

The influence of youth interest groups on the European Youth Guarantee

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Abstract

This research focusses on the influence of youth interest groups on the Council recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C 120/01). The Youth Guarantee is the latest EU policy in the fight against youth unemployment which in recent years has been at a very high level. The influence of youth interest groups on employment policies and EU policies, in general, has not been studied before. Therefore, the aim of this research is to find out if the youth interest groups were influential in the establishment of the Youth Guarantee. The existing research on the influence of interest groups is limited and has led to inconclusive and contradicting results regarding the factors that determine the influence of an interest group. Therefore, first, process-tracing is used to determine the level of influence. Thereafter, a congruence analysis is used to test three different theoretical approaches: the logic of access approach, the issue characteristics approach and the countervailing power approach. The findings show that the youth interest groups had a minor influence on the establishment of the recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee. The logic of access approach and the countervailing power approach provide explanations for this lack of influence. There are no empirical findings that provide explanatory leverage to the issue characteristics approach. A factor that explains this lack of influence in both theoretical approaches is the role of the European Parliament. Further research, therefore, can focus on policies where the European Parliament does play a role in the policy-making process to further test the explanatory leverage. The results and other suggestions for future research are discussed at the end of this study.

Keywords: influence, interest groups, Youth Guarantee, European Union

Content

- Acknowledgements 3**
- Abstract 5**
- 1. Introduction..... 8**
 - 1.1. Introduction 8
 - 1.2. Scientific and social relevance 9
 - 1.3. Reading guide10
- 2. Literature review11**
 - 2.1. Interest representation in the EU11
 - 2.2. What is influence?11
 - 2.1. How can we explain influence?12
 - 2.2. Youth interest groups16
- 3. Theoretical framework17**
 - 3.1. Definition of influence17
 - 3.2. Theoretical approaches17
- 4. Methods24**
 - 4.1. Qualitative Case Study24
 - 4.2. Methodological approaches24
 - 4.3. Congruence analysis25
 - 4.4. Selection of interest groups26
 - 4.5. Data27
 - 4.6. Reliability and validity28
- 5. Operationalisation29**
 - 5.1. Process tracing29
 - 5.2. Logic of access.....31
 - 5.3. Issue characteristics32
 - 5.4. Countervailing power33
- 6. Development of EU youth and employment policy.....34**
 - 6.1. Youth policy34
 - 6.2. Employment policy35
- 7. Results – Process-tracing38**
 - 7.1. Preference attainment.....38
 - 7.2. Influence attempts and access to decision-makers43
 - 7.3. Responses of decision-makers47
 - 7.4. Statements of (dis)satisfaction49
 - 7.5. Conclusion50

8. Results - Congruence analysis	55
8.1. Logic of access.....	55
8.2. Issue characteristics.....	56
8.3. Countervailing power	59
9. Conclusion	62
10. Discussion	67
References:	69
Appendix I: Questionnaire	73
Appendix II: List of respondents	75
Appendix III: List of analysed documents	76
Appendix IV: Codebook	82

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The participation of young people in democracy in Europe is, according to many studies, declining. While some see this as a general decline others have understood it as a shift to alternative forms of participation (Elchardus & Siongus, 2015: 133). It has been argued that young people do not think that they can influence the government and feel unheard. Furthermore, the societal involvement of young people is mostly described with words as 'individualism' and 'apathy' (Hoskins, 2005: 155). However, many scholars agree that involvement of different social groups in politics and democracy is undeniable for a well-functioning society. Therefore, a lot of research has taken place on youth participation in democracy (Forbrig, 2005: 13).

Research on lobby success and influence of interest groups in the European Union is very limited (Dür & de Bievre, 2007: 2). Moreover, there are hardly any studies on youth interest groups. The EU has a supporting competence in the field of youth and from 1999 onwards took on more responsibilities in this field. Youth became one of the core priorities of the EU social agenda in 2008 (Devlin, 2010; Chabanet, 2014). When EU competencies in more public areas increased this created a venue for public interest representation in Brussels, where the EU provides plenty of opportunities for lobby activities and exercising influence (Hix & Høyland, 2011: 196).

The European Youth Forum (EYF) is seen as the most important youth NGO. It is part of the social platform, which brings together social NGO's and commission officials for a 'civil dialogue' (Hix et al., 2011: 173). However, there are many youth interest groups and the map of organisations lobbying for social causes is very chaotic. Furthermore, these social interest groups are often disorganised, lack resources and compete rather than collaborate with each other (Greenwood, 2003: 228).

So far consultations in the field of youth policy are limited and have concentrated on minor issues. These consultations typically have involved few organisations and have neglected the field of youth employment (Chabanet, 2014). Even though youth employment is one of the most important issues for youth, as the youth unemployment rate fluctuates around 20% since the economic crisis in 2008 (Chabanet, 2014; Caliendo, M. & Schmidl, R., 2016: 2).

The latest commitment of the EU to youth employment is the *Youth Guarantee Scheme* (Chabanet, 2014). The Youth Guarantee is a commitment of EU Member States to guarantee

young people under 25 a quality offer. This means providing employment, continued education, apprenticeship or traineeship within four months after becoming unemployed. It is accepted in the European Council recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C 120/01). The Youth Guarantee is considered by the G20 and others as a new major reform in youth employment (European Commission, 2017b).

Even though, the research on lobbying and the number of interest groups active in Brussels has risen in the past years, the attention of political scientists to the influence of interest groups did not increase alongside (Dür & de Bièvre, 2007a: 2). There is a lack of research on lobby influence, as influence is difficult to capture in quantitative studies and is difficult to measure (Mahoney, 2007: 37). Furthermore, the existing empirical studies resulted in contradicting findings. In the field of diffuse interests, the findings differ from surprisingly influential to not being able to influence at all (Dür, 2008a: 2).

Many scholars, therefore, argue that more research is needed in the field of influence of interest groups in the EU to investigate whether interest groups are able to influence EU policies and how this influence or lack thereof can be explained (Mahoney, 2007: 35; Dür & de Bièvre, 2007a: 2). No research has taken place on the actual influence of youth NGO's on certain policies. Therefore, because of the importance of employment to youth organizations, the new EU policies in this field and the lack of research in the field of lobby influence this study will focus on the influence of youth interest groups on the Youth Guarantee. First examining the level of influence youth interest groups have had on the Youth Guarantee. Next, a congruence analysis will be conducted to test the strength of different theoretical approaches in explaining influence. Therefore, the following research question is formulated.

How can the influence of youth interest groups on the Council recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C 120/01) be explained?

1.2. Scientific and social relevance

1.2.1. Scientific relevance

This research contributes to the existing literature on lobby influence. The existing research in this field is still limited and resulted in contradictory findings (Dür & de Bièvre, 2007a; Mahoney, 2007: 35). Especially in the field of diffuse interests, there are no conclusive findings on what can explain influence or lack thereof (Dür, 2008a: 1213). There are several theoretical approaches that provide explanations for lobby influence. This study tests the explanatory leverage of three of these approaches in a congruence analysis. Therefore, this study contributes to the support for these theoretical approaches and contributes to the existing literature on lobby

influence by providing empirical evidence for theoretical approaches. In addition, this study contributes to the existing research in the field of youth participation and youth lobbying. It looks at the influence of youth in the European Union, which has not been studied extensively before. Furthermore, the field of the youth policies and youth employment policy have not been a focus of previous studies on lobby influence. Therefore, this study is relevant, focussing on a new area of interest groups and a new field of policies.

1.2.1. Social relevance

The youth unemployment rate in Europe fluctuates at a high rate of around 20% since the economic crisis in 2008 (Caliendo, M. & Schmidl, R., 2016: 2). This is a pressing issue many societies have to deal with and try to find solutions for. It is therefore interesting to find out if these policies are influenced by interest groups and if a policy is influenced by the youth interest groups. According to many scholars, an ideal youth policy is drafted based on consultations with youth. Therefore, it is interesting to find out if policies in the field of employment are influenced by youth (Williamson, 2007: 100). Furthermore, it is important to research lobby influence as the number of interest groups present in Brussels is increasing. As many organisations invest their resources in lobby activities, it is important to find out whether these interest groups actually are able to influence EU policies (Hix & Hoyland, 2011).

1.3. Reading guide

After this introduction, the literature review (chapter 2) will follow, where the existing literature on lobby influence is presented. Next is the theoretical framework (chapter 3) where the theoretical approaches used in this research are explained and hypotheses are formulated. The methodology of this research will be explained in chapter 4, where the research design will be presented. The operationalisation (chapter 5) of the variables used in this research is presented next. After a short overview of the development of the youth and employment policies in the EU (chapter 6), the results will be presented. First, the results of the process tracing (chapter 7) will be presented, revealing whether the youth interest groups were influential or not. Second, the results of congruence analysis (chapter 8) will be presented. Thereafter, in the conclusion (chapter 9), the research question will be answered. Finally, in the discussion (chapter 10), there will be reflection on the limitations of this research and suggestions for further research.

2. Literature review

In this chapter, the existing literature on lobby influence will be examined. First by looking at interest representation in the EU. Then the definitions of influence in existing research and the various theories that can explain influence will be explained.

2.1. Interest representation in the EU

Interest representation in Brussels is very developed and more dense and complex than in most national capitals in Europe (Hix & Høyland, 2011: 159). From the beginning business interest were well represented, however, diffuse, public interests started to mobilise and are well represented from the 1990s (Hix & Høyland, 2011: 170). These interest groups demand access to EU institutions, in order to move policies closer to their interests. The EU institutions on the other side, also want to enhance their power and influence in order to have their preferences met. Therefore, there is a struggle for power and influence, where EU institutions and interest groups find each other (Hix & Høyland, 2011: 178).

2.2. What is influence?

Many scholars don't define influence in their research. This lack of a clear definition is problematic for two reasons. First, without a clear definition, there is little guidance for the type of evidence that should be collected. Second, the validity of the research can be challenged, because it is not possible to assess whether the evidence actually measures influence (Betsil & Correl, 2008: 20).

However, some scholars started to define power. Dür (2008a: 12) distinguishes three faces of power. The first face is the traditional face of who "wins" or "loses" on a certain issue. The second face is about the ability to set the agenda and the third face is the capacity to prevent that other actors recognise your genuine interests. Woll (2007: 58) argues that power is a relational concept that is more subtle. Defining clear winners and losers based on information about their preferences, therefore, is not possible.

Power could also be understood as the 'control over outcomes' which could also be named influence. This means that an actor is powerful when they manage to influence outcomes to bring them closer to their ideal point (Tallberg et al., 2015: 22; Dür & de Bièvre, 2007a: 3). Influence is a smaller part of power and reduces the scope of inquiry, however the problem still exists that it is very difficult to know what would have happened if the actor did not act. Political influence, therefore, can be defined as the 'goal achievement through one's own and intentional intervention in a political process'. By focussing on the intentional interventions, the unintentional positive political outcomes are left out of the inquiry, focussing on what influence

can be attributed to the actor (Arts & Mack, 2003: 22). Also Tallberg et al. (2015: 22) conceptualize influence as ‘the extent to which an actor causes outcomes that would not have come about in its absence’. Two types of political outcomes can be distinguished: official positions by public authorities or the actual implementation of a policy (Dür & de Bièvre, 2007a: 3).

Others use the term lobbying success. Some argue that this does not imply influence, which implies causality: the outcomes depend on the actor’s actions. However, as politics is about ‘who gets what, when and how’, these scholars see the study of success as important as influence (Dür, Bernhagen and Marshall, 2015: 4). It is important to notice that this distinction between influence and success is not made by all scholars. Bunea (2013: 554) defines influence as preference attainment, using the terms lobby success and policy influence interchangeably.

2.1. How can we explain influence?

When studying the literature regarding influence, three main clusters of determinants are identified for explaining influence: the political institutions, issue-specific factors and interest group characteristics which consists of interest group resources and interest group strategies (Dür, 2007a; Mahoney, 2007; Bunea, 2013).

Mahoney (2007) states that there are macro factors, such as the existence of war and the freedom of markets. Furthermore, there are additional factors that influence the power of societal actors. These additional factors include collective action problems, mobilisation bias, internal dispute within organisation and the ability to set the agenda. She also argues that institutions, issues and interests are the factors determining lobby success.

2.1.1. Political institutions

One of the first factors studied in the field of interest group influence is the role that political institutions play. Bunea (2013) explains the theory concerning institutions. The EU institutions are able to empower or discourage interest groups by making rules and procedures and shaping the venues. They shape a structure of incentives and constraints for the interest groups and decision-makers. That way they determine the interaction between decision-makers and interest groups.

