. Although such a definition is better able to represent reality it risks becoming too vague to be useful. Because civil society is a term used in connection with classical Western democracies, Eastern Europe, Latin America, developing countries in Africa and Asia and even in regard to international organisations, both a very wide and a very narrow definition are ideal type concepts that can only be thought of as radical end points of a scale. In between we have (at the very least) two other possibilities: excluding the economy but including the state in one’s definition of civil society or, conversely, including economic but eschewing

¹¹ In as far as we see civil society as not restricted to the sphere of political action but also concerning social and cultural activities (Croissant et al. 2000: 19).

state actors. However, while there has been some support for the latter model¹², no case for the former model has been made in the relevant literature. The conceptions introduced in this chapter are summarised below:

Table 2: Conceptions of Civil Society

Term	State	Economy
1. Eastern European / radical republican model	X	X
2. Narrow definition	-	-
3. Wide definition	+	+
(4. Including the state but excluding the economy) [no instance found]	+	-
5. Including the economy but excluding the state	-	+
6. Functional model (according to specific circumstances)	~	~

+: part of civil society. -: not part of civil society. X: in contrast to civil society. ~: potentially part of civil society

As a next step, it will be necessary to answer the question which of these possible definitions of civil society is (or are) applied to the multi-level system of the EU.

2. Civil Society at the EU-Level

The concepts introduced in the first part now have to be scrutinised to find out to what extent they are applied at the EU level. In this chapter, the following questions need to be asked (although one needs to be aware that it will not be possible to answer all of them comprehensively): why is civil society necessary, what constitutes civil society at the EU-level, how is civil society involved in EU decision-making processes, what are the dangers of civil society involvement, and to what extent does a truly European civil society exist? Let us start by tackling the most basic question: why should it be necessary to involve civil society at this level at all?

¹² This view is endorsed by the definition suggested by Heywood which *ipso facto* puts less emphasis on civil society obligations to serve the public good: "...civil society encompasses institutions that are 'private' in that they are independent from government and organised by individuals to further their own ends" (2000: 17).

2.1. The Legitimacy Question

As mentioned, civil society is sometimes regarded as a way out of the EU's democratic deficit. But how is civil society participation in policymaking supposed to enhance the EU's legitimacy? To answer this question a distinction between output legitimization (criteria of efficiency) and input legitimization (criteria of participation) is useful (after Scharpf 1970 qtd. in Töller 2002: 159).

Table 3: Legitimising Civil Society Participation at the EU Level

Input Legitimation	Output Legitimation
Civil society organisations represent the citizens of the EU	Civil society actors possess considerable expertise in their specialised area. Their involvement thus guarantees better decisions.
Civil Society actors represent marginalized groups, whose voice is otherwise not heard.	Civil society organisations control and evaluate projects and thus provide valuable feedback

Source: Commission (2000a: 4-5 adopted).¹³

Having established these two legitimization categories we are now able to turn our attention once again to the membership question.

2.2. The Membership Question Revisited

We have already seen that the question who is to be counted as part of civil society is controversial. It is all the more necessary, then, to analyse closely who is conceived to be part of civil society on the European level. Basically, the same questions as on the national level apply: is civil society seen as being autonomous from the state? How is the relation with economic actors perceived? One of the few European level documents to address such questions from a theoretical point of view is the Economic and Social Council (ESC) opinion *The Role and Contribution of Civil Society in the Building of Europe* (1999a) which has been quoted in several important Commission documents (Commission 2001a: 14 fn 2;

¹³ These arguments were extracted from an EU document on NGOs. However, there seems to be no problem with applying them to civil society involvement as a whole.

Commission 2002a: 5 fn 6; CONECCS FAQ; Working Group 2a 2001: 3, 9-10). This ESC document defines civil society as a “collective term for all types of social actions, by individuals or groups, that do not emanate from the state and are not run by it“ (1999a: 5).¹⁴ Clearly, this definition demarcates civil society strongly from the state but not – it should be noted – from the economic sector. The ESC provides the following list of organisations, which it holds to be part of civil society:

List 1: Members of Civil Society at EU Level According to ESC

1. the so-called labour-market players, i.e. social partners
2. organisations representing social and economic players which are not social partners in the strict sense of the term
3. NGOs¹⁵ (non-governmental organisations) which bring people together in a common cause, such as environmental organisations, human rights organisations, consumer associations, charitable organisations, educational and training organisations etc.
4. CBOs (Community Based Organisations, i.e. organisations set up within society at grassroots level which pursue member-oriented objectives), e.g. youth organisations, family associations and all organisations through which citizens participate in local and municipal life
5. religious communities

Source: ESC (1999a: 8).

Particularly noteworthy is the vague formulation of item two. Can the potential of economic actors to act as part of civil society be subsumed under this point? While this item is never explicitly clarified in the opinion, some phrases in another part of the document offer important clues: the ESC holds that civil society organisations have many functions “...not just economic, but also religious, cultural, social etc....” (1999a: 4). While this could be a reference to the fact that civil society organisations themselves employ people¹⁶ - and are thus economic actors - the wording (“...not just economic...”) might also be taken as indicating that economic actors are seen not as potential but as usual members of civil society. More explicit is the working group “Civil Society” for the *White Paper on Governance*: „...this description...brings together the principal structures of society outside government and public administration, **including economic actors not generally considered “third sector” or**

¹⁴ Later in the document, civil society organisations are defined as “the sum of all organisational structures whose members have objectives and responsibilities that are of general interests and who act as mediators between the public authorities and citizens” (1999: 7). This phrase is sufficiently vague to include or exclude economic actors, according to one’s own preferred reading.

¹⁵ It is also sometimes not entirely clear how to define an NGO. In this study the definition used by the Commission (2000: 3-4) will be applied, which lists the following characteristics of NGOs: they are not created to generate personal profit, they are voluntary, they have some degree of formal or institutional existence, they are independent and they are not self-serving in aims and related values

¹⁶ About 7% of the labour market according to the Economic and Social Committee (1999b: 51-2).

NGOs” (2001: 10, my emphasis). Interestingly, while this sentence has not been included in the final version of the white paper, the very same wording is used in the proposed consultations rules issued by Commission in June 2002, and hence can be said to have been of considerable influence.

As we have seen, the ESC and the Commission both see civil society as an entity which strictly excludes the state but which to a considerable extent includes economic actors and their associations. Thus this definition conforms to the theoretic model 5 introduced in table 1. Several explanations for this come to mind. Firstly, the representatives of economic associations figure prominently in the makeup of the ESC (as one side of the social partnership) and these actors want to be recognised as part of the picture. Furthermore, the social dialogue is clearly very well known in the ESC and, although civil dialogue is seen as being separate from it, it may well be influenced by the older and better established structures of the social dialogue (compare ESC 2001b: 11; ESC 2002: 6).¹⁷ On a more general level, it can be easily pointed out that many EU interest groups are of economic nature and, consequently, a strictly normative, non-inclusive definition would have excluded a large number of actors. Furthermore, as has been argued previously, drawing a very strict boundary between the private sector and civil society downplays interdependencies.

Still, it should be born in mind that alternative conceptions of civil society at the EU level are possible as well. On the one hand, a broader definition is conceivable: the ESC disregards cultural matters, the media, think tanks and universities in its definition. Richter, on the other hand, offers a more narrow definition:

Die europäische Zivilgesellschaft ist die freiwillige Assoziation von Bürgern und Gruppen innerhalb der Europäischen Union mit dem Ziel des öffentlichen Diskurses über europäische Themenfelder, und zwar unter dem Gesichtspunkt ... einer Reduzierung institutionalisierter Regelungskompetenz (1999: 137).¹⁸

¹⁷ The social dialogue is the bipartite dialogue between employers’ organisations and trade unions and the dialogue of these social partners with public authority. The civil dialogue is the dialogue between public authorities and other NGOs (mostly concerning social matters, but also applicable to other areas).

¹⁸ “European civil society is the voluntary association of citizens or groups within the European Union with the aim of public discourse on European public policy under the premise of reducing...institutionalised regulatory competence” (my translation).

Richters definition is not only restrictive (as it only allows for discussions of European public policy), its normative thrust is also reminiscent of the East European / radical republican model – only this time transplanted to the European level. While the same arguments that led us to discharge this theory at the national level still apply, it is worth bearing in mind that such alternative conceptions exist, and that the ESC definition is by no means generally accepted.

Indeed, the ESC definition is not only contested from radical fringes, but also within the mainstream. In the new Commission database CONECCS¹⁹, which is meant to be a "who is who" and "who does what" in the representation of European civil society (CONECCS FAQ) the ESC definition is quoted in the FAQ while only a little further down a slightly different classification is established for use in the database itself

List 2: CONECCS Definition of Civil Society Organisations

- Trade unions
- Employers federations
- Professional federations
- NGOs
- Service and production federations
- Associations of public authorities
- Political interests
- Religious interests
- Other groups

Source: CONECCS FAQ

The CONECCS definition is not only more detailed than the ESC (by making a distinction between different kinds of business federations), more importantly it includes political interests - defined as “organisations, not themselves political parties, that represent a specific party political perspective of Community policy or that have an interest in the party political dimension of the European Union” (CONECCS FAQ) - and public authorities in form of “organisations grouping associations of public administration structures at local, regional or devolved levels” (CONECCS FAQ). Thus, although CONECCS is ostensibly based on the ESC definition, it is far more inclusive in regard to actors from the governmental sphere and hence conforms rather to model 3 than 5 (see table 2).

¹⁹ CONECCS stands for “Consultation, the European Commission and Civil Society” and is part of the attempts by the Commission to make consultations more transparent (see below).

That a variety of civil society definitions exist on the European level becomes particularly clear when looking at the proceedings of the 1999 *Convention on Civil Society Organised at the European Level* (ESC 1999b), held shortly after the ESC opinion was published. It was readily agreed that civil society is based on the principles of autonomy, pluralism, subsidiary and responsibility. Beyond such fairly general principles, however, it was more difficult to reach consensus. For instance, questions were raised about religious communities being part of civil society (ESC 1999b: 38). Even more importantly, there was fundamental disagreement on whether economic actors could be defined as part of civil society; even the membership of the social partners in civil society was questioned by some (ESC 1999b: 38).²⁰ Maybe one should agree with one participant who warned about categorising civil society too much and who pointed out that the very dynamic part of civil society cannot be captured by definitions. In fact, imposing rigid criteria might only lead to rigid organisations which do not respond to changes in society (ESC 1999b: 41, 51). Let us now turn from the “who-question” to the “how-question”.

2.3. How is Civil Society Involved?

George and Bache (2001: 291) distinguish three layers of civil society participation in EU policy making according to level of institutionalisation. Firstly, there is fully institutionalised representation through the ESC. Secondly, the semi-institutionalised social dialogue gives the social partners an opportunity to participate.²¹ Thirdly, the least institutionalised way of influencing policy is by way of lobbying the institutions.

Regarding lobbying, the possibilities to represent civil society interests differ from one EU institution to the other. Traditionally, the European parliament is regarded as being most open to lobbying by non-profit civil society interests (Mazey and Richardson 1996: 202; 1999: 113). The European Court of Justice is also subject to intense lobbying; within civil society, women’s groups and environmental groups have been fairly successful in this institution (Mazey und Richardson 1999: 115). The Council, by contrast, is generally regarded as being

²⁰ A majority of participants agreed that, although social partners and NGOs are both to be seen as members of civil society, the concepts of social dialogue and civil dialogue should remain distinct (ESC 1999b: 39).