The classic model of interest group politics is pluralism. The idea of this model is that there is open access to policy makers and that groups will find access. For every group that presses a certain view, another group will mobilize to present the opposing view (Hix & Hoyland, 2011, p. 159). However, equal access is here assumed which is not naturally the case, because of the

problem of collective action. This means that there are higher incentives to join a group that seeks benefits for group members than to join a group that seeks benefits for the whole society (ibid.).

Two alternative models have emerged: the corporatist model and the neo-pluralist model. The corporatist model assumes a main division between labour and business. To promote equal access the state recognises these two as official partners and engages in tripartite meetings. The neo-pluralist view argues that equal access can be ensured when the state officials act neutral. The state subsidizes certain underrepresented interests according to which issue is at stake (Hix & Hoyland, 2011: 161). The model that applies, influences which actors have access and can influence policies.

2.1.2. Issue specific factors

Klüver (2011) argues that a focus on issue characteristics is often overlooked. Policy issues have different features that influence the environment which can either be favourable or unfavourable for the interest group. When an interest group finds a favourable environment lobbying is much easier. The features Klüver analyses are the relative size of lobbying coalition, the salience, the complexity and the degree of conflict (2011: 484).

Bunea (2013) also argues that the policy environment in which issues are decided upon matters. The issue characteristics, such as salience or scope of the issue, she argues, influence the likelihood of counter-lobbies. Furthermore, it influences the strength of countervailing forces and implicitly lobbying success. Other factors that influence lobby success are the distribution of interest groups' policy preferences and inter-organizational ties linking interest organisations (Bunea, 2013: 552).

2.1.3. Interest group characteristics

The interest group characteristics can be divided in two components: resources and strategies.

2.1.3.1. Resources

Organisational resources and structural characteristics influence lobby success. These organisational resources are financial resources, the level of endowments, expert knowledge and field information. Structural characteristics are the membership size, internal organization and advocate type (Bunea, 2013: 554).

An important theory in explaining interest group influence is the theory of access (Bouwen, 2004). This stems from organizations not being internally self-sufficient. They require resources from the environment and, therefore, interact with the organisations in the

environment that control the resources. Private actors require the resource ‘access’ to European institutions. In return the institutions demand goods crucial for their functioning, these are called ‘access goods’. The common characteristic of these goods is information. There are three types of information: 1. Expert Knowledge, 2. Information about the European Encompassing Interest and 3. Information about the Domestic Encompassing Interest. While this theory is used to explain business influence, Bouwen argues that studying this theory for non-business interests could be useful (2004: 360).

Furthermore, Chalmers (2013: 39) argues that the currency of lobbying in the EU is information. Meeting the informational needs of decision-makers results in greater access. However, the type of information sent is less important for getting access than the tactics used to send this information. ‘The medium is more important than the message’ (Chalmers, 2013: 41).

2.1.3.2. Strategies

Interest group strategies are another determinant of lobby influence. Most literature distinguishes two strategies: inside and outside lobbying (Dür & Mateo, 2013; Junk, 2016). Inside lobbying tries to affect decisions from the inside; they focus on the political institutions. Outside lobbying focusses on the public and tries to influence decisions indirectly through the public opinion (Junk, 2016: 237). Junk argues that NGO’s engage in both strategies for various reasons. Where inside lobbying is driven by the logic of influence, trying to attain preferences, outside lobbying is driven by the logic of reputation. NGO’s want to maintain a good image and need public backing to get direct access and go from outside to inside lobbying (Junk, 2016).

Dür & Mateo (2013) also argue that inside lobbying, however less visible, seems to be more effective than outside lobbying. NGO’s, or citizen groups, face a trade-off between choosing for the more effective inside lobbying or go for outside lobbying which gives them the visibility they need to survive. Their conclusion is that citizen groups will choose to engage in outside lobbying in order to survive. Furthermore, they argue that citizen groups have better resources, i.e. volunteers, for outside lobby tactics instead of inside lobby tactics. While an outside strategy is cheaper for NGO’s, for business the inside strategy is cheaper (Dür & Mateo, 2013: 6).

2.1.4. Concrete versus diffuse interests

Many studies on lobby influence so far focussed on business interests, the so called concrete interests. However, there is also a considerable amount of research comparing these concrete interests to diffuse interests, the interests represented by NGO’s, citizen groups and other non-

business actors. Several scholars researched whether diffuse or concrete interests are more successful as well as the factors explaining their success.

Many scholars argue that concrete interests are more powerful than citizen groups in capitalist democratic systems because they have better access to the EU than citizen groups. It is argued that the EU has a bias in favour of promoting market efficient policies. This, in combination with a regulatory race to the bottom, favours business interest (Dür et al., 2015: 953). An important theory for explaining the lack of lobby success of diffuse interests is the theory of collective action by Olson. Which states that the diffuse interests are more difficult to organise and have less to no power (Dür & de Bièvre, 2007b: 81; Hix & Høyland, 2011: 160).

However, these findings are challenged, other theories argue that politicians have to fear voter mobilisation by NGO's and will, therefore, adjust their policy to not alienate diffuse interests (Dür & de Bièvre, 2007b: 81). MEPs want to stay in office and strive to avoid strong opposition to their policies. Interest groups can offer support to politicians defending their views or opposition to other politicians. Therefore it's likely that MEPs will take a position that maximizes support and minimizes opposition from society (Dür et al., 2015: 957) Another view argues that concentrated interests only approach the legislators with preferences close to their own, since these preferences are predetermined by the interests of the voters, this will lead to implementation of policies that appeal to diffuse interests (Dür & de Bièvre, 2007b: 81).

Others argue that because of the EU institutional structure, diffuse interests can be particularly effective. The European Commission is always looking to enhance its competencies and finds an ally in citizen groups representing diffuse interests. Furthermore, the European Parliament has growing powers and offers easy access and therefore, helps diffuse interests to pursue its goals. Finally, there is increasing politicization of EU politics, this leads to greater attention to EU policies and therefore, favours diffuse interests (Dür et al., 2015: 953).

The European Commission and European Parliament, in alliance with most citizen groups, are in favour of changing the status quo and want to enhance their powers. Therefore the Commission has put forward many legislative proposals in the areas of consumer, environmental and workers' protection. Actors pushing for changing the status quo thus have a strategic advantage. Business interest, on the contrary, mostly try to defend the status quo (Dür et al., 2015: 957).

2.2. Youth interest groups

The previous section explained the general theories and studies on lobby influence, now the research on youth interest groups will be explained. There is a big amount of research on diffuse interests influence in the EU, however, most of this is focussed on environmental interests. Research on the influence of youth lobby, on the contrary, is very limited. Youth interests groups represent very diffuse interests, based solely on the age of the group.

Rahja and Sell (2006) researched the experiences of youth organisations with the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). The findings show that member states dominate the OMC regarding youth, leaving only little space for youth organisations. Some other scholars researched the interests population in Brussels, finding that the interest countervailing business interest, such as youth, are a minority (Wonka et al., 2009: 470).

Laine and Gretschel (2009) conducted research on the influence of young people on EU youth policy. They studied the EU presidency focus events for youth in Finland and their influence on youth policy. Looking at the perception of the young participants on influence and the actual results in the policy. They found that because of a lack of a feedback mechanism after the focus event, it is not clear what influence the events had and the participants lack the knowledge to find out if they have influence. However, they found that when the participants know they can influence policy their motivations increases (Laine & Gretschel, 2009: 196).

Finally, Chabanet (2014) researched the evolution of youth policies and how youth organisations are involved by the institutions, focussing on the pressing issue of youth employment. After giving an overview of the EU actions in the field of youth he focusses on the Structured Dialogue, which is the latest and main consultation method in the field of youth. Here he found that the Structured Dialogue involves youth and youth organisations on symbolic issues while real pressing issues are left out of the consultation. Especially in the field of employment where the EU does not encourage the involvement of youth organisations. He also emphasizes the prominent role given to the European Youth Forum, which is seen as the single important partner to EU institutions, while other important (youth) organisations are overlooked.

3. Theoretical framework

The knowledge on lobby influence is still very limited and there is still a lot of uncertainty towards which theory can explain the influence of interest groups. As the previous chapter shows, there are different factors that might explain influence. These factors are incorporated in several theoretical approaches which will be used in a congruence analysis. For congruence analysis, empirical evidence is provided to test the strength of theoretical explanations compared to other theoretical explanations. This can help to build theory, leads to better useable theory and leads to theoretical innovation (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 144). In this chapter, first the definition of influence that is used in this research is described, then the chosen theories are outlined. Finally, hypotheses are formulated for these theories.

3.1. Definition of influence

In the previous chapter various definitions for the term influence have been outlined. For defining influence in this research the ‘control of outcomes’ approach will be followed. This approach defines an actor as powerful or influential when they manage to influence outcomes in a way that brings them closer to their ideal point (Dür & de Bièvre, 2007a: 3; Tallberg et. al. 2015: 22). These political outcomes can be twofold, either an official position taken by public authorities or the implementation of a policy. Therefore, this definition focuses on the empirical observable effects in policies (Dür & de Bièvre, 2007a: 3). A limitation of this approach is that it assumes that actors have clear preferences, which is not always the case. However, this approach is still seen as the most sound way towards assessing influence (Ibid.).

3.2. Theoretical approaches

In this study, three theoretical approaches are chosen that will be studied. First of all two well-known approaches in the field of lobby influence will be used: the logic of access and issue characteristics. These two approaches are more general and cover the components of interest group characteristics and issue characteristics. The third approach, called the countervailing power theory is newer and less known. This theory focusses on the differences between business interests and non-business interests. As this research focusses on youth interest groups it is interesting to add this theory that makes a clear distinction between diffuse and concrete interests.

3.2.1. Logic of access

Access is one of the key factors in describing interest group influence. Even though, this logic of access was designed and is mostly used to explain business interests, scholars claim that it would be very useful to investigate this theory for non-business interests (Bouwen, 2004: 360).

When studying interest group influence, access and the exchange of resources is one the most prevalent indicators of influence and will, therefore, be used for this research.

The logic of access is based on the idea that organisations are not self-sufficient and need resources from the environment. Therefore organisations interact with those organisations that control the required resources. The approach incorporates elements from both pluralism, the emphasis on the variety of groups and the important role of information, and corporatism, the attention to resource exchange (Bouwen, 2004: 338).

The relation between the public and private actors is seen as an exchange relation between groups of interdependent organisations. Not only do the interest groups require resources from the EU institutions, the EU organisations look for interaction with interest groups as well, to obtain resources and fulfil their institutional role (Bouwen, 2004: 339).

For private actors and interest groups, the required resource is ‘access’ to the EU institutions, meaning access to the agenda-setting and decision-making process. The European institutions in return demand certain goods, which they need to fulfil their role. These required goods, called ‘access goods’ all have to do with information. Three types of these access goods can be identified:

- Expert knowledge: this type of information is about expertise and technical know-how. It is necessary knowledge to develop effective EU policies in a certain policy area.
- Information about the European Encompassing Interest: this is information about the collective interests and needs of a certain sector in the EU.
- Information about the Domestic Encompassing Interest: this is information about the collective needs and interests of a certain sector in a domestic area (Bouwen, 2002; Bouwen 2004: 340).

How critical an access good is for the functioning of the EU institution determines the level of access the interest group receives in return. For the encompassing interests it’s important to notice that these are interests that represent several partners. The more partners involved, the more encompassing the interest is, meaning that when their interest is based on more actors it is broader and gives more credibility and reliability. The more encompassing the interests, the more valuable the resources for the institutions and more access will be granted (Bouwen, 2002: 370).

Next, it is important that the supply and demand of access goods come together. Whether an interest group can supply access goods depends on the organisational form. There are three organisational forms of interest representation: individual action, collective action and third party action (Bouwen, 2002: 373). These forms can be used at either the national level or the European level. Which form is chosen is largely determined by first, the size of the organisation, large organisations can rely on their own resources, while smaller organisations need to rely on collective action. Second, the economic strategy, this depends on the market strategy and the level of operation, either domestic or international, however for both lobbying at the EU level can create benefits. Finally, the domestic institutional environment, when national interest representation is well organised the need to join European interest representation decreases and the domestic relation towards lobbying influences the positive or negative attitude towards international lobbying (Bouwen, 2002: 375). For organisations with many resources these variables can help decide which organisation form to use. For others with fewer resources there are only few options.