²¹ George and Bache do not mention the civil dialogue, presumably because it is less well established. Furthermore, cooperation with informal sectoral associations of NGOs, such as the platform of European Social NGOs (“The Social Platform”) or the Liaison Committee of Development NGOs need to be taken into account as well (see Commission 2000a: 8 and below).

least open to lobbying; here, an indirect route, through member states, is often most successful (see Mazey und Richardson 1999: 118-119). Regarding civil society the European Social and Economic Council (ESC) is worth mentioning, as it regards itself as being the institutionalised voice of civil society (ESC 2001a: 3, 8). However, the ESC is generally not regarded as a success, its opinions being of a “very variable quality” (George and Bache 2001: 201; similarly Streeck and Schmitterer 1994: 188).

A considerable amount of activities by civil society, including lobbying, is directed at the Commission, which is therefore the focus of the present study.²² Compared with the Council it is relatively easy to approach the Commission, because it attaches importance to so-called “consultations” with interest groups. One reason for the willingness of the Commission to listen to outside views is that it is understaffed (Kohler-Koch 1997: 47-8). Furthermore, the Commission finds it easier to evaluate proposals if it has access to several different perspectives; indirectly, consultations can thus be said to contribute to the efficiency of the system (see Working Group 2a 2001: 7-8; Bellier 1997: 110-1). Consultations happen in a variety of ways, for instance through making proposals accessible to interested groups, through holding conferences and workshops, through formal committees but also through informal meetings and correspondence (see Bellier 1997: 111; Mazey und Richardson 1996: 210, 1999: 113). However, there are significant differences in how the various DGs handle the consultation process (Greenwood und Romit 1994: 35, Mazey und Richardson 1995: 347).²³

It is interesting to note, however, that it is only recently that the Commission has put an emphasis on the concept “civil society”. In the 1992 communication *An Open and Structured Dialogue Between the Commission and Special Interest Groups* the term is not mentioned once; rather a distinction is made between non-profit and profit interest groups. The earlier approach of the Commission seems to have been influenced by the conceptual frameworks of interest representation and lobbying, which eschew the term as well.²⁴ On the one hand, the recent emphasis on civil society participation might be a result of Prodi’s (2001) attempt at

²² The special importance attached to the Commission seems justified if one takes into account its role in agenda setting, the fact that all proposals pass through it and that details of proposals are decided by the Commission (George and Bache 2001: 295).

²³ The different consultation processes of the various DGs cannot be analysed here. For references see Working Group 2a (2001: 10 fn8), Commission (2000: 13 fn7), ESC (1999a: 9). For the civil society dialogue in trade policy consult http://trade-info.cec.eu.int/civil_soc/introl.php. Warleigh (2000) gives a case study of the opportunities for NGOs in different policy areas.

²⁴ In Mazey and Richardson’s (1999: 109) classification of groups active at the EU level, for instance, the term is notably absent. Rather, they distinguish functionally between European associations, national associations, lobbying consultants, ad hoc coalitions and expert communities.

reforming the Commission. On the other hand, many civil society organisations were only formed at the European level after the treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam and can thus be regarded as newcomers.

Civil society organisations have voiced a variety of complaints regarding current consultation procedures. They denounce the complexity of the system, its intransparency and the great number of committees (700) (Working Group 2a 2001: 3; Commission 2001a: 17; Governance Team 2001: 7, 20). One NGO representative defines the wishes of civil society: “[w]hat we want is to know the Commission’s agenda and to be able to have our say, without depending on the discretion of officials“ (qtd. in Working Group 2a 2001: 12; see also Commission 2000a: 6-7). The platform of Social NGOs has criticised that “[a]t present there is no legal basis for consulting NGOs. Consultations are still initiated by the individual Commission Directorates when they feel the need with no moves to draw everything together” (1998, qtd. in Geyer 2001: 485; similarly Rhinard 2002: 206 and Van Schendelen and Pedler 1998: 9 with regard to the integration of civil society in committees).

If one takes seriously Rhinard’s judgement that regarding the makeup of committees “a poor balance has been struck between effectiveness and democracy” (2002: 194-5)²⁵, it follows that it is not only necessary to rationalise the over 700 committees, as the Commission has promised to do (Working Group 2001 2a: 16; Commission 2001a: 17), but, perhaps more importantly, to complement criteria of efficiency and effectiveness (output legitimacy) - which still seem to be in the foreground (Warleigh 2000: 231, 239) - with criteria of participation and inclusiveness (input legitimation), or as the Commission itself puts it: “...good consultation serves a double purpose by helping to improve the quality of the policy outcome and at the same time enhancing the involvement of interested parties and the public at large” (2002: 4; compare Richter 1999: 176). The aim should thus be to steer the committee and consultation system to approximate a deliberative, or reflexive, policy making system, in which divergent views get a hearing and are involved in the decision making process (on reflexive democracy see also Abromeit 1998: 91, Bukow 1999: 30-1). To ensure a fair and transparent consultation system several civil society actors have demanded that a legal obligation for the Commission to consult should be enshrined in the Treaty (see Social Platform 2002; EHF 2002).

²⁵ This does not mean that civil society is presently not involved in committees at all; but its participation seems often to be constrained to relatively uncontroversial policy areas (see Töller 2002: 533, 536).

While the Commission has until now not supported such a move, first steps towards a more transparent consultation process are being taken, albeit somewhat slowly. The Commission is currently developing a code of conduct to regulate who is to be consulted on what, when and how to consult (Commission 2001a: 17). A first version of such a codex has been presented in June 2002 (Commission 2002a) and is at the moment being publicly discussed.²⁶ Another important step in the direction of more transparency is the signing of the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision Making and Access to Justice in Environment Matters²⁷ by the Commission. For its part the Commission has pledged to respect the following overarching principles in its dealings with NGOs:

List 3: Commission Principles in Dealing with NGOs

- the need to respect diversity and heterogeneity of NGO community
- the need to take account of the autonomy and independence of NGOs
- the need to take into account the specific needs of NGOs, depending upon the sector, size, experience and track record of the NGO(s) concerned
- the need for greater openness and transparency
- the need to ensure that measures taken incorporate and promote the European dimension of EU policies and related grants

Source: Commission (2000a: 18)

However, the Commission stresses that both sides need to be committed to the principles of participation, openness, accountability, effectiveness and coherence (2002: 8, these principles are elaborated in Commission 2001a). On the side of civil society it must be apparent which interest they represent, how inclusive that representation is and how accurately they reflect those interests (Commission 2002a: 10). The CONECCS database, which contains details about various interest groups (see above), is designed to improve transparency among the plethora of groups active at the EU level.²⁸ In environmental policy, the Commission has drawn up a list of criteria which organisations need to satisfy to be eligible to apply for partial funding by the Commission:

²⁶ Comments on the proposed rules can be accessed at http://europa.eu.int/comm/secretariat_general/sgc/consultation/index_en.htm

²⁷ For details on the Aarhus Convention see <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/>

²⁸ While the ESC has demanded that criteria of representativeness should determine which organisations are to be consulted (2000: 4), the Commission feels that this needs to be further discussed. Accreditation has been rejected by many NGOs themselves as a restrictive feature (ESC 2000:8).

List 4: Eligibility Criteria for Environmental NGOs Applying for Funding under Budget Line B4-3060

Consideration will be given only to proposals from organisations:

- which are independent and non-profit making, primarily active in the field of environmental protection, with an environmental objective aimed at the public good
- which are active at a European level (i.e. not simply at national level)
- which have an administrative and financial management structure
- whose financial resources are not exclusively made up of subsidies from European Union institutions

Source: Commission (2001b: 17-18)

Clearly the criteria for funding are far more stringent and clear cut than those for consultation and tailored to the needs of civil society organisations in a narrower sense (note the emphasis on the public good).

Another way for civil society to participate is through the open method of coordination (OCM). This novel way of European governance, while officially endorsed and defined at the Lisbon Council for the realm of social policy, was already used in the Amsterdam treaty for employment policy. While the Commission takes an active role in the latter policy area it has a much weaker part in the former (de la Ponte 2002: 340). OMC works in stages: first the Council of Ministers agrees on policy goals. Member states then translate guidelines into national and regional policies. Third, specific benchmarks and indicators to measure best practice are agreed upon. Finally, results are monitored and evaluated (Hughes 2000/2001). The Working Group “Involving Experts in the Process of National Policy Convergence” for the *White Paper on Governance* suggested that it might be difficult to involve stakeholders in this process (Working Group 4a 2001:3, 23 see also 34). However, de la Ponte’s analysis of OMC in the areas of social exclusion (2002: 345-6, 349) maintains that great efforts were being made to involve and inform as many organisations as possible. Nevertheless she notes a dominance of economic actors in the areas of pensions and health care. Moreover, in his assessment of OMC in employment policy Zeitlin (2002) suggests that the open method needs to be opened up because of lack of transparency. These findings suggest that there are significant differences in the inclusion of civil society in the various areas to which OMC is applied. Hence, extensions of the method to asylum policy, e-Europe or research need to be scrutinised in how far and to what extent far they allow for civil society participation. That the method is *per se* better suited to include civil society may be doubted.

2.4. Advantage Economic Actors?

It is often pointed out that groups which are able to mobilise considerable resources enjoy an advantage in the political arena and that such actors are predominately economic by nature (see for instance Andersen and Elisassen 1996: 54; Mazey und Richardson 1995: 345); this is certainly true in case of the EU's multi-level system. While the economic interests of such groups (that is, profit) are not necessarily always in confrontation with those of civil society in the narrower sense (the public good) - as the case of sponsorship shows – their relationship will often, perhaps even predominately, be defined by conflict. Considering the resource advantage economic actors possess, do we have to conclude, as Richter does (1999: 156, 162), that the EU agenda is set by market forces and that civil society organisations in a narrower sense (like consumer organisations or environmental groups) are marginalized? Mazey and Richardson (1999: 122-3) point out that the complexity of the system alone prevents an overarching supremacy of “material interests”.²⁹ Wallace concurs: “although the civic interests have less political muscle and less organized power than the producers, they are a constant factor in the debate and seem to have considerable influence on the outcome (1997: 9; similar Wallace und Young 1997: 241-2 and Warleigh 2000). As partial compensation for the resource advantage of economic actors, the Commission supports the activities of civil society organisations financially.”³⁰ The platform of European Social NGOs, for instance, is funded jointly by the Commission and Parliament (Geyer 2001: 486). Environmental NGOs can apply to the Commission for funding as well (see above).

As pointed out in chapter 1, civil society should not be glorified. Therefore, the next section will provide a critical estimation of the potential “dark side” of civil society engagement at the EU-level.

²⁹ This is the term used by Joseph Conrad in his novel *Nostromo* to describe the economic forces shaping the fate of the (fictional) Occidental Republic of Costaguana

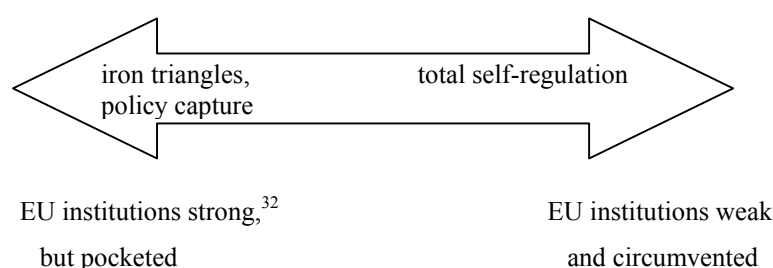
³⁰ Greenwood and Aspinwall (1998:3) estimate that 59% of civil society organisations active at the EU level receive European funding. In project funding over 1000 mil. € a year are allocated to NGO projects (Commission 2002a:2).

2.5. Danger of Civil Society Engagement

It is by no means inconceivable that the participation of civil society in the multi-level system can have negative consequences as well. On the one hand, the term “civil society” is susceptible for abuse – that is, it might serve to cloak preferential treatment of some interest organisations. Such practices are referred to as “iron triangles” (between member states, the Commission and preferred interests) or as “policy capture” (Mazey und Richardson 1995: 351).³¹ While the Commission acknowledges that in consultations a proper balance of diverse interests is needed (2002: 14), only a well-monitored and enforced consultation codex will contribute significantly to the abolishment of such practices.

On the other extreme of the danger spectrum is the total self-regulation of civil society. Self-regulation can be a conscious effort by some actors to shut out EU institutions (and thus prevent inconvenient regulation from outside). Because of the growth of self-regulation by private actors (see Andersen and Eliassen 1996: 54; Greenwood und Romit 1994) this is a danger that should not be underestimated. Even the self-styled champion of civil society, the ESC, has acknowledged this danger and warns: “self-regulation should never impinge either on fundamental rights nor on the basic principles underlying the building of the European Union” (2002: 9). Similarly, the Group of European Socialist Parties and the German Länder stress the responsibility and accountability of elected representatives in contrast to less accountable private actors (Governance Team 2001: 19-29; see also European Parliament qtd. in Commission 2002a: 4). To successfully confront these dangers, the Commission emphasises that it is its policy to give interest organisations “a voice but not a vote” (2002: 4). Still, it will be necessary to carefully monitor the results of self-regulation to prevent abuse.

Graphic 2: Danger Spectrum of Civil Society Involvement



³¹ As an example of such practices Wessels (1997: 34) gives the agricultural sector.

³² To exert influence on EU institutions seems only worthwhile if they are considered strong and effective. Before the Amsterdam reforms, for instance, the European Parliament was hardly lobbied because it was perceived to have little powers.

Keeping these dangers in mind, we will presently analyse the involvement of civil society in certain policy sectors.

2.6. Perspectives from Consumer Representation, Environment and Social Policy

In the following a rough survey of civil society engagement in several policy areas will be given. Civil society organisations seem to be particularly active in the fields of consumer protection, environmental matters and social policy; therefore these areas will be surveyed below.

Turning first to consumer protection, Young (1998) notes that consumer groups are among the better-resourced organisations in Brussels. Three factors contribute to their effectiveness: firstly, there is little competition among themselves (unlike in trade associations) as their interests tend to be congruent as raising the level of protection in countries with lower standards does not threaten the level of protection afforded by highest standard countries (Young 1998: 150). Consumer groups are also induced to work together because they lack resources to pursue unilateral strategies. Young (1998: 151) also notes a sense of solidarity: only together are these organisations able to counteract business interests. Last but not least, they – as representatives of the European consumers - enjoy credibility in the eyes of policy makers.

Similar arguments can be made in regard to environmental groups. Indeed, Webster's (1998) analysis of the activities of eight core environmental organisations confirms Mazey and Richardson's (1995: 346) prediction that environmental organisations should be well suited to form to form transnational coalitions. Webster notes that the eight biggest environmental groups active at the EU level (representing 132 suborganisations in 24 countries)³³ have agreed to coordinate their activities. They are on good standing with the DG responsible for environment and hold twice yearly conferences to exchange policy views. Similar to consumer organisations, these groups have been able to cooperate successfully despite

³³ These are: the European Environmental Bureau, Friends of the Earth Europe, Greenpeace International, WWF, Climate Network Europe, European Federation for Transport and the Environment and BirdLife International (European Office) known informally as the "Green 8". A review of their activities is provided in Commission (2001b).

different internal structures. Additionally to coordinating their lobbying effort, they have worked together in the review of the Fifth Environmental Action Programme and the revision of the Maastricht Treaty and share the authorship of publications and press releases (Webster 1998: 187). McCormick (1999: 203), however, is decidedly less upbeat about the influence of environmental groups on policymaking and notes that that industry is still a more powerful actor in the field.

Although about 30 social NGOs have founded a common platform of Social NGOs, Geyer (2001: 477) argues that the hope that these NGOs would help to maintain the human face of the EU has not materialized. Rather, he notes a distinct hierarchy among the NGOs with well-funded organisations on top (2001: 480). One wonders, though, whether Geyer may not be too sceptical in his assessment. After all, the platform is involved in the social dialogue and meets biannually with the Commission in the so-called European Social Policy Forum. Social NGOs do seem to be recognised as important actors: in 1999, for instance, it was announced that the next social action programme would be based on wide consultations with civil society (ESC 1999b: 56).

While several organisations from these fields complain about “sectoralisation”, i.e. that they are only consulted on their specific issue in the narrowest sense (ESC 1999b: 58), civil society activities in areas of consumer protection, environmental and social matters can be regarded as relative success stories. Informal sectoral associations of NGOs such as the Green 8 or the Social Platform seem to have been particularly useful, as they provide the Commission with a unified point of contact.³⁴ However, whether a group or a single association is ultimately successful or not depends on many factors, not the least of which is the specific national support an organisation does or does not receive. Cram (2001) shows that Irish women’s organisations have been considerably more successful than Greek or even British organisations in securing EU funds, simply because in the Irish case the existing national framework facilitates a successful application. Thus, there is a clear interaction between the national and the European context. Next, we will analyse the importance of “Europeanness” for civil society.

³⁴ Until recently, the oldest of these organisations was the Liaison Committee of Development NGOs. However, after allegations of financial mismanagement the organisation disbanded in 2001 and is currently reconstituting itself. At the European Convention, development, human rights, social and environmental NGOs have set up a “civil society contact group” to represent their interests.

2.7. A European Civil Society?

In this chapter I discuss whether it is appropriate to speak of a European civil society. It has been argued that civil society assists in the process of European unification by providing a “European public space” (Commission 2000a: 5) or, going one step further, by contributing to a “European identity” (ESC 1999a: 13; Social Platform 2002). From the lobbying perspective a “transnational society”, defined as “those non-governmental actors who engage in intra EC exchanges – social, economic, political - and thereby influence, directly or indirectly, policymaking processes and outcome at the European level” (Stone Sweet and Sandholz 1998: 9; similarly Platzer 2002: 410-11)³⁵ is sometimes postulated as well. But can the theory that civil society on the European level is more than a loose conglomeration of actors be sustained?

Historically, Streeck and Schmitterer argue, neofunctionalists were counting on interest organisations to become involved at the European level when the (then) EEC was being established:

[j]ust as civil servants like Jean Monet had been persuading, cajoling, manipulating the elected politicians and the administrative machineries of national states into emergent supranationalism, so the Geschäftsführer [CEOs] of business associations and trade unions were expected to enlighten their elected leaders that their interests too had migrated to a new place and that the offices and decisions of their representatives had to follow suit (1994: 182).

The European activities of interest groups would function as a constituency for the European bureaucrats and would ultimately permit the Commission to “lift itself out of the parochial entanglements of national politics and intergovernmental non-decision making into a safely anchored new world of supranational political management” (Streeck and Schmitterer 1994: 183). However, such a system of corporate supranationalism failed to materialise (due to the resistance of member states) and it was only with the Single European Act that European integration resurged. According to Streeck and Schmitterer (1994: 185, 215) the current system is far away from early corporate visions and is more similar to the US pluralist system of interest representation.

³⁵ Mazey und Richardson (1999: 110) count interest organisations, economic- and knowledge elites as part of transnational society.

Such a pattern of “disjointed pluralism” (Streeck and Schmitterer 1994: 215) is unlikely to provide a strong basis for the development of a civil society with a European consciousness. This diagnosis is supported by Warleigh (2001) who points out that most organisations are active on the European level not because they are europhiles but because they have specific aims – profit or non-profit – that they want to push through. Furthermore, NGOs, the focus of his study, are often not contributing to the political socialisation of their followers. The EU policy of such organisations is frequently made by a rather small elite and is rarely enthusiastically supported by the bulk of members and supporters (Warleigh 2001: 623, 634). To measure the europeanisation of civil society Warleigh uses seven categories, which he derives from NGO activities in development policy:

Table 4: Europeanising Civil Society? (NGOs)

Key Variable	Indicator in EU Context	Rating ***=high (* =low)
Collaboration with like-minded actors	Ability to construct policy coalitions	***
Independence	Reliance on non-official sources of funding	***
Democratic internal governance	Participation in decision making by supporters	*
Cognitive impact on supporter	Increased awareness of, and engagement with EU	*
Ability to be self critical	Officer – supporter dialogue; Internal review	**
Ability to draw on existing political socialization	Large base of supporters willing to participate in decision making	*

Source: Warleigh (2001: 634)

Warleigh (2001: 635-6, compare also 2000) concludes that NGOs are not contributing significantly to a civil society with a European consciousness. To be sure, the behaviour of other parts of civil society can be studied as well to analyse their possible contribution to a European Civil Society. If we enlarge our definition beyond the actors suggested by the ESC

(see list 1 above) to include parties³⁶, euro-protests (such as the movement against genetically modified food) and the media as parts of a broadly based civil society, the following picture emerges:

Table 5: Europeanising Civil Society? (Broad Definition)

Constituent	Positive	Negative
NGOs	Policy coalitions at the EU level; participate in the system	Low participation of the bulk of followers in European policy making
Parties	Existence of pan-European parties	Party policy is often undermined by national interests
Media	Some media offer a European, non-national outlook for the elite (<i>Economist</i> , <i>European Voice</i> , <i>Euronews</i>)	Most of the European public is informed about EU policy via national media
Euro-Protests	Trans-national protests are growing	However, the overwhelming majority of protests still happens in a national framework

Source: On parties Hix (1998: 37-40), on the media Schlesinger (1999) and Semetko et al. (2000), on Euro-protests Imig and Tattow (2000: 73-93).

When merging these three sub-components of a possible European civil society, it has to be noted that such an entity currently exists in an embryonic state at best. Do we have to agree, then, with Abromeit, who holds that regarding the democratisation of the EU “we may at once lay aside those ideas revolving around the civil society, since by now there is no European civil society worthy of the name” (1998: 91, similarly Richter 1999: 150)? Such a view disregards the very real successes that civil society organisations have been able to achieve in certain policy areas (see above). Indeed, their continued activities prove that civil society does not need the emergence of an overarching European identity to participate successfully in the EU’s multi-level policy networks.

³⁶ The case for including parties has been strongly made in Eastern Europe where party make-up differs from the West. Because parties at the EU level are loose associations quite different from parties at the national level there may be a reason for including them as well. As we have seen, organisations with associations to political parties are also included in CONECCS (list 2 above).