Furthermore, the quality and efficiency of access goods matters just as much as the ability to provide them. The number of (hierarchical) layers in the organisation and the complexity of the internal decision-making process negatively influence the flexibility and efficiency of providing access goods (Bouwen, 2002: 375).

The type of access goods that institutions demand differs per institution. The European Commission is the most supranational and tries to promote European interests, therefore it can use information about the European encompassing interest. The Commission has the sole right of proposing European legislation and drafts this legislation. This requires large amounts of expert knowledge. This type of information is, therefore, most demanded by the Commission (Bouwen, 2002: 379).

The European Parliament has limited roles in making new policies. The demand for expert knowledge is therefore limited. However, their role in drafting policies is increasing. The Parliament is directly elected and, therefore, has the role of evaluating the proposals of the Commission to see if it matches the interests of the people. The most important access good, therefore, is information about European encompassing interests (Bouwen, 2002: 380).

Finally, the Council of Ministers. The Council is the most intergovernmental institution of the EU. All ministers represent their countries and try to defend national interests. Therefore

information about domestic encompassing interests is most valuable for the Council (Bouwen: 381).

3.2.1.1. Hypotheses

From the logic of access and resource exchange the following hypotheses can be derived:

1. The interests group that provides the required access goods is more influential.
 - a. An interest group is less influential when the decision-making is complex and there are many organisational layers
2. The interest group that provides Expert Knowledge can influence the European Commission.
3. The interest group that provides European Encompassed interest can influence the European Parliament.
4. The interest group that provides Domestic Encompassed interest can influence the Council of Ministers.

3.2.2. Issue characteristics

The second factor that can explain lobby influence is issue characteristics. The focus on the characteristics of a policy issue is younger than the focus on access and resource exchange. Several scholars found that the research on lobby influence through access and resource exchange lead to inconclusive or even contradicting results. Therefore some scholars decided to look into other factors which could explain lobby success and influence. For some time now, scholars look at the lobbying context and it is often found that this context affects the lobbying behaviour and could account for differences in lobbying success (Mahoney, 2007: 36; Klüver, 2011; Bunea, 2013).

When looking at the characteristics of an issue to explain influence, the argument is that policy issues differ in a variety of features, which can create a favourable or unfavourable environment for interests groups. When an interest group deals with a favourable environment, the interest group will be more successful in lobbying and will have more influence (Klüver, 2011: 484). The attention for the importance of issue-characteristics has risen in the past years, however, there are still few empirical studies that test the effect of issue characteristics on lobbying success (Klüver, 2011: 485).

The characteristics of a policy issue affect their ability to influence decisions, because interest groups do not operate in a vacuum, but have to deal with a complex environment (Klüver, 2011: 486).

The first important characteristic is the lobby coalition. Interest groups hardly ever lobby alone. On every issue, there are interest groups trying to influence the output according to their preferences. There are several interest groups on the same side lobbying for their preferred results, therefore interest groups lobby together. These coalitions, trying to move the policy to their ideal point, are issue specific since the policy preferences change according to the policy issue at stake. Important is that all interest groups at one side of the Commission are assumed to be together in a lobbying coalition as opposed to the interest groups on the other side of the Commission. The success of interest groups is affected by the relative size of these lobbying coalitions. Meaning that if a large coalition lobbies for a policy objective and only a marginal number of groups lobbies for the opposite, the larger coalition will be more successful and influence the decision-makers. This follows the logic that when there is more support for a certain position, this position will be more influential than a position that is less supported. Hence, the likelihood of influence increases when the number of interest groups fighting for the same policy goal increases (Klüver, 2011: 487).

The second characteristic is the salience of a policy issue. The salience of an issue deals with the attention an issue raises among interest groups. Not all issues receive equal attention, some issues are only relevant for highly specialized interest groups, where others are of interests for many broad groups. A policy issue is salient if it receives a lot of attention from a wide variety of interest groups. This salience of an issue influences the lobbying success of interest groups (Mahoney, 2007: 47; Klüver, 2011: 488). The salience of an issue can change over time. Often this is linked to a change in the public opinion. An issue can increase in popularity and therefore in salience which can influence the possibility of success. The number of interest groups interested in a policy issue increase when a policy issue gets more visibility and becomes more popular (Lowery, 2007).

The effect of salience on lobby influence depends on the relative size of the lobbying coalition. This means that salience of an issue has a positive or negative effect on lobby success depending on the relative size of the coalition. When in the larger coalition salience has a positive effect on the lobby success and when in the smaller coalition salience has a negative effect on the probability of success (Klüver, 2011: 488).

3.2.2.1. Hypotheses

From this theory the following hypotheses can be derived:

1. The interest groups that are part of the larger lobbying coalition are more influential.

2. Salience of an issue makes the larger lobby coalition more influential.

3.2.3. Countervailing power

A relatively new theory looks at the differences between business and citizen groups. Arguing that citizen groups win from business because they press for a policy change (Dür et al., 2015: 952). This theory opposes many other researchers who often argued that the status quo is very powerful in the European Union because of many veto players in the EU which can block a change from the status quo (Hix & Høyland, 2011: 102). Because this is one of the youngest theories in the field of interest group influence looking from an extraordinary perspective it is chosen to integrate this theory and test the explanatory leverage compared to the two previously outlined approaches, which are more established.

Business interests have many advantages when lobbying. They often have more resources which can be traded for access to decision-makers. They often control relevant information with which they can influence outcomes. And finally, business enjoys a structural privilege over citizen groups in capitalist systems (Dür et al., 2015: 955). However, countervailing powers, such as trade unions and citizen groups, emerge and mobilize. Many non-business interests gather the material resource to mobilize politically and manage to influence decision-making (Ibid).

These countervailing forces are successful in the contemporary European Union. The reason is that for many issues the European Commission and European Parliament are promoting policy change, which is often supported by non-business interest groups. Furthermore, the European Commission is an institution that has an interest in securing its own position and existence. Therefore, they have an interest in being seen as highly active. When proposing new legislation this can be used to expand its competences and strengthen its position towards the other EU institutions. Therefore, the Commission searches for areas where it actively can put forward new legislation. As the area of distributive and redistributive policies is limited, the Commission will look more at regulatory policies (Dür et al., 2015: 956).

To get policies accepted the Commission needs support from the Council and, under the ordinary legislative procedure, the European Parliament. Actors in these two institutions want to ensure re-elections and are therefore open for lobbying by interest groups. Interest groups support those politicians that support their views and oppose those that have different views.

National governments and MEP's are, therefore, expected to take a position that maximizes support and minimizes opposition from society (Dür et al., 2015, 957).

In general, business interests want to harmonize regulatory standards across Europe through EU policy. When the non-business interests are able to counter the business interests' defence of the status quo, new legislation can pass. The Commission does not want their policies to fail and therefore, tries to assess the societal support before proposing policies. They then only propose a change to status quo when there is enough societal support. Because of the high interest of the Commission in more legislation, those interest groups pushing for a change in the status quo have an advantage (Dür et al., 2015: 957)

However, the level of contestation over a policy issue matters. Citizen groups often are more visible and play an important role in visible arenas such as newspapers. Business interests are often less visible. An important proposition is "When the spotlight is on and the public gets involved, political equality tends to prevail and special interests lose" (Dür et al., 2015: 958). Where businesses often have specific interests, citizen groups are the ones protecting diffuse interests. When an issue receives little attention often businesses are involved and tend to be more successful. However, when more parties are involved and the issue receives more attention the diffuse interests and citizen groups tend to be more influential (ibid).

Finally, the legislative procedure matters. When the number of relevant legislators is limited the defenders of the status quo are more likely to be successful. This is the case when the European Parliament does not have the role of co-legislator. In order to countervail the business powers citizen groups often rely more on lobbying the legislative assemblies, like the Parliament. Business is, therefore, more successful when the role of the European Parliament is limited, hence when the ordinary legislative procedure does not apply (Dür et al., 2015: 959).

3.2.3.1. Hypotheses

From this theory the following hypotheses can be derived:

1. An interest group is more influential if it's pushing for policy change.
2. When a policy issue gets more visibility diffuse interests are more influential.
3. When the role of the European Parliament is limited, diffuse interests have less influence.

4. Methods

4.1. Qualitative Case Study

This research is a qualitative case study. A case study is defined by Rohlfsing as ‘*an empirical analysis of a small sample of bounded phenomena that are instances of a population of similar phenomena*’ (2012: 27). In a case study the researcher gets an indebt understanding of the case focussing on the complexity and particular nature of the case (Bryman, 2012: 66). As the aim of this research is to get thorough knowledge about the youth lobby on the Youth Guarantee, this method is very suited for this research. Furthermore, the aim of this research is to get insights on this specific policy and not to produce generalizable findings, therefore, qualitative research is preferred over a quantitative approach.

4.2. Methodological approaches

Generally, there are three methodological approaches to assess influence: assessing attributed influence, assessing the degree of preference attainment and process tracing (Dür, 2008b: 561). First, the three methods will shortly be explained thereafter it will be explained why the process tracing method is chosen.

4.2.1. Assessing attributed influence

When the method of assessing attributed influence is used, this means that the involved actors are requested to fill in a survey where they self-assess their influence or the influence of their peers on a certain policy. The method is very simplistic and therefore fits large-n studies very well (Dür, 2008b: 565). However, the research relies on the self-assessment of the actors where there is a risk of bias. Actors can perceive their influence differently or can strategically downplay or exaggerate their perceived interests. It is found that often NGO’s downplay their influence in relation to business while business tends to do the same in relation to NGO’s. Furthermore, the biggest critique of this method is that it assesses the perception of influence rather than influence itself (Ibid.).

4.2.2. Assessing the degree of preference attainment

The second methodological approach is the assessment of the degree of preference attainment. In the approach the distance between the outcome and the ideal point according to an actors’ preferences reflects the actors’ influence. The advantage of this method is that it can assess influence also when the influence is not exerted visibly. This method is suited for large-n studies and can lead to generalisation (Dür, 2008b: 566). However, defining the preferences of actors can be very difficult and the method can’t control for alternative factors explaining the overlap

between outcome and preference. Besides it does not make clear how the influence is exercised, meaning that the channels of influence are not clear (ibid.).

4.2.3. Process tracing

The process tracing approach is the most used approach for assessing influence. Through process-tracing the steps by which causes affect outcomes are uncovered. Meaning that the following things are assessed: the preferences of interest groups, their influence attempts, their access to decision-makers, the responses of decision-makers to the attempts of influence, the degree of reflected preferences in the outcomes and statements of (dis)satisfaction with the outcomes (Dür, 2008b: 562). The main advantage of this approach is that it is very precise and covers all steps that influence a political decision, therefore it fits small-n studies very well. The approach makes often use of semi-structured interviews which can give extra insights than surveys or document analyses. However, the cross-checking of the evidence obtained in these interviews is often very difficult. This, namely, often includes perceptions and information that is not written down. Another disadvantage is that the approach is not very suited for large-n studies or for producing generalizable output. Furthermore, there's a risk that there is not enough evidence for covering all the causal steps. This gives a risk of concluding a lack of influence while there is a lack of evidence. Finally, when there is too much weight given to the level of interest group activity for determining influence there is a risk of incorrect findings (Dür, 2008b: 563-564).

The approach of process tracing will be used in this research. Despite the previously outlined limitations, this approach fits the research question and aim of this research best. The goal of process tracing is to get a very broad and deep understanding of the influence of an interest group by uncovering all the steps of influence. This matches the goal of this study. Furthermore, the process-tracing method is very suited for small-n studies, which matches this research focus on one case as well. The process-tracing approach looks at all the steps of lobbying, making a qualitative assessment of the influence. Important to notice is that elements of assessing the degree of preferences attainment are also integrated in the process tracing method as it looks at the preferences of actors reflected in the outcomes. Therefore it is the method that captures most and is preferred over the other two approaches.

4.3. Congruence analysis

When doing small-n research there is the advantage of getting very indebt knowledge on a case. Small-n research is therefore very suitable for connecting empirical cases to divergent theories. Using a case study to provide empirical evidence for the relative strength and explanatory

relevance of a theoretical approach compared to other theoretical approaches is the goal of congruence analysis (Haverland & Blatter, 2012: 144). This is necessary because there are different theoretical approaches competing for recognition and dominance in social science. These dominant theories shape perception and attention of social researchers and testing empirical evidence for these theoretical approaches can control if the theoretical approaches provide correct predictions about reality (Haverland & Blatter, 2012: 149).