3. Intermediary Conclusions from Chapters 1 and 2

Before we proceed to deal in more detail with civil society participation in research policy it is pertinent to sum up our previous findings and to formulate some intermediary conclusions. As we have seen, the term civil society is fluent and can be applied both in a wide and a narrow sense. The dominant EU position, as used by the ESC and CONECCS, certainly corresponds to a broad interpretation of the term, as it includes economic actors and, the case of CONECCS, even some entities from the realm of the state. Such a definition is legitimate; however one should be careful that it is not abused. To consult only industrial groups, for instance, and to cloak such preferential treatment as “consultations with civil society” is certainly a perversion of the term. If one wants civil society to contribute effectively to a democratisation of the system, the basic driving force in consultations must be to include a balanced range of actors. Clear rules stating who has to consult whom on what, how and at what time are necessary. Only if every effort is made to “pluralise” existing networks will civil society participation be an effective means in ensuring an open and reflexive system. For the remaining part of this essay we will be concerned with the case of research policy which will be analysed in order to find out how matters stand in a single policy area in this regard.

4. Civil Society and EU Research Policy³⁷

4.1. Introduction: The “Double Imperative” of Civil Society Involvement in EU Research Policy

While the first part of this essay looked at general issues of civil society involvement at the EU level, the second part will analyse one specialised policy area in more detail. Why, however, was research policy³⁸ chosen as the area under scrutiny? There are other fields, such as environmental policy, development aid or social affairs where NGOs are more active. By contrast, there is a dearth of material on civil society participation in R&D policy.³⁹ However, I prefer to see this lack of research as an opportunity rather than as an obstacle. While under-investigated, research policy deals with sensitive issues vital to the future of society (such as genetically modified organisms or stem cell research). Therefore it can be argued that science has become too important to be left to the scientists.

I propose that at the EU level there exists a “double imperative” to include civil society in research policy, and this double imperative is the main reason for choosing RTD as the object of inquiry. What I mean with this term is that EU research policy has to deal with the contestation of legitimacy from two sides. First, the general questions of the “democratic deficit” (see introduction) apply. Second, however, science policy is confronted with its own “governance problems”, which, in turn, are an additional rationale for including civil society and which we therefore need to look into.

³⁷ We will only deal with those research efforts here that have a connection to the Commission. Consequently, intergovernmental programmes such as COST or EUREKA will not be analysed (although these programmes might eventually become part of the ERA).

³⁸ The terms “research policy“, “RTD (research and technological development) policy” and “R&D (research and development) policy” will be used interchangeably.

³⁹ Indeed, research policy itself is a somewhat under-researched field; academic journals such as European Public Policy or Common Market Studies contain very few academic articles on the subject (with the exception of biotechnology). Moreover, the register of British research on European integration (Jones 1999: 56) showed not a single entry for research policy (first classification code). Peterson and Sharp (1998: 177) argue that the labyrinth of committees and procedures and the technical complexity are two important reasons for this dearth of research.

4.2. Science in the 21st Century: Democracy or Technocracy?

In this essay, civil society involvement in decision-making has previously been analysed through the conceptual lens of the EU's multilevel system; the need to involve civil society so as to reform this way of governance ("pluralisation") constitutes the first part of the double imperative for including civil society. In this chapter we will look at the second part of the double imperative, namely the role that civil society can play in science policy.

Today, the role and perception of science is fundamentally ambiguous. It is ironic that, as Ziman (1984: 184) points out, Western culture depends heavily on science-based technologies, yet few people have more than a most general notion of science (similarly House of Lords 2000 ch. 1, Nelkin 1984 [1979]: 10). Indeed, a recent Euro barometer survey (2001) revealed that 45% of Europe's population are neither interested in nor informed about science and technology.

At the same time, recent decades have seen an increase in the use of scientific expertise in the political process (Funtowicz et al. 2000: 328, Töller 2002: 167). Not only governmental actors but also interest groups are not able to conduct policy without reference to science. As an example Toumey (1996: 42) points out that, although the understanding of science by the nuclear industry, liberal environmentalists and more radical groups differs markedly, they all integrate the concept into their own ideology. Hence, "technical expertise becomes a resource exploited by all parties to justify their political and economic views" (Nelkin 1984 [1979]: 17). Somewhat contradictory, however, experts are widely seen as impartial, objective and rational (Töller 2002: 168). Furthermore, among experts' communities (so called "epistemic communities") consensus is relatively easy to attain. Thus, for Anderson and Burns "the technical...expertise disciplines the political bargaining in specialised networks..., it also provides a language and means of framing problems and their solutions" (1996: 235). Andersen and Burns even argue that the system of parliamentary governance is ineffective and inferior to a "democracy of organisations and experts" (1996: 230). Töller (2002: 173), by contrast, argues that parliamentary democracy will not be abolished but that it will also no longer be the only relevant actor.

However, in a recent paradigm shift, the so-called “objectivity” of experts has been called into question (Funtowicz et al. 2000a: 332) and some scholars argue for a fundamental move away from a technocratic approach to a participatory one. They recognise that the assessment of science cannot be left solely to scientists (Funtowicz et al. 2000b: 3). To counteract the dangers of an “expertocracy” or a “technocracy” it is important to open up the process of science policy in line with a participatory and reflexive approach which, Töller (2002: 169) suggests, should consist of three important steps: first experts need to be consulted in the initial phase so that there is ample time to discuss their findings and to have a public discourse. Secondly, when selecting experts care should be taken to include different scholarly perspectives. Thirdly, expert knowledge has to be communicated to stakeholders who should be invited to participate in the discussion.

According to De Marchi and Ravetz (1999) and Funtowicz et al. (2000) BSE is an example of what happens if a participatory approach is not applied. They argue that the closed decision making system of the British government with its secrecy, untransparency and denial of public participation was directly responsible for the outbreak of the epidemic (compare also House of Lords 2000: ch.2).⁴⁰ In fact, BSE also had repercussions on the EU level: a European Parliament Committee on BSE severely criticised the Commission’s inability to separate safety and consumer interests from agriculture and food production interests. This resulted in a radical change in the make-up of scientific advisory committees. Eight committees funded in 1997 to advise DG XXIV on consumer health and food safety include previously unprecedented provisions for transparency and openness (Lake 2000: 10).

To restore and maintain trust in science, public participation will be essential (Funtowicz et al. 2000: 329) and civil society involvement will be crucial as NGOs and consumer groups in particular have the technical background and the negotiating skill that the general public lacks. As the Eurobarometer survey shows, civil society organisations do enjoy considerable trust in the populace:

⁴⁰ In the UK, some reforms were introduced after the BSE crises and unofficial groups are now no longer ignored (de Marchi and Ravetz 1999: 745).

Table 6: Trust in Organisations

Imagine there has been a disaster in your neighbourhood. Who would you most trust to explain the reasons for this disaster?	Cumulative Total (% EU 15)
Scientists	62,6
Environmental Protection Associations	59,8
Doctors	55
None of the above	32,6
Consumer Associations	31,6
Government Representatives	19,9
Journalists	17,7
Don't know	12,3
Businesses	4,4

Source: Eurobarometer 55.2 (2001:44).

Civil Society can thus be a force to return science policy to society. It should be noted that, while scientists are still rated highest as providers of information in the table above, within a participatory framework they are not seen as providing indisputable facts but rather as witnesses providing testimony (de Marchi and Ravetz 1999: 755). However, de Marchi and Ravetz (1999: 756) point out that the involvement of NGOs and other civil society organisations requires a delicate balance between their function as critics and stakeholders. They argue that with them in the process there will inevitably be an element of conflict (compare also Peterson and Bomberg 1999: 178-9); however, their exclusion can lead to much worse problems in the long run. Having given an overview of the second imperative for civil society inclusion in EU RTD policy making, we now need to outline the main feature of the EU RTD “landscape”.

4.3. EU Research Policy: an Overview

4.3.1. Historical Perspectives

The European research space is to a significant extent characterised by a plurality of organisations with divergent funding, geographical locations, membership and scientific approach (compare Gieser 1994: 424-427). Many of these organisations, such as CERN or ESA developed on an intergovernmental basis outside the EU framework. Within the EU, research policy was slow to take off. It was only in the eighties that a breakthrough was made when Etienne Davignon reconceptualised research policy as a distribution of research funds to support the single-market project (Banchoff 2002: 8), which lead to programmes focused on

boosting European industry, such as ESPRIT (information technologies) and RACE (communication technologies). In 1983 existing activities and new programmes were for the first time united into a multi-annual framework programme (fp) (Banchoff 2002: 8). By the 1990ties, 3 billion ECU were spent on research, which made fp 4 and 5 the third largest EU programmes - although this statement is less impressive if one recalls that 42 billion ECU were spent for agriculture and 31 billion ECU for the structural funds (Peterson and Sharp 1998: 9-10). Currently, member states still account for about 95 percent of public R&D expenditures and their combined investment in non-EU institutions such as ESA or CERN is still greater than the EU research programmes (Banchoff 2002: 2) - hence the term “15+1” which is meant to show the fragmentation into 15 national programme and one framework programme.

4.3.2. ERA and FP 6

The latest effort to co-ordinate and integrate the European research space is the European Research Area (ERA) (launched by Commissioner Busquin in 2000) where the need to redefine EU research policy in terms broader than the fps in order to overcome national fragmentation is stressed. In order to achieve this, the Commission proposed the creation of frontier-free area for research, better use of financial instruments and resources and the promotion of mobility among researchers (Commission 2000b). Since then, these demands have been incorporated into the new Sixth EU Framework Programme for Research (fp 6), which has been hailed as a significant departure from previous efforts. Not only has the available budget been increased by 17%, new overall goals have also been formulated. The expressive aim of fp 6 is to focus on questions of European importance. To do so, three main areas of action are envisaged. The first part, entitled “integrating research”, focuses on the need to strengthen ties between Community research and research conducted on a national level. Furthermore, it outlines priority fields of research (see figure below) and designates so-called “centres of excellence” which will be encouraged to co-operate and will receive additional funding. Special emphasis is also put on the need to include SMEs. The second part, “structuring the European Research Area”, aims at correcting structural weaknesses. This involves support for research infrastructure but also an analysis of questions regarding the interaction between science and society (see below). Finally, “strengthening the foundations of the European Research Area” involves funds for meeting the technological needs arising by the implementation of EU policies. A further component will be the

anticipation of future scientific and technological needs and the capability to react quickly in times of crises (such as BSE).

List 5: Priority Areas in European Research

- Life Sciences, genomics and biotechnology for health
- Information society technologies
- Nanotechnologies and nanosciences, knowledge based multifunctional materials and new production processes and devices
- Aeronautics and space
- Food quality and safety
- Sustainable development, global change and ecosystems
- Citizens and governance in a knowledge-based society

Source: European Union (2002: 4)

According to Gannon (2001), fp 6 seems to have been received favourably by the scientific community. As a further instrument for creating the ERA the OCM will also be used; at the moment, benchmarking is under way in the fields of human resources, public and private investment in R&D, scientific and technological productivity, impact of RTD on competitiveness and employment and the promotion of RTD culture and public understanding of science (CORDIS: without date [w.d.]). Even if one disregards the OCM, research policy is characterised by a complex multi-level decision making process which is analysed below.