Congruence analysis will be used in this study because the aim of this research is to find explanations for the influence of interest groups. Moreover, there are many different theoretical approaches in the field of interest group influence and there is still a lot unknown about their explanatory leverage. It is important to find out which theoretical approach is best at explaining influence by comparing them to each other. For congruence analysis propositions will be formulated from abstract theories which will be tested to empirical evidence (Haverland & Blatter, 2012: 146). In this study, three theoretical approaches are outlined in chapter 3, where hypotheses are formulated. After the process-tracing is done and the level of influence of the interest groups is defined, the hypothesis will be tested to find out which theoretical approach can provide the best explanation for the influence of the interest groups.

4.4. Selection of interest groups

In this research the influence of youth organisations is researched. The main focus of this research will be on the European Youth Forum (EYF). They are the biggest youth organisation, representing 100 youth organisations, both national youth councils and other organisations, from all over Europe (European Youth Forum, 2017). They are, therefore, the most important youth interest group and seen as the official partner in the field of youth for the European institutions. Moreover, they are part of the social platform, which brings together social NGO's and Commission officials to have a 'civil dialogue' (Hix et al., 2011: 173).

The main focus will be on the EYF. As they are an umbrella organisation their member organisations also participate in the lobby. Other organisations that participated actively in the lobby will also be taken into account in this study. Based on position papers, newspapers and other information, AEGEE/European Students' Forum, the biggest interdisciplinary international student organisation and the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI), are included in this research. They played an important role as it was under Irish presidency that the Youth Guarantee got accepted.

Finally, the preferences of some non-youth organisations will be researched as well, to find out what the lobbying coalitions were and if there were interest groups opposing the youth interest groups. Special focus will be on business interest groups and social partners.

4.5. Data

For all the six steps of process tracing data will be collected, the precise data per step are explained in the next chapter. The main data sources are document analysis and interviews. For document analysis the main sources of data will be position and policy papers, statements, policy documents and newspapers. Lobbying is not always written down or well documented, therefore, it is useful to do interviews in addition to document analysis. As not all data might be available, the respondent can fill in for this missing information. When multiple sources of data are used this is called triangulation. This leads to a broader picture of a case. The data received from different sources can and should be checked with each other to find out if they confirm each other. When this is the case this increases the validity (Silverman, 2011: 369).

The interviews will be with members of the interest groups who were dealing with employment policy, the list of respondents can be found in appendix II. Unfortunately not all required respondents were available for an interview. Therefore sometimes the person dealing with employment is replaced by another person working on employment during a later time or another person working in the interest group at the time of the Youth Guarantee. The interviews are semi-structured, meaning that the questions are based on the theoretical concepts and the stages of process tracing. There will be room for extra input from the respondent in every interview for extra insights and useful information. Furthermore, the researcher can ask additional questions based on the answers of the respondent. The list of questions can be found in appendix I. Unfortunately not all interviews could take place face-to-face therefore some interviews have been conducted through Skype and over email. Interviews over the phone brings certain limitations, it is namely more difficult to observe the respondent and to act in response to them, for example by asking additional questions based on these observations (Bryman, 2012: 488). While when the questionnaire is send by email there is no option to ask any additional questions or to give clarifications for the questions. However, it is preferred to do the interviews this way than to leave them out, as they provide valuable data.

The interviews are recorded and transcribed, in case it was not possible to record the interview, the researcher made notes and wrote a summary of the interview directly after the interview. All data, interviews and documents are analysed by using coding. This means that codes are formulated based on the theoretical approaches and the operationalisation (Bryman, 2012: 575).

The codebook can be found in appendix IV. The interview transcripts and documents will be given codes, which will be the basis for the results. It is the goal that for every code there are enough data to be able to present results.

4.6. Reliability and validity

The main disadvantage of a single case study is the concern of external validity. There is a risk that the case is not representative and that therefore the findings cannot be generalised to other cases. However, it is not the goal of a case study to generalize, the findings can help with theory building (Bryman, 2012: 71). This research makes use of congruence analysis, therefore, by testing the different theoretical approaches this research helps to the theory building around influence.

The internal validity of qualitative case studies is very high because the case is studied very indebt (Bryman, 2012: 390). To make sure this study really measures what it wants to measure, tested methods will be used. The concepts will be operationalised based on earlier studies to the same concepts, which have proven to work.

External validity or generalizability is low in a single case study, as only one case is studied. The goal is to get indebt knowledge of the case not to find generalizable results (Bryman, 2012: 392). However, by testing several theories the results contribute to the strength of this theories by either confirming or disprove them.

The reliability focusses on the replicability of this study. To make sure that other researchers will be able to check this research by replicating it, every step of this research is written down and the researched data and questionnaire used for interviews can be found in appendixes (Bryman, 2012: 392). However, as there are interviews used in this research, this makes replicating this research a little more difficult. It is hard to replicate the exact same research.

Finally, there is a risk of anecdotalism in case studies. This means that only data are used which suit the preferred conclusion, leaving out contradicting or unclear data (Silverman, 211: 20). This risk should be avoided by not jumping to conclusions too soon looking for confirming evidence, but to be open to all data and first analyse them, studying the less clear data as thorough as the other data before making conclusions. This risk is also reduced by cross-checking the evidence through using different data sources.

5. Operationalisation

Before starting with the data analysis, the steps of process tracing and variables from the hypotheses will be operationalised in this chapter. Here it is explained what these variables mean and how they will be measured and analysed.

5.1. Process tracing

In the previous chapter, it is explained why the method of process tracing is chosen as the most appropriate method for this research to find the level of influence. The steps of process tracing when it comes to interest group influence will be operationalised here.

5.1.1. Interest group preferences

The first step is to find out what the preferences of the interest groups on the policy are. For this study, the aim is to find out what the preferences were over the Youth Guarantee. As to define preferences of interest groups, first issues will be identified. Issues are the main controversies that exist within a certain policy domain (Bunea, 2013: 555). The issues will be found based on the written submissions of interest groups and, in case applicable, calls for consultation from the European institutions (Bunea, 2013: 559). The preferences subsequently will be identified, based on written submissions from interest groups, either position documents submitted to the institutions or to the public. The development of the preference will be analysed by looking at the preferences over time between 2008 and the acceptance of the policy in April 2013. This makes it possible to identify the importance of issues and to see if the preference has changed over time. Furthermore, interviews will be used to identify the importance of the issues. Focussing on written submissions to identify preferences is highly justified in the literature, because of a high level of institutionalization of the dialogue between policy-makers and interest groups in the European Union (Bunea, 2013: 560).

5.1.2. Influence attempts and access to decision-makers

Dür (2008a: 1221-1222) emphasizes that there are several roads towards influence, namely access, selection, voice and structural coercion. Access means the direct expression of the preferences of an interest group to the decision-makers. Selection means influencing the selection of politicians who have decision-making power. This is a very common practice in the United States, however research on this is still limited in the European Union. The voice channel means that interest groups 'make noise', organising rallies, petitions, statements in media and public debates. Finally structural power, this road mostly applies to business interests who have the structural power and financial resources. So they can choose to invest in certain polities where their interests are best served.

To define influence attempts in this study, the focus will be on the access and voice paths. This can be linked to the well-known lobby strategies of inside and outside lobbying. Where the access path is an inside lobby strategy, focussing on directly influencing decision-makers and the voice path is an outside strategy where interest groups try to influence and mobilize the public opinion (Dür & Mateo, 2013: 5). The selection path is very difficult to measure because this can take place decades before the studied policy is on the agenda. The structural power path will not be studied because this road applies to business interest groups with many resources and structural power, which are not the main focus of this research (Dür, 2008a: 1222).

To determine the influence attempts, options the interest groups used will be checked. For access, these are next to directly addressing the decision-makers, other options which are informal consultations, communications and public hearings (Dür, 2008a: 1223). First, this will be measured by looking at official consultations, structural contact with officials and written down invitations to meetings. Next, there will be attention for informal consultations which is another important part of access (Dür, 2008a: 1223). These data will be mainly obtained from interviews, as this process is less written down. It will also be checked which institution is targeted and to which institution the interest groups have access.

For the voice path manifestations, rallies, petitions, statements in the media, and participation in the public debate will be checked. The data for this will be found in written submissions of interest groups to the European institutions and the public and EU documents on consultations. Furthermore, the reliable EU newspaper EurActiv will be checked for statements and reports on influence attempts.

5.1.3. Responses of decision-makers

Next, the response of decision-makers. First of all, official communications in response to consultations and influence attempts will be analysed. So it is determined if there was a response and what the response to the interest groups preferences and attempts to influence was. The response will be marked positive, negative or neutral on the different issues defined in step one. Second, there will be analysis of unofficial responses by decision-makers. All three EU institutions, the Council, Parliament, and Commission will be checked. Data will come from official documents from EU institutions for the official responses, and interviews for the unofficial responses.

5.1.4. The degree of reflected preferences in outcomes

For this step, the final policy will be checked for the outcomes on the issues which were identified in the first step. Thereafter, the outcomes on these issues will be matched with the

preferences from step one over these issues. In this way per issue it can be identified if the preferences of the interest groups are reflected in the outcomes (Dür, 2008b: 567). This makes it possible to see the number of issues where the preferences were reflected and the number of issues where the preferences are not reflected. A certain number or percentage of preferences attained is not identified to determine influence, because there is no previous record of such a number. When the preference attainment method is used influence is determined as compared to other actors (Dür, 2008b: 567). When using process-tracing, as in this study, influence is determined based on all the steps, of which preference attainment is one (Dür, 2008b: 562).

5.1.5. Statements of (dis)satisfaction

The final step is identifying the statements of (dis)satisfaction. By doing this it is possible to see if the preferences are really attained in the policy. For this step, the written submissions of interest groups, from after the policy was accepted, will be analysed. This will be position papers and press releases from the interest groups and news articles in the European newspaper Euractiv. From this statements again several issues will be identified and the statements on this issues will be analysed, finding out if they are positive, neutral or negative.

5.2. Logic of access

For the logic of access approach there are several hypotheses formulated. The required and provided access good needs to be identified, just as the organisational structure.

5.2.1. Required access good

There are three types of access goods. Expert knowledge is identified as expertise and technical know-how, indispensable for developing effective policy. European encompassed interest is information about the aggregated needs and interests of the European sector. Domestic encompassed interest is information about the aggregated needs and interests of a national sector (Bouwen, 2004: 477). The required access good depends on the institution that plays a role. The Commission mostly requires expert knowledge, the European Parliament mostly requires European encompassed interest and the Council requires mostly domestic encompassed interests. Therefore, to find out what access good is required, the role of the institutions will be examined. This will be done by looking at the legislative procedure that applies to the policy issue. This determines the role that the institutions play and therefore determines the required access good.

5.2.2. Provided access good

Next, it is important to find out whether the required access good is also provided by the interest group and which access good the interest groups provide. This depends on the organisational

form of the organisation. There are three types of organisational forms: individual organisations at the national or European level; associations at the national or European level; and consultants. Individual organisations are best at providing expert knowledge. Associations are not good at providing expert knowledge because they have to deal with a wider range of issues. European associations are best at providing European encompassed interest and national associations are best at providing domestic encompassed interest. Consultants have limited capacity in providing access goods and can only provide expert knowledge if they are specialized (Bouwen, 2002: 377).

5.2.3. Organisational structure

The organisational structure of an interest group affects the efficiency of the provided access good. Therefore, the following items will be taken into account to measure the organisational structure. First of all, the number of layers an organisation has, meaning to find out if the organisation has a national level or a European level organisation or other layers. Second of all, the complexity of internal decision-making processes. This will be measured by looking at the number of steps that need to be taken before taking a decision and the number of bodies or members that need to be involved for a decision (Bouwen, 2002: 375). This information will be obtained from the organisations' organogram or statutes.

5.3. Issue characteristics

From the issue characteristics approach there are two hypotheses formulated. One focusses on the salience of an issue, the other one on the size of the lobby coalition. Here it is explained how these two variables will be measured.

5.3.1. Salience of an issue

In this study the definition of Klüver for salience will be used. She defines salience as the attention an issue raises among interest groups (2011: 488). Therefore first of all the number of interest groups that give a statement on the issue will be counted. An interest group will be counted as paying attention to the issue when they have published an official statement or position on the issue. Second of all, the number of statements for each interest group will be counted. Salience can increase or decrease over time, therefore for each year, starting from the first statement made until the policy was adopted, it will be checked how many statements from how many interest groups are published.