4.3.3. Levels of Decision Making in Research Policy

As mentioned in the introduction, in the EU system a super systemic level (high politics), a systemic and a sub systemic level can be distinguished. Particularly at the systemic level, negotiations on research policy have proven to be a complex subject matter. This is the case because of several super systemic factors: not only did the Maastricht treaty grant co-decision rights to the EP, until the Amsterdam Treaty (where QMV [qualified majority voting] was introduced for research policy) the Council was required to decide unanimously on the fp as a whole and on its constituent parts (Banchoff 2002: 9). Because R&D is such a specialised and technical policy area, discussions in the Council tend to focus on the budget, not on the content (D'Souza 1999: 76-7, Peterson 1995: 395).

While budgetary issues are tricky, Peterson (1995: 395,400) argues that as far as content is concerned, the Commission is a far more powerful actor in research policy than in most other

EU policy sectors. Indeed, about 90 percent of what eventually becomes the framework programme is determined by the Commission in its proposal (sub-systemic level). At the systemic level, Commission and Parliament often act as allies against the member states (D'Souza 1999: 56).

In establishing priorities at the sub systemic level, continuity between the fps is very important - which is an additional factor making change difficult, particularly if industrial and scientific groups flex their muscles in support of some programmes. In terms of new institutionalism, research policy is highly path dependent (Peterson and Sharp 1998: 61-92, Peterson and Bomberg 1999: 218-9). Let us sum up these characteristics in a table modelled on and building upon Peterson and Blomberg's approach (1999, see introduction):

Table 7: Multi-Level Decision Making in Research Policy

Level	Characteristics
Super systemic	<u>EP</u> : co-decision rights granted at Maastricht <u>Council</u> : unanimous vote required until Amsterdam treaty (QMV only in time for fp 6)
Systemic	Up to fp 6 complex negotiations because of the wide array of actors. Discussions tend to focus on budget because of specialised subject matter
Sub-systemic	Commission powerful actor: about 90% of its proposals are taken over. Continuity important

The crucial question for the present inquiry is how open and accessible this decision making process really is; in other words: are we dealing with open or closed policy networks in research policy?

4.3.4. Influences on EU-Research Policy: a Closed Policy Network?

Economic actors are generally regarded as having a big influence on EU RTD (for instance by Frühwein 2002: 29, Hartung 2002: 15, Heritier 1999: 80, Levy 2000: 123) But is Heritier right in concluding that large companies were granted "excessive power" (1999: 85) to define and shape the R&D programme? In the past, economic interests have certainly been at the

heart of policy formulation, as the case of the ESPRIT programme, which was basically set up by the round table of industrialists, shows (see D'Souza 1999: 44, Richardson and Bomberg 1999: 206, 222).⁴¹ However, the Maastricht treaty stipulated that cohesion policy has to be taken into account in all EU policies, including research (Peterson and Sharp 1998: 8), which led to a move away from the exclusive focus on industry needs.⁴² Fp 5 in particular included social objectives, which led to it being described as a social contract (Georghiou 1998: 894). D'Souza (1999: 93) distinguishes between three phases of EU science policy: while RTD policy up to 1975 was dominated by political objectives, from 1975 to 1992 economic interests were dominant; after Maastricht socio-economic issues like job creation, health or the environment have taken a prominent place. However, while at least a partial shift away from a fixation on economic goals as the only *raison d'être* for research policy has taken place, this does not mean that economic actors are not powerful in policy making.

Additionally to the influence of industry, an intransparent and complex bureaucracy and a technocratic policy style are often perceived to be the further characteristic of EU science policy (see Hartung 2002: 15). Can we say, then, that EU research policy is characterised by a closed policy network? Peterson and Sharp seem to think so:

[a] generally closed circle of actors tends to be involved repeatedly in decisions that determine which projects and technologies receive funding in given sectors. The process is highly incestuous: evaluations of proposals are often recipients of large grants from EU programmes, and mutual back scratching is common (1998: 182).

It is certainly true that the Commission works closely with the industrial and scientific communities and nurtures and manufactures policy networks in order to strengthen its hand *vis à vis* the Council (Peterson and Sharp 1998: 177). One of the Commissions favourite methods to legitimise its autonomy is through seeking the endorsement of its strategy by “independent” experts committees (Peterson and Bomberg 1999: 220-221). Instrumental in this endeavour are the advisory committees, 17 of which were set up to advise the Commission on fp 5 alone. Their membership reflects the division of interests in RTD policy: half of the members of these groups had a background in research, one third were from

⁴¹ However, research supported by the Commission is always pre-competitive, that is it does not lead to a direct market advantage (on pre-competitiveness see Luukkonen 2002).

⁴² This emphasis opens a potential dilemma between promoting excellence (regardless of location) and ensuring greater cohesion. Generally, though, structural funds are a much more important source of funding for cohesion countries than research programmes (Peterson and Sharp 1998: 21, 145).

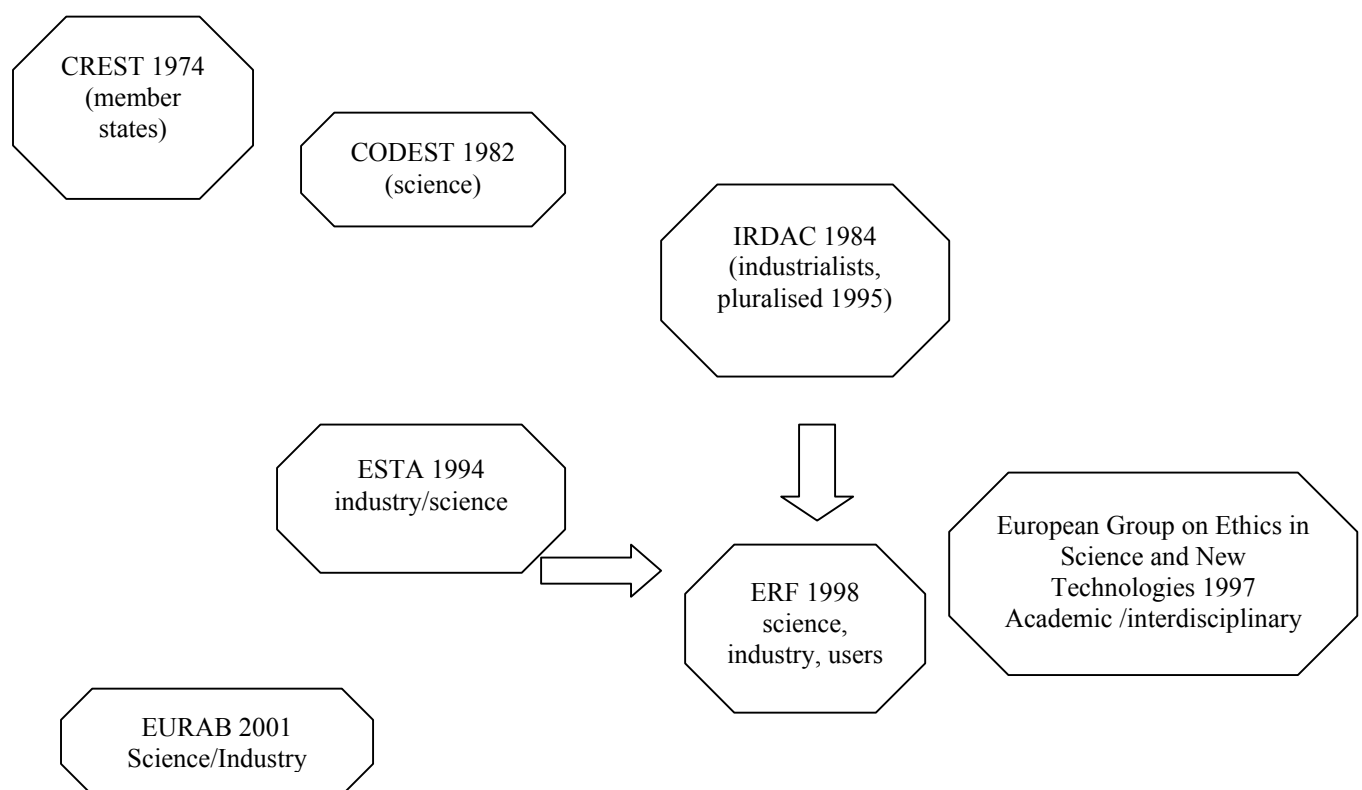
industry and the rest was made up by research users or regulators (Shepard 2000:19, see below for more information on advisory bodies). Indeed, Grande and Peschke's analysis (1999) suggests that the first two groups are dominant in research policy. They chronicle the co-evolution of these interests with R&D policy (1999: 47). The science camp consists mainly of supranational associations (two of the most important being ESF and EUROHORC) and national liaison offices (see Grande and Peschke 1999: 50, table 2). Business interests are represented in the form of round tables, high-level groups (such as the influential Senior Advisory Group Biotechnology) and supranational associations (some of which are formed for quite specialised interests). Both groups have similar functions, namely gathering information, supporting the participation of member organisations in European research programmes and, to a certain extent, lobbying and policy making (see Grande and Peschke 1999: 52, table 3). However, despite fulfilling similar functions these two camps do not cooperate at the EU level (Grande and Peschke 1999: 50). Within research programmes large companies and SMEs tend to collaborate mostly with other (large) firms, while universities and research institutes team up with each other.⁴³ Moreover, northern institutions tend to link with the North and Southern ones with the South (Peterson and Sharp 1998: 19). Existing policy networks thus reinforce each other - and the framework programmes.

However, as the framework programmes expand, many policy networks expanded their membership and become less insular (Peterson and Sharp 1998: 183). Generally, Peterson and Sharp note "a new and general enthusiasm for open debates" within DG research. Levy (2000: 135) considers the culture of DG XII to be reformist, and holds that the management of EU RTD stands out in a much more positive light than other sectors. After Maastricht the Commission adopted a self-critical approach that led to profound changes towards more openness and transparency (see Peterson and Sharp 1998: 114). Thus, the Commission has become sensitive to accusations that research policy is controlled by the same industrialists who win contracts again and again. To remedy the situation, it has encouraged a wider pool of proposals and has been scrutinising its evaluating experts (Peterson 1995: 404-5). This has also affected two of its most important advisory bodies in research policy, namely ESTA (European Science and Technology Assembly), a body consisting of 96 eminent academics and industrialists with the tasks of providing the Commission with advice on the broad strategy for fp 5, and IRDAC, the industrial R&D advisory committees which was crucial in setting priorities for industrially targeted EU research (Peterson and Sharp 1998: 178). In

⁴³ However, the rate of success was highest when academic and industrial interests went into programmes together.

1995 the latter was enlarged to include more senior industrialist and peak associations such as UNICE and the European Trade Union Congress (ETUC) and its mandate was broadened as well (Peterson and Sharp 1998: 178). In 1998 both IRDAC and ESTA were streamlined into a new single body, the European Research Forum, which consists of an academic and scientific chamber on the one hand and an industrial services and users chamber on the other hand. A new European Research Advisory Board (EURAB) was created in 2001 consisting of 45 members from science or from industry. Graphic 3 summarizes the main science advisory bodies to the Commission, indicating when they were founded and from where their membership is drawn.

Graphic 3: Main Science Advisory Bodies to the Commission



While measures have been taken to pluralise at least some of these bodies, as the case of IRDAC and the presence of user groups in the ERF show, industry and science remain by far the dominant actors.

Another way to include civil society in the decision making process may be through OCM. Indeed, because this is a novel form of governance, existing networks may be less entrenched than in the traditional community method. In research policy OCM is currently applied to

benchmarking; while the respective Commission document shows no evidence of civil society representation in this specialised area (Commission 2002b), this may change in the future.

The overview given in this chapter warrants the preliminary conclusion -- to be supported or refuted by empirical evidence -- that we are dealing with policy networks where the traditional actors are still in a powerful position. However, the Commission is presently trying to open up decision-making processes in research policy. It is to these efforts that we turn to next.

4.4. The Science and Society Dimension within the Commission

Recently, the interactions between science and society, including the participation of civil society have become of interest to the Commission. A socio-economic perspective was already present in fp 5 both under the key action “Improving the Socio Economic Knowledge Base” and within individual other fp 5 areas, for instance the “Quality of Life” programme (see Vasarotti et al. 2002: 4). However, an analysis of the socio-economic research proposals in the latter area concluded that the quantity and quality of these proposals was relatively low. Among other things, the authors of this study demand that the Commission should more rigorously ensure the participation of all stakeholders not just hard science and industrialists (Ragucci 2002: 15-16). These recommendations are in line with the promotion of participatory procedures suggested by Working Group 1b for the *White Paper on Governance* (2001).

Actually, the afore mentioned *White Paper on Governance* can be seen as a significant influence on the establishment of the youngest directorate within DG XII entitled *Science and Society* in 2001. It has the ambitious objective of reconciling science and society (CORDIS News 2002). This mission can also be traced to a similar objective in fp 6. In the framework programme the following actions are envisaged to achieve this goal:

List 6 : Actions Envisaged under Science and Society Heading in FP 6

- Bringing research closer to society: science and governance, scientific advice, involvement of society in research, foresight
- Responsible use of scientific and technological progress, in harmony with fundamental ethical values, assessment, management and communication of uncertainty and risk; expertise; analysis and support to best practice in the application of the precautionary principle in

different areas of policy making; European reference system; research on ethics in relation to science, technology developments and their applications

- Stepping up the science /society dialogue: new forms of dialogue with the participation of relevant stakeholders; knowledge of science by citizens; stimulation of awareness; promoting young people's interest in scientific careers; initiative aimed at promoting the role and place of women in science and research at all levels.

To achieve these ambitious goals the fp lists the following activities:

- Networking and establishment of structural links between the institutions and activities concerned at national, regional and European level, in particular using information society technologies;
- Exchange of experience and good practice;
- Carrying out specific research;
- High-profile awareness-raising initiatives such as prizes and competitions
- Establishing data and information bases and carrying out studies, in particular statistical and methodological studies, on different themes.

Source: European Union (2002: 56-57)

The main instrument through which the Directorate Science and Society has started putting these aims and activities in practice is the *Science and Society Action Plan* (Commission 2002c) which is seen as a contribution to FP 6, the ERA and the issues discussed in the white paper on "European Governance". The aim of the plan is nothing less than "creating the foundations for active citizenship, so that it is society itself that governs which scientific choices are made and controls their impact" (Commission 2002c: 3). The Commission proposes 38 concrete measures to achieve this, grouped under the headings "promoting scientific educations and culture in Europe", "a science policy closer to the citizen" and "responsible science at the heart of policy making". Of relevance for our topic is the third subsection of "promoting scientific educations and culture in Europe" which deals with establishing a dialogue with citizens. Possible instruments for this aim are consensus conferences (where experts and citizens engage in a debate on new subjects where regulation does not yet exist), citizen's juries (which are engaged in a decision process for which the end solution has already been defined, for instance, finding an appropriate location for a waste disposal site), national and regional consultations, on-line forums and participatory foresight programmes.⁴⁴ The Commission concludes that "establishing a dialogue at the European level involves close cooperation between a wide range of stakeholders from research organisations, public authorities, media, citizens, civil society, enterprises, etc." (2002c: 14).

⁴⁴ See House of Lords (2000: ch5) for a more detailed description of the pros and cons of the respective mechanism for public participation.

However, the bulk of proposals to involve the public and civil society can be found in chapter two, “a science policy closer to the citizens”. It is here that the Commission recognises that it is not enough to keep the public informed, “...they must also be given the opportunity to express their views in the appropriate bodies” (Commission 2002c: 17). In this regard the Commission notes a need for existing mechanisms “to be widened and deepened to systematically include other sectors of civil society at all stages” (Commission 2002c: 17). Action 22, then, proposes to exchange through workshops and networks information and best practice between member states and the regions on the use of participatory procedures. In Action 23, the Commission commits itself to organise regular events to enable civil society participation in specific issues such as biotechnology, environment, information technology, health or innovation (Commission 2002c: 18). In the third main heading “responsible science at the heart of policymaking”, the Commission also promises to establish an open dialogue with civil society on the ethical questions involved in research (Commission 2002c: 21, action 30).

The Commission has also acknowledged the problematic nature of scientific expertise. Indeed, it suggests including the public and stakeholders to make the process more transparent so as to defuse the conflict potential of sensitive issues. Action 36 promises that a set of guidelines will be established for the Commission’s own practice in selecting and using expertise for policy-making. (Commission 2002c: 24-5).

While the budget of the Directorate General Science and Society is small - only 0,3 percent of fp 6 are available to achieve these ambitious goals - it counts on a catalysing effect and on cooperating with other thematic issues within fp 6 (CORDIS News 2002).⁴⁵ The Commission official in charge of implementing the action plan stressed that these are long term goals and sensitive issues where short-term action, such as holding a one time consensus conference, is insufficient. Rather it involves changing the mentality of both civil servants and NGOs.

My interview partner at the Commission also pointed out that there is no organised channel to interact with civil society in research policy. The ESC may be important, but is only one voice. New procedures must therefore be developed to listen to civil society. While the Commission official considered the CONCECCS database a useful way towards more transparency, he criticised that the three research committees contained in the database are

⁴⁵ A research highlight where civil society participation will be an important issue on the agenda is the 2004 Science conference, which will be organised by organisations at the grass root level (CORDIS News 2002).

primarily active in other areas and thus not representative of DG research. The official pointed out that civil society organisations are not sufficiently aware of the importance of research. As an example he cited consumer organisations; although research presently conducted will have an impact on their area in their near future (GMO food comes to mind) they contribute little to the debate on research policy. Ideally, in the future all stakeholders will have access to their own expertise, which will allow for constructive debates.

Within DG Research attempts to involve (civil) society are not limited to the Science and Society directorate but are pursued in a variety of research programmes. Thus, I also interviewed an official from the quality of life programme who concurred that more effort is needed to involve civil society not only in the policy debate but also in the actual research programmes themselves. In this area, the bio society website offers a first link between science and society containing as it does, a section on bioethics and socio-economic research.⁴⁶ Similar to the science and society official, my interview partner in quality of life criticised that there is no specific approach to NGOs. In his opinion, civil society should be more proactive in approaching the Commission, although he admitted that civil society actors are often not specifically targeted by the Commission. However, the recent Commission communication *Life Sciences and Biotechnology – A Strategy for Europe* (2002d) puts considerable emphasis on dialogue with the public and civil society and pledges that the Commission will apply the highest standards of governance in the areas of life sciences and biotechnology (2002d: 11-12, 28-29).

These efforts are indeed proof of the reformist culture in DG Research. However, there is some evidence that there is also a counter-movement, which is to be expected as established interests may feel threatened by a pluralisation of actor representation. It is strange, for instance, that the Commission included stem cell research in the framework programme which eventually lead to Germany's threatening to block the release of funds for the whole programme (see der Spiegel 2002a, 2002b). It may be argued that, had the Commission consulted more widely than among its "usual suspects" from the science and business community it would have become aware of the contentious nature of stem cell research to other interest groups and a significant part of the general populace. To be fair, several participatory measures, such as a stakeholder conference, were conducted but these were apparently not sufficient to alert the Commission to the non-acceptance of stem cell research

⁴⁶ <http://biosociety.cordis.lu/>

among influential stakeholders.⁴⁷ Let us now take an empirical look at the matter by analysing civil society involvement in fp 6 and the ERA.

4.5. Civil Society involvement in FP 6 in and ERA⁴⁸

4.5.1. CONECCS and CORDIS

In this chapter we move away from what the Commission plans to do to a more empirical perspective, that is how the situation presents itself **now**. For such an enquiry CONECCS, the new database set up to ensure transparent information, seems an obvious starting point. Looking at the relative number of civil society organisations registered in CONECCS as being active in a given sector⁴⁹, the policy area with by far the most number of actors is enterprise (209), followed by environment (85) and agriculture and Rural Development together with social affairs (each 75). Out of 27 policy areas, research (44) is ranked 11, which situates it in the middle field (see appendix for the full ranking). However, a note of caution needs to be sounded regarding the previous discussion. These figures are only an indication of how many organisations in a given area have taken the trouble of registering with CONECCS. Because there is no obligation to do so, there may indeed be many more actors active in the field that have simply not bothered to register or who do not even know about the database. Before we can make reliable assertions it thus behoves us to take another source of information into account. Fortunately, all organisations that have contributed to fp 6 and ERA are listed on the CORDIS website.⁵⁰ However, the CORDIS web page does not categorize actors into different organisational types. Rather than to superimpose such a categorisation myself, I have chosen to apply only a broader model: as we have seen, the available literature identifies science and business as the dominant actors; therefore I have decided to put these organisations listed in CORDIS into the categories “science”, which comprises associations of European

⁴⁷ It could be argued that Germany’s decision had to do with the upcoming election rather than with genuine fears about stem cell research. However, it should be noted that the country was able to build a coalition of states, which illustrates the widespread concern over the issue.

⁴⁸ Again I will concentrate on civil society and its relation with the Commission. Additionally to lobbying the EP civil society organisations have, of course, the opportunity to try and influence their national representatives in the Council. Indeed, Austria and Germany have made the position paper of national NGOs available together with their governmental position paper (see <http://www.cordis.lu/rtd2002/fp-debate/members.htm>). These can not be analysed here, though.

⁴⁹ As we have previously discussed, the categorisation of the database is somewhat more inclusive than the one suggested by the ESC.

⁵⁰ The lists are reproduced in the appendix.

universities, academies public laboratories or other organisations of the so-called “scientific community” and “business”, which contains all sorts of economic actors such as sectoral or national associations. A third category, “civil society”, that is civil society organisations outside the business – science divide, was introduced as well to include organisations that do not fit into the first two categories. In fact, the number of organisations in the latter category will be an important indicator about the openness of research policy.