5.3.2. Size of the lobby coalition

Interest groups lobbying on an issue will be divided into lobbying to push the policy further from the initial position of the Commission or lobbying to weaken the policy. These two groups

will be divided by the total number of interest groups lobbying on the policy in order to determine which coalition is relatively stronger (Klüver, 2011: 495). As the EYF is an umbrella organisation with 100 members they will be counted as one and all the member organisations that actively participated in the lobbying process will be counted as well. The statements of the interest groups which are identified for the salience of an issue will be marked as either being positive, negative or neutral.

5.4. Countervailing power

For the countervailing power approach the following variables are needed to test the hypotheses: pushing for policy change, visibility of an issue, role of the European Parliament.

5.4.1. Pushing for policy change

To find out if an interest group is pushing for policy change, the preferences of the interest group will be compared to the status quo. If these preferences differ from the status quo on more issues than they overlap, then the interest group is defined as pushing for a policy change.

5.4.2. Visibility of an issue

The visibility of an issue will be measured through the media attention an issue receives. This will be measured by looking at the visibility in newspapers. In the study of Dür et al. (2015: 977) five leading national and pan-European newspapers were researched to measure visibility: Agence Europe, European Voice, Financial Times, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Le Monde. These newspapers will also be checked for this study, looking for articles on ‘the Youth Guarantee’ or a translation of this term. As European Voice changed into Politico Europe in April 2015, Politico Europe will be used in this research. Unfortunately the database of Agence Europe was not accessible, therefore it is chosen to replace this newspaper by the European newspaper Euractiv. The issue is visible if the issue appears in at least two of these five newspapers (Dür et al., 2015: 977).

5.4.3. Role of the European Parliament

The role of the European Parliament is measured by looking at the legislative procedure that applies to the issue. When the European Parliament acts as a co-legislator in the Ordinary Legislative Procedure, the role of the Parliament is big, when another legislative procedure applies the role of the Parliament is defined as limited (Dür et al., 2015: 959).

6. Development of EU youth and employment policy

This chapter will first give an overview of the EU policies and competences in the field of youth. When did the EU get involved in youth policy and how did this develop. Next, this chapter will give an overview of when youth employment became an issue in the European Union and how employment policy developed.

6.1. Youth policy

According to Williamson (2007) there always exists a youth policy in a country, either by intent, by default or by neglect. Young people live their lives, no matter if there is a supportive or restrictive policy context. However, he argues that in the ideal situation a youth policy is constructed, based on dialogue with youth. An ideal also the EYF supports, as they often state 'Nothing about us, without us' (Williamson. 2007: 100).

Youth policy in the EU is nonetheless still a relatively young field of action, as youth policy is a member states' competence with only a supporting competence for the EU (Williamson, 2007: 100; Devlin, 2010). Therefore, most of the EU policies have no binding status and are mostly recommendations and encouragements to the member states.

The first youth mobility programme, the Erasmus programme, was introduced in 1988. However, only in 1993 the European Community got formal entitlement to 'encourage the development of youth exchanges and of exchanges of socio-educational instructors'. This formulation stayed the same until the Treaty of Lisbon when the words 'and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe' were added (Devlin, 2010: 67).

Many scholars agree that with the EU White Paper on Youth, which was announced by the European Commission in 1999, the EU started to create their youth policy (Williamson, 2007; Devlin, 2010; Chabanet, 2014). The paper included four themes related to active citizenship: participation, information, voluntary service and a better understanding of youth. Governments were encouraged to relate their youth policies to these themes. Critics of this paper mostly argued that these were not the most urgent issues in the lives of young people in Europe (Williamson, 2007: 101; Devlin, 2010). However, the document was of great symbolic value, particularly since the Commission had not even published twenty white papers before (Devlin, 2010: 68).

The second important step in the European Youth Policy was the adoption of the European Youth Pact in 2005. This pact was a cross-sector policy instrument which focussed on three pillars: employment and social integration; education, training, and mobility; reconciling work

and family life (Williamson, 2007: 101; Devlin, 2010). These issues were seen as the more ‘hard’, aspects of youth policy, dealing with things that really affect youth. The white paper focussed more on the ‘softer’ and less contentious aspects (Devlin, 2010: 68).

The next step in the development of an EU youth policy was the construction of the ‘Structured Dialogue’ in 2006 (Devlin, 2010; Chabanet, 2014). The Structured Dialogue was supposed to be a dialogue in member states with young people and researchers. Both on a national, regional and local level on policies affecting youth, as well as on the European level set up by the European Commission. All member states were invited to establish a national working group with ministry representatives, national youth councils, youth organisations, researchers and other diverse young people. They organise events and debates and pass the results on to the European level. The national and European events are organised in accordance with the rotating presidency on pre-selected themes (Devlin, 2010: 69). The EYF plays an important role in the Structured Dialogue as they are the main umbrella organisation for youth organisations. While youth has got its own consultative procedure, critics argue that the most sensitive topics, such as employment, are left out of the Structured Dialogue and that the results, so far, are limited (Chabanet, 2014: 492).

In 2009 the Commission felt that the existing framework for youth policy was not efficient and proposed a new strategy. The new proposal led to the Renewed Framework for Cooperation in the Youth Field 2010-2018 adopted by the Council of Youth Ministers. Two overall objectives were identified: 1) to create more and equal opportunities for all young people in education and in the labour market, and 2) to promote active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of all young people (Devlin, 2010: 70).

6.2. Employment policy

In the field of employment policies the competences of the EU are limited as well. Solving unemployment is often still seen as a member states competence, where each member state should have the sovereignty to design its own policies. Unemployment appeared on the European agenda in the 1970’s, however solving these issues started in a very fragmented manner (Chabanet, 2014: 481). In 1970 a tripartite institution was set up to coordinate national employment policies: The Standing Employment Committee, consisting of Ministers of Labour, the social partners and the Commission (Goetschy, 1999: 118).

Already in the early 1980’s high youth unemployment rates spread across Europe, putting unemployment on the agenda of the European institutions. However, no specific youth

employment policies were designed at that time (Lahusen et al., 2012: 300). In the 1994 the European Employment Strategy (EES) was accepted and was a new way to fight unemployment. The EES was included in the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997. Other initiatives under the EES were developed in the late 1990s through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), a method of legislation which works through benchmarking and sharing best practices and relies on voluntary commitment of member states (Lahusen et al., 2012: 300).

Youth employment was supposed to be tackled under the EES from 1997 onwards. Policy progress in the field of youth employment was measured and several recommendations were included. From 2002 several policy debates addressed youth employment, due to high youth unemployment rates. In 2005 measures and actions proposed in the European Youth Pact from 2005 were included in the European Strategy for Employment. This led to more engagement of EU institutions in monitoring and evaluating the progress in the field of youth unemployment (Lahusen et al., 2012: 302).

It took until the economic and financial crisis of 2008 for the EU to start discussing youth employment on its own. The Youth on the Move document from 2010 is seen as a turning point as it is the first document dealing exclusively with youth employment (Lahusen et al., 2012: 300; Chabanet, 2014). This document was one of the seven flagship initiatives from the Europe 2020 strategy, the successor of the Lisbon Strategy of 2000. Youth on the move is set up as 'an initiative to unleash the potential of young people to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the European Union' (Devlin, 2010: 73).

One of the key aspects of youth on the move is the Employment of young people. The document sets a framework of priorities for actions to reduce youth unemployment at the national and European level. Important focus lies on the facilitation of the transition from school to work and reducing labour market segmentation. Furthermore, the document encourages the set-up of a Youth Guarantee to ensure young people a job after their graduation (Devlin, 2010: 74).

The first mention of a policy which can be called a Youth Guarantee is found in the Council decision of 12 July 2005 on Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (2005/600/EC). In the context of the European Employment Strategy a target is set that *'every unemployed person is offered a new start before reaching 6 months of unemployment in the case of young people and 12 months in the case of adults in the form of training, retraining, work practice, a job or other employability measure, combined where appropriate with on-going job search assistance'*. In the Council decision of 15 July 2008 on the guidelines for the

employment policies of the Member States (2008/618/EC) this target changed the 6 months for young unemployed people to 4 months.

The first mention of a ‘European Youth Guarantee’ was in 2010 in the European Parliament resolution of 6 July 2010 on promoting youth access to the labour market, strengthening trainee, internship and apprenticeship status (2009/2221(INI)). There the Parliament suggests that the Commission and Council set up a European Youth Guarantee to secure ‘*the right of every young person in the EU to be offered a job, an apprenticeship, additional training or combined work and training after a maximum period of 4 months’ unemployment;*’. In September of the same year the Commission presents Youth on the Move, the new initiative that focusses on youth policies (COM(2010) 477 final). In this initiative the Commission urges Member states to focus on setting up a Youth Guarantee. In April 2012 in the Commission communication ‘*Towards a job rich recovery*’ (COM(2012) 173 final) the Commission states that they are working on a proposal for a Council recommendation for a Youth Guarantee and that they will mobilize EU funding. One month later the Parliament accepts a resolution on the Youth opportunities Initiative (2012/2617(RSP)), where they present that they are happy with the developments so far and ask Member States to take measures at national level to tackle youth employment. But see that more is needed to tackle youth discrimination. An official proposal for a Youth Guarantee follows in December by the Commission (SWD(2012) 409 final). In February 2013 the Council discussed the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020, where they decided that there would be 6 billion euros available for the European Youth Guarantee (EUCO 37/13). Finally the Council adopted the Recommendation on the Youth Guarantee in April 2013 (2013/C 120/01).

7. Results – Process-tracing

In this chapter, the results of the process-tracing analysis will be presented, by looking at the preference attainment, influence attempts, responses of decision-makers and statements of dissatisfaction.

7.1. Preference attainment

The first step of process-tracing is to define what the preferences of the interest groups are. Based on contributions of interest groups and the programme of EU consultations several issues of the policy are identified. Subsequently, the preferences of the interest groups over these issues are determined. The next step is determining the reflection of preferences in the outcome, the Council recommendation (2013/C 120/01). Finally, there is a short elaboration on the importance of these issues.

The preferences are based on several position papers and other written statements, starting with the first position on youth employment from 2008 until the acceptance of the Youth Guarantee in April 2013 and on several interviews.

7.1.1. Age

The first issue that is identified is the age of the people that are eligible for the Youth Guarantee. If the age limit would be higher, more people can participate in the Youth Guarantee, while having a lower limit would lead to a more targeted approach to the youngest unemployed people. For the youth interest groups, youth should be defined as up to 30 years. Therefore, they also wanted the Youth Guarantee to be for people up to 30 years and that all youth under 30 should have access to the Youth Guarantee (Porcaro et al., 2012; Interview 2, 2017).

In the Council recommendation (2013/C 120/01) the age limit for the Youth Guarantee is set at 25. This is a more strict policy than the youth interest groups wanted and is not reflecting the preference to give all youth up to 30 the access to the Youth Guarantee. Therefore, the preference is not reflected in the outcome.

7.1.2. Career support

The next issue is career support and professional guidance. The issue is whether the Youth Guarantee should come with extra career support and professional guidance. This to help the young people find out what they want, what their strengths are and how to use them in order to find a job later themselves. The youth interest groups already focus on the importance of career support and tailor-made solutions for unemployed young people already before they started the lobby for the Youth Guarantee (EYF, 2009). Furthermore, it is also one of the main points of the Structured Dialogue on employment of 2010-2011 and is included in their position papers

for the Youth Guarantee. Their wish is a personalised approach, where young people receive guidance and counselling as a way to find tailored solutions for unemployment (EYF, 2010; McAleer, M. & Doorley, L., 2011; Compiled Conclusions EU Youth Conference, 2011). Including career support into the Youth Guarantee was important to the interest groups as they see the difficulties people face who have been away from the labour market (Interview 3, 2017).

Career support is mentioned in the Council recommendation (2013/C 120/01). There is a specific focus on the development of partnerships between public and private stakeholders. This to provide career support in order to create a smooth transition from unemployment to work. Furthermore, there is a call for education institutions and schools to provide career support and guidance. Therefore, it is concluded that the preference is reflected in the outcomes.

7.1.3. Discrimination

The next issue is discrimination. Not only age is a limit to enter the job market but a lot of vulnerable groups experience additional discrimination. Based on, for example, gender or migration background. The issue in this policy is whether or not additional measures for this kind of discrimination should be integrated in the Youth Guarantee.

The youth interest groups see discrimination as an important obstacle for equal opportunities in the labour market, as the EYF already mentioned in their position paper on employment in 2008 (EYF, 2008). The prevention of additional discrimination among young unemployed people, based on i.e. gender, migration background or disabilities, is an important issue for the youth interest groups, as it is found in several position papers and was one of the resolutions from the Structured Dialogue on employment in 2011. The Youth Guarantee, according to them, therefore, should come with anti-discrimination measures to ensure equal access (EYF, 2010; Compiled Conclusions EU Youth Conference, 2011; McAleer, M. & Doorley, L., 2011; EYF 2012).

In the recommendation (2013/C 120/01) the Council recognises that some young people experience discrimination. Therefore they include to set up outreach strategies to these young vulnerable people. With the aim to get them to register with employment services, and with attention to their diverse backgrounds. Therefore, the preference of the youth interest group is reflected in the outcomes.

7.1.4. Funding

The funding of the policy was another issue. This issue concerned the amount of money that would be dedicated to the Youth Guarantee. Allocating more money would mean that more

young people could benefit from the Youth Guarantee. Allocating less money would mean that an additional contributing of member states would be needed to make the policy a success. Moreover, it was important where the money would come from. If the money would come from the European Social Fund (ESF) this would mean that the money would be earmarked and could not be reallocated without intervention of the Parliament.

The preference of the youth interest group is that there is sufficient, structural funding for youth employment policies and specifically for the Youth Guarantee. The International Labour Organization researched in 2012 that for an efficient Youth Guarantee in the Eurozone at least €21 billion would be needed (Rsaza, D, 2012). The youth interest groups call for at least €10 billion euro, coming from the ESF (Porcaro et al., 2012; Komaromi, S., 2012). The youth interest groups wanted the money from the ESF because this would be harder to abandon and because of the role the European Parliament can play (Interview 3, 2017). The 10 billion was not enough to make the whole Youth Guarantee possible but would give a substantial basis for the member states.

In February 2013 the European Council created the Youth Employment Initiative, which included €6 billion to support measures from the Youth Employment Package and specifically the Youth Guarantee for the period 2014-2020. Of this €6 billion, €3 billion is allocated from the European Social Fund (Interview 3, 2017). The recommendation (2013/C 120/01) refers to this fund as the way to finance the Youth Guarantee. The youth interest groups called for sufficient funding and wanted at least €10 billion euros from the ESF. As there is only €3 billion coming from the ESF next to another €3 billion from another envelop this preference is not completely reflected in the outcome.

7.1.5. Green economy

The next issue focusses on whether or not there will be a special focus on green economy initiatives in the Youth Guarantee. The EYF demanded in their position paper on the Youth Guarantee of 2010 that the Youth Guarantee work placements should include green economy initiatives (EYF, 2010). However, the recommendation (2013/C 120/01) does not include a reference to green economy initiatives. Hence, the preference is not reflected in the outcomes.

7.1.6. Include partners

Another issue in the policy was the inclusion of partners. When the policy would state explicitly that social partners and youth organisations should be involved in the implementation of the policy this would give them more influence than when this would be left out.

The preference of the youth interest groups on the inclusion of partners is twofold. First of all, they call for the inclusion of social partners in designing and implementing the Youth Guarantee schemes. Second, they call for the inclusion of youth and youth organisations in all the stages of youth employment policy making and in designing, implementing and monitoring the Youth Guarantee (EYF, 2008; EYF, 2010; Porcaro et al., 2012; interview 3, 2017).

The recommendation (2013/C 120/01) aims to ensure the ‘involvement of social partners at all levels in designing and implementing policies targeted at young people’. Also, it is the aim to ensure the involvement of young people and youth organisations in further developing the Youth Guarantee. Therefore it can be said that the preference is reflected.

7.1.7. Exploitation of young people

The issue of exploitation of young people deals mainly with the risk that interns will be used as a cheap form of labour. Interns are often unprotected and underpaid, doing the work of a normal employee without any extra support or the financial benefits. Furthermore, there is the worry that when giving a job the quality of the job is not taken into account. The issue here was, whether or not extra measures to protect the young people under the Youth Guarantee, would be included.

The youth interest groups are already for a long time concerned that internships are used as a source of cheap labour and call for protection of students (EYF, 2008; EYF, 2009). An internship should have added value to professional and personal development and should be part of an education. Otherwise, the internship should be seen as a job and the intern should benefit from the same full rights and protection and salaries as normal employees. Furthermore, the youth interest groups are worried that young people will fall into poverty. Because they cannot reach the benefits from the Youth Guarantee due to the costs. The youth interest groups, therefore, demand that work placements, including internships and apprenticeships, offered as part of the Youth Guarantee have sufficient income, social protection, and health insurance. Furthermore, they also demand that education and training opportunities under the Youth Guarantee are accompanied by a scholarship to cover the expenses (Komaromi, S., 2012; EYF, 2010; Porcaro et al., 2012). The Youth Forum also wished for measures ensuring the quality of the job offer. Hence, they oppose the ‘Any job is better than no job’ discourse fighting for quality job offers (interview 3, 2017).

The risk of exploitation of interns is not mentioned in the recommendation and measures to protect interns are not included in the recommendation (2013/C 120/01). Neither is there

attention for the risk of young people falling into poverty, the need of scholarships for training and quality job offers under the Youth Guarantee. The preference of the youth interest groups is not reflected in the outcomes.

7.1.8. Recognition of skills

Recognition of skills means that skills obtained under the Youth Guarantee will be formally recognised and that young people can proof their experience for later employment. Recognizing skills would be an extra benefit for young people who participate in the Youth Guarantee. However, it takes extra measurements to ensure the formal recognition of those skills.

The recognition of skills is very important for the youth interest groups. The skills and competences that are obtained through non-formal education and volunteering are deemed very valuable for the development of young people. Therefore, they requested that also the skills and competencies obtained as part of the Youth Guarantee will be formally recognised (EYF, 2009; EYF, 2010; Porcaro et al., 2012).

In the recommendation (2013/C 120/01) there is special attention for skills and competences. Improving skills and competences is mentioned in the aim of the policy and there is a special focus on the encouraging of obtaining ICT skills. Furthermore, the recommendation refers to the implementation of the Council recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01). This recommendation calls for the validation of skills and competences all over Europe and to be in place no later than 2018. Therefore it can be concluded that the preferences are met.

7.1.9. Timing

The timing of the policy is another issue. This concerned the time between getting unemployed and receiving a quality job offer. If this time was longer there would more time to find a job offer, when the timeframe is shorter the young people are earlier in employment again.

The youth interest groups demanded that the Youth Guarantee would start as fast as possible and wanted to ensure a quality job offer within four months after becoming unemployed (EYF, 2010). This four months' timeframe was important as the youth interest groups wanted interventions as soon as possible. Because according to them waiting for an unemployed person to find a job themselves would remove young people further from the labour market (interview 3, 2017).

These preferences are reflected in the outcomes, as the recommendation (2013/C 120/01) aims to get young people an offer within four months after unemployed. Furthermore, the Council stresses that the Youth Guarantee should start as soon as possible.

7.1.10. Voluntary

The final issue is the voluntary aspect of the Youth Guarantee. Voluntary means that participation in the Youth Guarantee cannot become a requirement to obtain unemployment benefits. This gives young people more freedom. If it would be possible to use the youth guarantee as a requirement for unemployment benefits this would restrict the freedom of young people.

The youth interest groups wanted the confirmation that in no way the participation in the Youth Guarantee would become a requirement for obtaining unemployment benefits (Porcaro et al., 2012). There is no mention of the voluntary basis of the Youth Guarantee in the recommendation (2013/C 120/01), therefore it does not protect the Youth Guarantee from being used as a requirement for unemployment benefits. The preference is therefore not reflected in the outcome.

7.1.11. Importance of issues

Not all issues were of equal importance to the interest groups. The issues of most importance to the youth interest groups were first of all, the inclusion of partners, especially the youth organisations in the development, implementation and monitoring of the policy. Second, the need for sufficient funding of the policy was an important issue and finally the measures against exploitation of young people. (Interview 1, 2017; interview 2, 2017; interview 3, 2017). Of these issues the preferences regarding the inclusion of partners is attained in the recommendation, while the preferences regarding funding and exploitation of young people are not attained.

7.2. Influence attempts and access to decision-makers

The next step in process tracing is to look at the influence attempts and access to decision-makers. For the influence attempts both the voice and access path are studied. The influence attempts are studied over time and compared to the development of the policy. This way it is possible to find out if the attainment of preferences is the result of the lobby of the interest groups.

7.2.1. Access

First, the institutions that were addressed are described. Next, the influence attempts through formal access will be presented in chronological order. After that, there is an explanation of the informal contact with decision-makers.

7.2.1.1. *Addressing European Institutions*

The most important institution for the European youth interest groups was the European Parliament. There was interaction with MEPS both in informal contact and through consultations. The youth interest groups and MEPs worked in a kind of bilateral cooperation, started by MEPs who brought the Youth Guarantee to the attention of the youth interest groups (interview 1, 2017; interview 3, 2017). The second actor the interest groups tried to influence was the Commission. However, they were focussed mostly on the legal framework of the policy. When the interest groups got involved they felt that the proposal was already very fixed and ready to be voted upon (Interview 1, 2017). Finally, the Council was mainly targeted with the structured dialogue on Employment. Thereafter, the European interest groups did not really address the Council. *'Back in that time the Council did not have much capacity to deal with youth cases. So the youth policies were the responsibility of the country that was presiding the EU, so its youth ministry would lead the discussions on youth.'* (Interview 1, 2017). The feeling was that things tend to get stuck there, as there is contact with the permanent representation but the decision-makers self are hardly met (Interview 2, 2017; interview 3, 2017). Nevertheless, the Council was targeted through the national level. Namely, the presidency country, Ireland, was targeted by the NYCI together with the EYF(Doorley, J., 2013; interview 3, 2017).

7.2.1.2. *The Structured Dialogue on Employment*

The first event where youth organisations were consulted on youth employment policies was the Structured Dialogue on Employment between January 2010 and June 2011. In three subsequent cycles of 6 months, different aspects of Youth Employment were tackled in youth conferences and consultations. These were led by the presidencies of Spain, Belgium, and Hungary. At the final Youth Conference in Hungary the conclusions of the three cycles were translated into recommendations. After the conference, these were directly presented to the Council. The focus of the recommendations and consultation was broader than the Youth Guarantee. In the recommendations, they call for setting up 'policies that offer young people that are actively looking for work, a job within a specified timeframe'. Besides this specific call for policies like the Youth Guarantee, other recommendations touch upon issues of the Youth Guarantee. One of the six recommendations calls for career-oriented training and guidance to prepare them for work. Another recommendation focusses on the safeguarding of rights of young people that enter the labour market. Furthermore, there is a recommendation that calls for the recognition of skills and competences. Finally, they call for sufficient funding to increase the opportunities for young people in the labour market with special focus on young people that experience discrimination (Compiled Conclusions EU Youth Conference, 2011).

7.2.1.3. *Youth at work conference*

In October 2011 the Youth@Work conference took place during the EU SMEweek. This week focussed on entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's). The EYF was invited for a roundtable where in two rounds employment was discussed with businesses and the Commission. First focussing on the crisis and the lack of skills and next on what is there for SME's in hiring young people (Youth@Work, 2011).

7.2.1.4. *Jobs for Europe conference*

In September 2012 the 'Jobs for Europe: the employment policy conference' took place. At this conference, the Parliament, Commission, and Council discussed the measures from the Employment Package adopted by the Commission in April 2012. Several partners as the ILO, OECD and several interest groups were present. The EYF was present to represent the youth perspective. In two days several issues were discussed in three tracks. In the track '*employment policy throughout the lifecycle*' the Youth Guarantee was discussed and the EYF gave a presentation on their views. Peter Matjasic, at that time president of the YFJ, presented their opinion on the Youth Guarantee. Outlining that a Youth Guarantee should be for all young people, that young people should be given the skills and training to become entrepreneurs and that a real investment in youth and the future is needed (Matjasic, 2012; European Commission, 2012B).

7.2.1.5. *Meeting the Irish presidency*

In January 2013 the NYCI together with the EYF gave a presentation to the Irish EU Affairs Committee. Ireland then just got the rotating presidency and made employment one of its key issues. In this presentation they presented data on the number of unemployed young people, how the Youth Guarantee should look and how it should be funded. Furthermore, they raised concerns on that not any job is a good job and that reaching the most disadvantaged should be the priority of the Youth Guarantee (Doorley, J., 2013).