Table 8: Research Organisations Input Listed in CORDIS (for FP 6 and ERA)

Name	Description/Mission Statement⁵¹	Classification	In CONECCs?⁵²
All European Academies (ALLEA)	the European federation of national academies of science and humanities	Science	No
Animal Cell Technology Industrial Platform (ACTIP)	an informal forum of companies with activities in animal cell technology	Business	No
Association of the German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHT)	A federation of 82 German chambers of industry and commerce	Business	No
Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences	Merged with EUA (no website)	Science	No
European Council of Applied Sciences and Engineering (Euro-Case)	a European non-profit-making organisation of Academies of Applied Sciences, Technology and Engineering from eighteen European countries	Science	No
European Council for Automotive R&D (EUCAR)	Represents the interests of 13 European car makers	Business	No
European Information and Communication Technology Industrial Association (EICTA)	Represents 45 multinational companies and 28 national associations from 18 European countries	Business	Yes
European Life Sciences Forum (ELSF)	Umbrella organisations of seven life sciences foundations	Science	No
European Science Foundation (ESF)	An association of 70 member organisations devoted to scientific	Science	No

⁵¹ Taken from the organisation's websites (appendix) and/or from CONECCS

⁵² as of 17/09/2002

	research in 27 countries		
Euroscience	open forum for scientists, industrialists and citizens interested in science and technology	Civil society	No
European University Association (EUA)	The main voice of the higher education community in Europe.	Science	Yes
Farm Animal Industrial Platform (FAIP)	Represents the major European breeding industries	Business	No
International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM-EU)	worldwide umbrella organisation of the organic agriculture movement,	Civil Society / business	No
Max Planck Society	Independent, non-profit German research organisation	Science	No
Plant Industrial Platform (PIP)	Association of EU plant biotechnology companies, breeders and seed producers	Business	No
Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederation of Europe (UNICE)	The voice of business in Europe	Business	Yes
University International Team of Experts (UNITE)	European University negotiators advising on the fp. Members of IRDAC /ESTA	Science /business	No
Academia Europea	International, non-governmental association of individual scientists and scholars to promote education, learning and research	Science	No
Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR)	146 regions promoting a more balanced development of European territory	Civil society (broad sense)	No
Eureka	A network for market - oriented industrial R&D	Business	No
European Association of Craft, Small and Medium sized Enterprises (UEAPME)	70 member organisations representing 10 million enterprises	Business	Yes
European Industrial Management Research Association (EIRMA)	Foster the highest standards for managing research so as to strengthen the position of European industry	Business	No
European Public Telecommunications Network Operators	42 of Europe's largest telecom and electronic communications	Business	Yes

Association (ETNO)	operators		
European Research Consortium for Informatics and Mathematics (ERCIM)	Foster collaboration between science and industry. Members: leading research institutes	Science/business	No
Marie Curie Fellowship Association	aims at developing steady contacts with other European scientific and science policy organisations.	Science	No
Yeast Industry Platform (YIP)	Created by EU. Represents European companies interested in the results of yeast related bio-technology contracts conducted within the fp programmes	Business	No

Even a precursory look at this figure reveals that it coincide very little with the CONECCS data. In fact, only five out of the twenty-six organisations that have issued an opinion on fp 6 or the ERA can be found in CONECCS. This can be explained by the fact that organisations derive no advantage from being listed in CONECCS. Indeed, the Commission explicitly states that being listed is in no way equal to any form of accreditation. It therefore comes as no surprise that many actors simply do not bother to register or might even not be aware of the database. While hasty generalisation should of course be avoided, these findings cast at least some doubt on the general representativeness of CONECCS.⁵³

The second conclusion that can be reached from looking at the table above is that the actors involved in the consultation process for fp 6 and ERA can be grouped rather neatly into the science and the business camp. In fact there are 9 science organisations, 12 material interests actors, 2 that cater to the needs of both and only 3 organisations that could be classified as civil society actors beyond the science – business framework. These figures support the view that science policy is still to a considerable extent a closed policy network that includes science and industry but not much else.

⁵³ Indeed, not even heavyweights in the area, such as the ESF are present in CONECCS. Because of this I have refrained from analysing the organisations found in CONECCS more closely and have concentrated on CORDIS as my main point of reference. However, the CONECCS list of actors in research policy can be found in the appendix.

4.5.2. Qualitative Interviews

To augment and supplement the previous findings qualitative interviews with one Brussels based civil society organisation from each category were conducted. My main interests in the interviews were firstly to find out whether the respective organisations consider themselves to be part of civil society at all. After all, we have seen that the term has only recently been used on the European level. Secondly, how do they evaluate their capacity to influence policy? Do they see a fundamental conflict between material interests and science interests? Finally, how do they evaluate moves towards a more open system?⁵⁴ The following criteria were used in selecting the organisations for the qualitative interviews:

List 7: Selection Criteria for Qualitative Interviews

- Based in Brussels: for practical and financial reasons (travel costs)
- The pattern of interest representation deducted from the CONECCS/CORDIS data suggests a distinction between science, business and civil society organisations in a narrow sense. At least one organisation from each of these categories needs to be represented.
- For the business sector two organisations were interviewed, one being a sectoral association, the other being a broader representative body of business interests.

My first meeting was with a representative from EUCAR (European Council for Automotive R&D), an association of the major European carmakers⁵⁵ that has the aim of supporting R&D activities in the fields relevant to the industry. The representative defined EUCAR as being part of the transportation system and thus part of civil society and society at large. While there was very little on transport in the first draft of fp 6, EUCAR was able to exert influence in writing the transportation issue back into the picture. The most important factor in this success story was, according to the EUCAR representative, the fact that their case had substance, that is EUCAR's expertise in the automotive area. Furthermore, the fact that EUCAR presents itself not only as the representative of the automobile industry but as part of the whole transportation system was of importance as well.⁵⁶

Asked about criticism of the present system of interest representation, the representative said that the process is too long, takes too much time, and involves too many stakeholders in too many committees. He also mentioned that, because DG research has to put the fps together

⁵⁴ See appendix for my interview guidelines.

⁵⁵ Members are: BMW Group, Daimler Chrysler, Fiat, Ford in Europe, Opel, Porsche, PSA Peugeot-Citroën, Renault, Volkswagen Group, Volvo.

⁵⁶ The organisations repeatedly stresses its willingness to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders (EUCAR 2000: 2).

with actions from other DGs, the outcome is rather fragmented. The EUCAR representative did not see conflicts with the scientific community. My interview partner stressed that while the main goal of EUCAR is cooperation among members, not to exert influence on EU policy, it is the Commission that often takes an active role and asks for positions.

Regarding the “pluralisation” of the decision making process by the inclusion of other actors the EUCAR representative was sceptical. Open discussions amongst a wide array of interests would only slow down an already cumbersome decision making process. Rather, democracy should be exerted through the traditional representation system (member states, parliament). The representative was also not aware of the *Science and Society Action Plan* and the CONECCS database.

While EUCAR was selected as a representative of a sectoral association, it was deemed necessary to include a more general association of economic actors as well. Probably the most important player in that field is UNICE (Union of Industrial and Employers’ Confederation of Europe). Its mission is threefold: firstly to promote the common professional interests of the firms represented by its members, secondly to inform the decision-making process at European level so that policies and legislative proposals which affect business in Europe take account of companies' needs and finally to represent its members in the dialogue between social partners enshrined in the Treaty on European Union (UNICE Mission Statement). As the latter objectives indicates, and my interview partner at UNICE confirmed, the organisation does see itself as part of civil society. Similar to EUCAR, one of UNICE’s concern is a balanced integration of economic, societal and environmental concerns (UNICE Mission Statement). Indeed, my interview partner confirmed that one-sided argumentation is definitely out of favour. Of course its 16 million members give UNICE a strong position in its interaction with the Commission. Similar to EUCAR, it was stressed that consultation is a two way process that is sometimes pursued quite actively by the Commission. However, my interview partner indicated that consultation can also be method to ostensibly demonstrate the Commission’s openness while in reality policy has already been decided.

UNICE supports the ERA, stressing (unsurprisingly) the need for continued industry involvement in R&D policy (2000: 2). It supports the aim of increasing R&D efforts in all European countries and stresses that the principal aim of a common R&D policy must be to underpin innovation and support competitiveness. In general UNICE seems to have been satisfied with fp 6, praising the many new chances and the increased flexibility it offers. In

contrast to EUCAR, my interview partner at UNICE did see a broad line of conflict running between scientists and companies. Asked about grievances with the present system, the UNICE representative also mentioned that the policy-making process could be faster. Not only is UNICE aware of the *Science and Society Action Plan*, it is the only interviewed organisation that explicitly welcomes a “science and governance” perspective (UNICE 2000: 4).

Let us now turn towards the second major force in R&D policy, the scientific community. The European University Association (EUA) was formed in 2001 as a result of the merger between the CRE-Association of European Universities and the Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences. As the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, the EUA sees itself the main voice of the higher education community in Europe (EUA website). Being an umbrella organisation where regional and national academic cultures interact the EUA sees itself very much as part of civil society. Its mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research.

In regard to the ERA, the EUA wants to contribute actively to the framework programme, to provide information on how EU members can participate in it and to explore the notion of a European doctorate. While the EUA welcomes the simplification of procedures and the equal access provisions for candidate countries it also notes the “widespread uncertainty in the academic world in relation to the introduction of new framework programme structures and related new specific programmes...” (EUA 2001: 1). The EUA stresses the importance of scientific and technological excellence as the criteria for selecting and evaluating proposals. While it welcomes new provisions in the section on the appointment of independent experts, it points out that no mechanism is suggested for this procedure. In this context, the appointment methods used in fp 5 are referred to as “anarchistic”. Similar to UNICE, the flexibility of the new programme is commended.

My interview partner pointed out that both the scientific community and economic actors face common research questions. The Commission, she indicated, might be too linear in associating basic research with the scientific community and applied research with industry. While the EUA does note the strong influence of industry in DG XII, the EUA is nowadays invited to participate, which, my interview partner suggested, may coincide with the new Commission and the new Commissioner for Research. Regarding the element of public

consultations the EUA representative echoed the opinion expressed by the UNICE representative, namely that the process can be abused. She pointed out that in a meeting with 100 other organisations there is rarely time to prepare adequately or to speak at length. However, in the final document the invited organisations are often said to have agreed on a proposal. Thus, such “participatory” meetings can serve to rubber stamp the decisions of a minority. To sum up, she argued that at present, the rules and criteria for consultation remain unclear. Indeed they seem to change repeatedly as units with a directorates are moved and some policy matters become more prominent while others recede in importance. Therefore the background of a workshop can change quite radically from its initial inception to the time when it actually takes place. The EUA spokesperson was rather dismissive of rules of consultations, pointing out that they are usually vague. The interviewed person was aware of the *Science and Society Action Plan*, but pointed out that it has been a rather overlooked item generally.

Before we move on to analyse those civil society organisations that cannot be categorised as either science or business, let us sum up the main findings so far. Firstly, both science and business organisations see their expertise as important for being involved in consultations. They also point out that a crude one-sided “me first” argumentation leads nowhere; rather the organisations try to present a balanced view of the subject matter. Furthermore, they note that consultations are a two-way process, pursued quite actively from the side of the Commission. Two organisations mentioned that consultations can also be abused to rubber stamp decisions made beforehand. There was also agreement in the critique of the vague criteria of participation. The next chapter will look at civil society organisations in a narrower sense, using both data from my qualitative interview and the previously introduced CORDIS data.

4.5.3. Civil Society Beyond the Science – Business Divide

As already mentioned, there are few actors outside of the business and science communities in research policy. The European Humanist Federation (EHF) is the only organisation listed under the category “religious” in the CONECCS research section. In this case, however, religious is not an adequate description. Rather, the EHF aims at promoting humanist rational thought and is thus a community of conviction rather than one of faith. Created in 1991, it promotes humanism and humanist organisations and aims at representing humanist thought at the European level. It has, for instance, contributed to the Convention on the future of Europe and to the *White Paper on Governance*.

According to my interview partner, in research policy the EHF is interested in “everything that touches ethics”, particularly (but not limited to) bioethics. The EHF thus positions itself as being “experts on ethics”. Asked about its influence, the EHF representative noted that its papers are taken into account and that they are regularly invited to attend events. However, the EHF is set apart from the previously interviewed organisations in that it did not issue an opinion on fp 6. Asked for the reasons for this, the representative cited lack of resources and experts.