7.2.1.6. *Informal lobby*

According to the interest groups there was informal contact with decision-makers to address their preferences. This happened during official consultations but also outside formal meetings and at events organised by the youth interest groups. The youth interest groups argue that '*there was even more informal contact than formal contact*' (interview 3, 2017). This was mostly with the MEPs from the European Parliament who were very open to the youth interest groups and wanted to hear their views. There was regular contact with the Youth Intergroup, which was a group of MEPs who were actively involved in youth policy and youth rights (Interview 1, 2017; Interview 2, 2017).

7.2.2. Voice

The voice path of influence focusses on participation in debate, statements, rallies, and manifestations. Several publications of the interest groups are analysed, next to analysing the European newspaper Euractiv.

7.2.2.1. *Participation in debate*

The youth interest groups participated in the debate on the Youth Guarantee mainly by writing position papers. The first position paper was published in 2008 by the EYF and focussed broader on youth employment, a concrete reference to a Youth Guarantee was not there yet. However, they did call for a smooth transition between education and work. With a focus on quality internships, decent work and fostering entrepreneurship (EYF, 2008). The next position paper published by the EYF dates from 2009 and focusses on youth employment in times of crisis. This position paper includes the same topics as the position paper of 2008 and adds that the focus of youth employment policies should be on those young people that face the biggest difficulties entering the labour market. Furthermore, it urges the EU and member states to make progress in the recognition of skills and qualifications (EYF, 2009). In 2010 the EYF publishes their position paper on the Youth Guarantee. Here they present their support for a Youth Guarantee. In nine bullet points they point out what it should be and what should be included. Besides the issues from the position papers from 2008 and 2009, here they include the wish for sufficient funding, the inclusion of social partners and youth organisations, and the inclusion of green economy initiatives (EYF, 2010).

Furthermore, the NYCI published a position paper on the youth employment in 2011. Because Ireland suffered from the second highest youth unemployment rate in Western Europe the NYCI pushes for a Youth Guarantee. They argue that support needs to be offered to young people and youth organisations should be involved in the implementation of policies (McAlear, M. & Doorley, L., 2011). Next AEGEE published a position paper on the Youth Guarantee in 2012. The biggest concern they address is the funding of the policy, furthermore, they are worried about the decision power of the Commission in education policies. They finally raised the concern that internships will be used as a cheap form of labour (Komaromi, S., 2012).

Besides position papers, the interest groups published some other documents where they expressed their opinion. The EYF published in 2012 a Youth Guarantee booklet. Here they explained the youth unemployment situation in Europe and argued for a European Youth Guarantee (Porcaro, G. et al., 2012). AEGEE published a newsletter on the Youth Guarantee in 2013, explaining the developments. They underlined once more their concerns about the

funding and their frustration with the Youth Guarantee being only for young people up to 25 (AEGEE, 2013). The NYCI published a factsheet in 2013, where they shortly presented the costs of youth unemployment, the costs of a Youth Guarantee and how this could be implemented (NYCI, 2013).

7.2.2.2. *Statements in Media*

In total there were 6 articles found on Euractiv where the EYF was mentioned in relation to the Youth Guarantee. The first articles are from 2010 when the EYF expressed their happiness with a Parliament resolution on setting up a Youth Guarantee. Nevertheless, they expressed their wish for more funding and to focus on the risk of internships used for cheap labour (“EU youth job strategy under fire”, 2010; “MEPs mull plan to limit youth unemployment”, 2010). This focus on the quality of internships and the need for sufficient, structural funding, is something which is expressed in every statement in the media. For example in an interview with Peter Matjaši, president of the YFJ, in 2011 and again in 2012 (“Activist: Jobs creation”, 2011; “Youth Guarantees can boost Eurozone recovery”, 2012). In 2013 the EYF published two own submissions which were published on Euractiv. The first one was ‘*EU Budget: less for cows, more for young people*’. Here they explained that the EU spends €12,70 per cow and only €1,26 per young person in the budget at that time. Therefore, a change is needed for a real investment in the future, in youth (Matjaši, P, 2013). In the other contribution from 2013, they argue that youth unemployment is something which needs to be tackled together, in broad, strategic partnerships in order to prevent Europe from a ‘lost generation’ (Porcaro, G, 2013).

The interest groups themselves argued that because of the crisis, there was already a lot of visibility for youth unemployment. Therefore, besides a social media campaign, they did not really have a campaign to increase this visibility. However, they did use the visibility. But not everyone agreed if the Youth Guarantee as a policy itself was also very visible outside Brussels. Even though the youth interest groups did not really feel they could influence the Youth Guarantee directly, they used the attention to keep the focus on youth policy and maybe influence future youth policy (Interview 1, 2017; interview 3, 2017).

7.3. Responses of decision-makers

Now the responses from decision-makers to the influence attempts will be explained.

7.3.1. Parliament

MEPs from the European Parliament were the first to take action on the Youth Guarantee and according to the interest groups, they were the ones who brought the issue to them. The Parliament accepted several resolutions and often discussed the Youth Guarantee. Almost all

MEPs supported the Youth Guarantee, the only reluctant group was the EPP. They did not want to allocate funding to this (Interview 1, 2017; “EU ministers give nod to ‘Youth Guarantee’”, 2013). Besides the wish for the Youth Guarantee, the parliament also included the wish of the youth interest groups that a framework for quality internships should be accepted and they argued that sufficient funding was needed (“MEPs mull plan to limit youth unemployment”, 2010).

The contact with the Parliament was mostly with the Youth Intergroup, a group of members of the parliament working on youth policy. *‘We cooperated with the youth intergroup, they were really fighting for youth policy and are very accessible. There was even an MEP, Brando Benifei from S&D, giving a speech at our general assembly. They welcomed our input very much and supported us from inside.* (Interview 2, 2017). They gave the political support from the inside and put the position of the youth interest groups in resolutions (interview 3, 2017).

7.3.2. Commission

The Commission often restated their support for the Youth Guarantee. The commissioner for employment, László Andor, addressed in a speech after the jobs for Europe conference that youth is a very vulnerable group and that employment policies need to better address the needs of youth (2012a; 2012b). However the official responses from the Commission remain vague and only focus on the establishment of the Youth Guarantee without further detail (AEGEE, 2013).

In informal contact, there was according to the interest groups not much space for discussion. The policy idea and proposal seemed very fixed. The Commission was open to receive support from the youth interest groups but there was no space for amendments (interview 1, 2017). Even though the commitments to the Youth Guarantee remained vague and there was little space for amendments, the youth interest groups did feel that the Commission wanted this policy: *‘as every Commission wants to have their own baby’*. Therefore, they in general agreed with the youth interest groups on priorities, but their approach was often more quantitative where the youth interest groups wanted a more qualitative approach (interview 3, 2017).

7.3.3. Council

When the Structured Dialogue on employment was finished, recommendations were presented to the Council. After that, the Council responded with a resolution. Here they emphasised the main issues from the structured dialogue: easier access to the job market for young people; recognising non-formal learning and youth work; a quality framework for internships;

improving flexibility and security; and promote equal access to mobility opportunities (9048/11 SOC 344). However after this resolution, few has happened with these key issues.

The Council was also present at the Jobs for Europe conference where President Van Rompuy gave a speech. Here he emphasised that youth employment is a great concern in many member states. He stated that the member states are willing to act together as they realise more that the situation elsewhere influences the domestic situation (Van Rompuy, 2012).

Finally, the NYCI tried to influence the Irish national government who held the presidency at the time that the recommendation was accepted. After their presentation to the EU Affairs committee, the government expressed their support to the Youth Guarantee. They were seen as an important actor in favour of the Youth Guarantee and managed to get it accepted as they made it a priority under their presidency (NYCI, 2013; Doorley, J., 2013).

According to the youth interest groups it was very difficult to find out if they had influence. *'They never say: thanks to you it worked'*, the institution is complicated and often there was no response (interview 3, 2017).

7.4. Statements of (dis)satisfaction

After the policy was accepted the youth interest groups continued their efforts to influence the Youth Guarantee. They mainly did this through the voice path, by publishing several position papers on the implementation of the policy, publishing statements and raising attention in the media. They stated their opinion in 11 articles between 2013 and 2015.

The youth interest groups were mainly satisfied that the policy was accepted and that a Youth Guarantee was established. However, their contributions mainly focussed on their dissatisfaction regarding two issues: the implementation and the funding of the policy (Interview 2, 2017; interview 1, 2017). The policy is, according to the youth interest groups, not good implemented, member states don't follow the recommendation and monitoring is difficult ("A holistic approach to youth employment", 2013; "Youth Guarantee an unprecedented opportunity", 2014; Päll, A., 2014, EYF, 2015; Eurocities et al., 2016;). However, as the implementation does not affect the influence of the interest groups on establishing the recommendation this will not be elaborated further as the focus of this study is on the preferences from before the recommendation was accepted.

7.4.1. Funding

After the recommendation was accepted the youth interest groups continued their pledge for more funding. The commitment that was made by attributing €6 billion was seen as just a

symbolic commitment and a lack of political ambition. ‘*The funding that was there was just not realistic to make it happen*’, argued Anthonija Parat (interview 2, 2017). They often referred to the ILO who calculated that €21 billion is required to establish the Youth Guarantee fully for the Eurozone, so even more for the whole EU (“political rhetoric is not enough”, 2013; Zbornik, P., 2013; EYF, 2013; Päll, A., 2014; Hernández Rodríguez, P, 2015; EYF, 2016) .

7.4.2. Other issues

The youth interest groups also expressed their dissatisfaction with other issues. The important issue that the youth organisations should be included still recurred in the statements of dissatisfaction. However, the main concern was not that the recommendation was not good enough but that this was not implemented (EYF, 2013; EYF, 2015; Päll, A., 2014).

Furthermore, the youth interest groups kept pressing to raise the age limit of the policy to 30, to include more measures to make to policy inclusive and to reach the youth that is most vulnerable and the youth that experiences additional discrimination. Moreover, the youth interest groups continued to express their wish that measures would be taken against the exploitation of young people and for quality job offers (EYF, 2015; Zbornik, P., 2013; Casigne, E, 2015; Cerulus, L., 2013; Jacobsen, H., 2014; Milevska, T., 2013)

After the policy was accepted a network of youth organisations was established by the Youth Forum, they attended conferences to express their wishes for a better Youth Guarantee and tried to make their voice heard as often as possible (Interview 2, 2017). The attention for the Youth Guarantee was still high when the policy was accepted and the youth interest groups tried to maintain this attention. They could use this issue to publish their youth policy agenda in the field of employment. They did not only try to influence the Youth Guarantee but also wanted to keep the attention and maybe influence future policies. However, the attention for the Youth Guarantee died out pretty fast, according to the youth interest groups (Interview 1, 2017).

7.5. Conclusion

Now all the steps of process tracing have been fulfilled, the influence of the youth interest groups can be determined. To see if there was influence, it is necessary to conclude how many preferences were attained, together with the influence attempts, access to and responses from decisionmakers and statements of satisfaction the level of influence is determined.

First of all, the number of preferences reflected in the final policy. As explained in the operationalisation, this number alone does not determine the level of influence. It is the starting point to see if the interest groups managed to have preferences reflected. Five preferences were

reflected in the outcomes, and five preferences were not reflected. After the policy was accepted the lobby efforts continued and many statements were published. Many of them focussed on the implementation of the policy, however, this is not the target of this study. For four issues the youth interest groups continued their lobby efforts. Two preferences that were not attained, namely the green economy initiatives and the voluntary aspect, were not included in the statements of dissatisfaction after the policy was accepted. Therefore, it is concluded that these two issues were of less importance. For the three important issues: funding, inclusion of partners and exploitation of young people, one preference namely the inclusion of partners was attained. For the other issues, four out of five preferences were attained.

The recommendation (2013/C 120/01) followed several earlier policy documents. The youth interest groups started their lobby on the Youth Guarantee around 2010. Therefore, it is checked whether these preferences were already attained in the Council decision of 15 July 2008 on the guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (2008/618/EC) where a measure like the Youth Guarantee was proposed. This way it can be seen if the achieved preferences attainment can be attributed to the efforts of the youth interest groups. Table 1 shows if the preference is attained in the decision of 2008 and the final recommendation of 2013 and if the issue was included in the statements of dissatisfaction afterwards.

Table 1: preference attainment

	Preference attained in Council decision of 2008	Preferences reflected in Council recommendation of 2013	Included in statements of dissatisfaction
Most important issues			
Funding	-	-	+
Include partners	-	+	-
Exploitation of young people	-	-	+
Important issues			
Age	-	-	+
Career support	+	+	-
Discrimination	-	+	+

Recognition of skills	-	+	-
Timing	+	+	-
Least important issues			
Green economy	-	-	-
Voluntary	-	-	-

Of the five preferences that are attained 2 of them were already attained in the earlier Council decision of 2008. Three preferences were included which were not earlier included namely, the inclusion of partners, measures against extra discrimination and the recognition of skills. However, the youth interest groups continued their lobby on the measures against discrimination after the recommendation was accepted. This means that this preference is not completely attained and the measures in the recommendation were not sufficient.