The EHF warns that in the future a growing amount of knowledge may be in the hands of companies and not the public. To counter this danger, transparency and the inclusion of civil society is necessary (EHF 2002: 8). However, for the EHF it is often not business interests that are its opponent but the churches, although there is also some common ground, such as in human rights issues. Like the EUA, the EHF criticised the vague criteria used in selecting organisations for consultations. My interview partner added that being represented in CONECCS has no advantage for a civil society organisation. For my EHF interview partners it was far from clear why some people get heard while others do not. They also found the Commission website somewhat difficult to navigate and suspected that there is a “sport of hiding” calls for proposals. Clearly, then, the EHF regards the system as not transparent. Although the EHF representative was not familiar with the *Science and Society Action Plan*, it noted “the beginning of something” in the changed Commission attitude towards actors outside the traditional networks.

While my talk with the EHF concluded my series of interviews, the data derived from CORDIS identifies three other civil society organisations not included in the scientific or the business community. Table 9 identifies the main characteristics of these organisations:

Table 9: Civil Society Organisations Beyond the Science – Business Divide (as Extracted from Table 8)

Organisation	Aim	Classification
Euroscience	offers a forum for scientists, industrialists and citizens. Strengthens the links between European science and society. Contributes to the creation of an integrated space for science and technology in Europe, influences science and technology policies.	Civil society
Organic Agriculture Movement (IFOAM)	IFOAM is committed to a holistic approach in the development of organic farming systems including maintenance of a sustainable environment	Civil society / business
Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR)	aims at promoting a more balanced development of the European territory and a greater involvement of the regional players in European integration [and] enhancing the value of all the territories of the Union to strengthen its economic, social and territorial cohesion	Civil society / state

Source: Organisation websites

While these organisations demonstrate that there **are** players in research policy that cannot be grouped as either business or science organisations, the number of such organisations is generally far too low to speak of a truly pluralist structure of EU research policy. As a comparison let us for a moment consider the contributions to the debate on the “future of the Union”.⁵⁷ The civil society actors present in this area include various youth and student forums, federalist groups, a French department, various associations of civil society groups (such as the Social Platform), the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, Amnesty International, national forums, the Spanish Council of Representatives of Disabled People, women’s organisations, religious organisations and the trade union organisation ETUC. This list, then, certainly contains a bigger plurality of actors than our previous analysis of research

⁵⁷ http://www.europa.eu.int/futurum/index_en.htm

policy. Indeed, it can even be argued that the contributions to the debate on Europe are exactly on the other end of the civil society involvement spectrum.

However, is this comparison valid? After all, one has to take into account that a discussion about the future of the European Union is by its very nature broader than research policy. Furthermore, such a discussion concerns not only the Commission but also other EU bodies, most notably the Convention. All this is true. But, on the other hand, is it really the case that (for example) women's organisations have nothing to say on fp 6? After all, promoting the participation of women in research is part of the programme. Furthermore, the ERA is the most recent attempt to co-ordinate national research more closely and hence should be of interest to federal groups as well. A similar case can be made for including social organisations in research policy: has there not been is a social dimension to RTD policy since Maastricht (cohesion)? Surely, ethical concerns could have been taken up by the church. Still the fact remains that these groups are not represented. Why is this the case?

As has become apparent in the course of the present inquiry, policy networks have not (yet?) been sufficiently opened to embrace a broader range of actors. However, this alone is insufficient to explain the lack of civil society participants outside the science - business networks. As one Commission official said, it may well be that civil society organisations themselves are unaware of their possible contribution to research policy or that they are not active enough.⁵⁸ Furthermore, they might simply not have enough resources to participate. Consequently, while DG Research is proactive in involving its traditional clientele, it needs to undertake an even more active approach to involve actors such as churches, women's organisations, social groups and the like, both through informing them about their opportunities to participate in research policy and through financial support. One possible way to do that would be to support the creation of a Platform of Organisations involved in RTD policy, similar to the Social Platform.

⁵⁸ Warleigh (2000: 233) reports complaints from decision makers that they were obliged to seek out NGOs rather than hear from directly.

5. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Reviewing the main finding from my analysis, I will try to suggest some answers to the question which role civil society can play in contributing to a reflexive and participatory policy making system at the EU level. To begin with, the EU has already conducted considerable “soul searching” on its own legitimacy on the super systemic (*Laeken Declaration*) and the systemic (*White Paper on Governance*) level. In research policy, several important initiatives try to ensure civil society participation (*Science and Society Action Plan, Life Sciences and Biotechnology – A Strategy for Europe*). My research suggests, however, that the traditional players are still dominant; particularly at the sub systemic level committees and advisory bodies have not been sufficiently pluralised.

Peterson and Sharp note that it is “impossible not to be struck by the EU’s fragility as it enters the 21st century” (1999: 273). What is thus at stake is not only the quality of decisions (output legitimacy) but also the input legitimacy of both science and the entire EU system of governance. In other words: if the EU does not open up, it will be closed down! As discussed in the introduction, I believe that opportunities for democratisation exist within the system, civil society involvement being one of them. Already we see its participation in a variety of fields; however, civil society complaints about the present system need to be addressed, which leads me to the following policy recommendations.

Generally, the Commission should endorse making consultation legally binding through a treaty provision, thereby creating the basis for non-arbitrary and clearly defined interactions with civil society. In turn, civil society needs to accept the principle of transparency as well; therefore, being represented in the CONECCS database (with details about funding and membership) should be made obligatory for organisations wishing to participate in policy making. The Secretariat General should also work with the respective Directorates General to update the information on committees and consultative bodies in the database.

Regarding research policy, more efforts need to be made to pluralise existing advisory bodies and networks. Civil society outside the science – business divide must be actively approached and supported (Commission support for environmental NGOs could serve as best practice). Such a proactive approach involves combating sectoralisation and encouraging organisations

to be active in more than one field of expertise (for instance, getting the opinion of a social group on fp 6). To counter fragmentation, the Commission should consider funding a platform of research NGOs that would provide a unified point of contact. This system seems to have worked well in environmental, social and, until recently, development matters. Moreover, care should be taken that future applications of the OCM in research include civil society actors. The Commission should also make every effort to combat abuse of participatory measures as a cloaking device for decisions made by a minority.

One thing is for certain: if anything the importance of the topic of this essay is going to increase in the future. In research policy, DG XII has recently published a call for research proposals on *The Role of Civil Society in the Governance of the ERA* (Commission Directorate General Research 2002) as the future basis of Science and Society Action Plan actions 22 and 23. The tasks set in this call for tenders indicate questions that had to be left open in the present study and which will propel future research. Five parts are singled out for future study. Firstly, available research on the participation of civil society in (research) policy needs to be reviewed and summarised, thereby comparing best practice between member states, regions, candidate countries, the Commission and third countries. Secondly, these findings have to be updated through interviews with people involved on the side of civil society and public organisations. Thirdly, an evaluation of present practices must be conducted and widespread discussion needs to take place (item four), finally resulting in proposals for best practice. While such a comprehensive approach was outside the scope of my study, I hope to have highlighted the major challenges and opportunities that civil society is faced with at the EU level. Assuredly, there remains much to be done before we can speak of the EU system as being truly open and participatory; indeed some may find the progress so far insufficient. However, the imperfect policy making processes of the EU are surely preferable to the *status quo ante*, or as Mc Conagh puts it: “the decision making mechanisms of the European Union are...hilarious, but not quite as funny as the centuries of war which preceded them” (1998: 17 qtd. in Peterson and Bomberg 1999: 275).

Appendix

- CONECCS Ranking of Organisations According to Policy Areas
- Websites of CORDIS Civil Society Actors (Table 8 & 9)
- CORDIS List of Stakeholders FP 6 [in print version only]
- CORDIS List of Stakeholders ERA [in print version only]
- CONECCS: List of Organisation by Policy Areas (Research)
[in print version only]
- Interview Guidelines

CONECCS Ranking of Organisations According to Policy Areas

- 1) Enterprise: 209
- 2) Environment: 85
- 3) Agriculture & Rural Development: 75 / Social Affairs: 75
- 4) Consumer Protection: 67
- 5) Internal Market: 63
- 6) Health: 62
- 7) Education: 57
- 8) Culture: 56
- 9) Economic and Financial Affairs: 47
- 10) Transport: 45
- 11) Overall EU Policy Matters: 44 / Research: 44**
- 12) External Trade: 42
- 13) Information Society: 41
- 14) Development: 31
- 15) Energy: 39
- 16) Human Rights: 34
- 17) Employment: 30
- 18) Enlargement: 27
- 19) Competition: 25
- 20) External Relations: 21
- 21) Regional Policy: 19
- 22) Taxation: 18

23) Justice and Home Affairs: 15

24) Fisheries: 8

25) Humanitarian Aid: 6

Source: CONECCS 17.09.2002

Websites of CORDIS Civil Society Actors

[Table 8 & 9]

ALLEA www.allea.org/

ACTIP www.actip.org/

DIHT www.diht.de/

Euro-Case www.euro-case.org/

EICTA www.eicta.org

EUCAR <http://www.acea.be/EucarInternet/>

ELSF www.elsf.org/

ESF www.esf.org

Euroscience www.euroscience.org/

EUA www.unige.ch/eua/

FAIP <http://www.fedesa.be/Antibio/FAIP/FAIP17.htm>

IFOAM www.ifoam.org/

Max Planck Society www.mpg.de/

UNICE www.unice.org/

Ácademia Europea academia.darmstadt.gmd.de/

CPMR www.cpmr.org/

EUREKA www.eureka.be/

UEAPME www.ueapme.com/

EIRMA www.eirma.asso.fr/

ETNO www.etno.be/

ERCIM www.ercim.org/

Marie Curie Fellowship Association www.mariecurie.org/

Yeast Industry Platform <http://www.tech-know.be/>

Interview Guidelines

D. Spichtinger Civil Society and EU RTD Policy

<http://www.geocities.com/dspichtinger/cseu.html>

e-mail: daniel_sp@lycos.com

Interview: Some Issues for Discussion

The following questions (keywords) are meant as a giving you some indication of what the main thrust of my interview is likely to be. They are, however, points of departures, rather than a fixed framework.

Starting points

Putting your organisation into perspective. Your activities in EU RTD. Would you define your organisation as part of “civil society”?

How do you evaluate your capability to influence EU policy making? Do you have sufficient opportunities to make your voice heard? Why is your contribution valued? Do you have more influence on setting goals or shaping specific programmes?

What differences do you see in consultations with DG Research as compared to other DGs (if any)?

Competing interests:

Among interest groups, where do you see the areas of conflict?

Publicly funded research (universities) vs. private companies?

Actors from north vs. south?

Actors from small vs. big member states?

Cohesion vs. Excellence?

Opening up?

Is the present consultation system transparent? Is it fair? Does it ensure a balanced representation of interests (profit / non-profit)? What is your opinion on the new consultation rules? About CONECCS?

Considering that RTP policy is concerned with vital issues such as GMOs or stem cell research do you see the need to involve the public and all parts of civil society (NGOs)? Or would this only convolute an already complicated decision making process?

Is the decision making process too complicated? Can/should it be rationalised?

Are you aware of the Science and Society Action Plan? How do you evaluate it?

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