This research focusses not only on preference attainment to find influence. Therefore the influence attempts and responses of decision-makers, have been studied. The youth interest groups used both the access and voice path for their lobby. On the access path, they used both formal consultations and informal contact with decision-makers. The lobby was mainly addressed to the Parliament which was very open to the input of interest groups. They brought the issue to the attention of the youth interest groups and responded to their input with resolutions which included the important wishes of the youth interest groups for more funding and for quality job offers. The Commission was also addressed through formal consultations and informal contact. The Commission, however, was found to be pre-occupied with the legal framework of the policy and the space for amendments was limited. Their responses to the youth interest groups, therefore, also remained vague and did not change over time. The Council was not addressed by the youth interest groups, except for the Structured Dialogue on employment. The Council did not have the capacity to deal with the issue and was an institution where it was very difficult to enter and to get results. Their responses remained very vague and were often a restating of their intentions. However, the Council was also addressed by the NYCI through the Irish government which was holding the presidency at the time that the recommendation was accepted. They responded to the lobby efforts of the youth interest groups by making the Youth Guarantee one of their key priorities for their presidency.

The youth interest groups also used the voice path. As youth unemployment was a very visible issue according to the interest groups, they tried to keep this attention. They published several

position papers and other documents where they expressed their opinions. They started a social media campaign to inform about the Youth Guarantee. Furthermore, several articles were published in newspapers where they expressed their opinion. The interest groups argued not only to do this to influence the Youth Guarantee but also to get youth policy higher on the agenda and influence other future policies.

The interest groups did use several paths to express their opinion and try to influence the Youth Guarantee. However, not all institutions were open to this or did respond in a positive way and were therefore influenced. This is shown in table 2.

Table 2: influence attempts and responses

	Addressed through formal consultations	Addressed through informal contact	Responses
European Parliament	Yes	Yes	+
European Commission	Yes	Yes	-
Council of Ministers	Yes	No	-
National government	Yes	Yes	+

Altogether, the youth interest groups got five of their preferences attained in the Council recommendation. Two of these preferences were already attained in an earlier policy, therefore for three preferences the policy moved towards the preferences of the youth interest groups. Looking at the influence attempts, access to and responses from decision-makers, it is found that the youth interest groups received most support from the European Parliament and were able to influence their positions as they included the need for more funding and quality jobs in their resolutions. The Commission and Council were addressed by the youth interest groups however they were not open to input and did only give vague responses. Finally, the national government of Ireland was addressed as they held the presidency of the Council, they were very open to the input from youth organisations and the youth interest groups influenced the Irish government to make the Youth Guarantee a key priority of their presidency and to get it accepted under their presidency.

Putting this together, it can be concluded that the youth interest group were able to influence the debate and acceptance through the Irish government and the European Parliament. However, their influence on the content of the Youth Guarantee was limited. Some preferences were attained, however, there is no evidence that links this to youth interest groups lobby

efforts. Therefore, having followed all the steps of process-tracing, looking at all the preferences, access, influence attempts, responses and statements of (dis)satisfaction it is concluded that the youth interest groups only had a minor influence on the Youth Guarantee.

8. Results - Congruence analysis

In this chapter the hypotheses from the different theoretical approaches will be tested, to find out which approach can best explain the influence of the Youth interest groups. First, the variables from the hypotheses will be tested. Thereafter this will be matched with the results from the process-tracing to find out which approach best explains the (lack of) influence of the interest groups.

8.1. Logic of access

From the logic of access and resource exchange the following hypotheses are derived:

1. The interests group that provides the required access goods is more influential.
 - a. An interest group is less influential when the decision-making is complex and there are many organisational layers
2. The interest group that provides Expert Knowledge can influence the European Commission.
3. The interest group that provides European Encompassed interest can influence the European Parliament.
4. The interest group that provides Domestic Encompassed interest can influence the Council of Ministers.

In order to find out if these hypotheses are correct, the provided and required access good for this policy are studied.

8.1.1. Provided access good

The access good that an interest group provides, depends on the type of organisation. There are three types: an individual organization, a national or European association and a consultancy organisation. The interest groups that have been studied for this research were all associations with members. The EYF is an European association with around 100 member organisations, both European organisations and national youth councils (European Youth Forum Statutes, article 2.3). AEGEE is a European association with around 200 local member organisations, with around 13.000 members (About AEGEE, 2017) and the NYCI is a national association with 50 member organisations (Doorley, 2013).

The EYF and AEGEE are therefore best at providing European encompassed interest and the NYCI best at providing domestic encompassed interest. Anthonija Parat explained it this way:

'we offer the opinion of young Europeans, this is what we believe and this is how it can be improved. We are many, so we have some leverage' (Interview 2, 26 May 2017). Expert knowledge is not offered by the interest groups.

8.1.2. Required access good

To find out which access good was required, it is important to find out which institutions played a role in the decision-making. The Youth Guarantee is accepted as a Council recommendation. This means that the Council adopts a recommendation based on a proposal from the Commission. The European Parliament has no formal role in this process. Therefore, the Council and Commission were the main parties that required access goods. Accordingly, the required access goods for this policy were national encompassed interest for the Council and expert knowledge for the Commission. The youth interest groups confirmed this, the Parliament was very open to their views, where the Commission was more closed, working on the technical and legal framework of the policy. The Council was only open for input on the national level through the presidency (Interview 1, 2017; interview 2, 2017).

The efficiency of the required access good is not only affected by the institution but also depends on the organisational structure. The youth interest groups are associations, their decision-making is, therefore, more complex than companies' as their decision-making takes place based on democratic elections and votes.

8.1.3. Conclusion

The youth interest groups were in this case hardly able to provide the required access good. The youth interest groups provided mostly information about the European Encompassed interest, while the required access good was information about the Domestic encompassed interest and expert knowledge. The NYCI was able to provide domestic encompassed interest and was therefore able to have some influence on the Council. Their influence is further limited by their organisation type and complex decision-making. As was concluded in chapter 7, the youth interest groups did have a minor influence on the Youth Guarantee. Therefore the results confirm the hypotheses from the theory of access.

8.2. Issue characteristics

From this theory the following hypotheses are derived:

1. The interest groups that are part of the bigger lobbying coalition are more influential.

2. Salience of an issue makes the bigger lobby coalition more influential.

8.2.1. Lobby coalition

The first hypothesis for this approach was: the interest groups that are part of the bigger lobbying coalition are more influential. To find out if this is correct, the number of interest groups lobbying for on the Youth Guarantee is checked. Besides the youth interest groups studied in this research, the EYF, AEGEE and the NYCI, other EYF members were involved in the lobby. These were mainly National Youth Councils, namely the Spanish Youth Council, the Portuguese Youth Council, the Slovenian Youth Council and Rural Youth Europe (Interview 4, 2017; interview 3, 2017).

Other organisations lobbying on the side of the youth interest groups were UEAPME, the interest group representing small and medium-sized enterprises (UEAPME, 2013), EASPD, the Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD, 2013), Solidar, an association of trade unions (Interview 1, 2017), and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC, 2016). Furthermore, a joint statement from ETUC Youth Committee, Eurocities, Solidar, EYF, Age Platform Europe, EASPD, FEANTSA, European Disability Forum and COFACE in 2016 called for better implementation of the Youth Guarantee (2016).

Business Europe is the biggest interest group for business interest. A record of their opinion from before the policy was accepted, was not found. However, in a statement from 2014, they stated that they always had supported the Youth Guarantee as a short-term crisis response. Nevertheless, they were worried as that the Youth Guarantee would become more than a crisis measure and would be used as a structural reform. Which, in their eyes would be a task of national governments and not of the EU (Business Europe, 2014). In interviews it was confirmed that there was no real opposition from business interest. *'Business always said nice things about it at conferences, so on paper nobody was against it.'* (Interview 2, 2017). Even though, there was no opposition from business, their lack of interest in the policy was not helping the youth interest groups: *'we have been trying to engage with them many times and it is problematic: if you want to ensure that the Youth Guarantee is working we need the engagement from business'* (Interview 3, 2017).

The only interest group found opposing the Youth Guarantee was the Young EPP group (YEPP). They followed the EPP position in Parliament and did not see the Youth Guarantee as the correct way to solve the problem of youth unemployment (Interview 1, 2017).

When counting all interest groups individually, 16 interest groups were counted as lobbying on the side of the researched youth interest groups, one interest group is found as lobbying against the Youth Guarantee and one interest group, Business Europe, is found to have changed from more in favour to more against the Youth Guarantee. Therefore it can be concluded that the Youth Interest groups were part of the bigger lobby coalition.

8.2.2. Saliency

The next hypothesis is: saliency of an issue makes the bigger lobby coalition more influential. In this study saliency means the number of interest groups involved on the issue. The number of interest groups involved over time is checked to see if the saliency increased. According to what is reported previously there were 18 interest groups involved in lobbying on the Youth Guarantee. The youth interest groups were already active in lobbying for the Youth Guarantee from 2010 onwards (Interview 4, 2017; EYF position paper 2010). The official positions from other interest groups were published later, in 2012 the positions of UEAPME and EASPD followed (EASPD, 2012; UEAPME, 2013). Other statements from interest groups were only found after the policy was accepted from Business Europe in 2014. The position from Eurocities, Age Platform Europe, FEANTSA, European Disability Forum and COFACE was not published before 2016 (Business Europe, 2014; Eurocities et al., 2016).

More interest groups joined the public debate over time, therefore it can be concluded that the saliency of the issue did increase over time.

8.2.3. Conclusion

The youth interest groups belonged to the bigger lobby coalition lobbying for the Youth Guarantee. Furthermore, the saliency of the Youth Guarantee grew over time. This means that the number of interest groups involved on the issue increased. Therefore, according to the hypotheses from the issue characteristics approach the interest groups should have been influential on the Youth Guarantee. However, as chapter 7 concluded, the influence of the youth interest groups was limited. Therefore, it is found that the issue characteristics hypothesis do not provide a correct explanation for the influence of the youth interest groups on the Youth Guarantee.

8.3. Countervailing power

The countervailing approach deals with concrete interests versus diffuse interests. Therefore, before the three hypotheses of the countervailing power approach will be checked, there will be a short explanation of the preferences and lobby attempts of non-diffuse, business interest.

8.3.1. Business interests

Business Europe is the most important business interest group representing business interests from all over Europe. There are no clear records of their preferences from before the policy was accepted. The only public statement published, dates from 2014. Business Europe was present during certain consultations, such as the Jobs for Europe conference in 2012, however, there is no record of their opinion there on the Youth Guarantee (European Commission, 2012B). This was also confirmed in interviews, where the youth interest groups experienced that on paper there was support, however, what happened behind the scenes was unknown (Interview 2, 2017). Furthermore, a lack of interest was experienced from the side of business, this was not helpful for the youth interest groups (Interview 3, 2017).

From the statement released in 2014, it can be concluded that Business Europe did support the Youth Guarantee as a tool to response to the crisis. However, they condemn the Youth Guarantee as a structural reform. They agree that structural reforms are needed on the level of national governments, where the Youth Guarantee can be an optional tool but not the structural reform needed from the EU (Business Europe, 2014). Therefore, it can be concluded that in the time before the Youth Guarantee was accepted Business Europe did not oppose the Youth Guarantee. But they did also not take an active role in lobbying in favour of it. When it became clear that the Youth Guarantee could be seen as more than a crisis solution they started to defend the status quo and proposed to leave employment policy again to the member states.

8.3.2. Pushing for policy change

The first hypothesis for the countervailing power approach is: An interest group is more influential if it's pushing for policy change. To find out whether the first hypothesis is correct it needs to be found if the interest group is pushing for policy change.

The preferences from chapter 7.1 are checked with the status quo, at the time of acceptance of the policy. First of all, the Youth Guarantee was something new, which did not exist in the EU already. The Council Recommendation (2013/C 120/01) was new, and new legislation by

default changes the status quo. Only the preference for the recognition of skills was partly covered in the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01). All other issues, were according to the interest groups, not sufficiently targeted in the existing policies and they were pushing to add more in the policy not to keep it as it was. Therefore it can be said that the interest groups were pushing for policy change.

8.3.3. Visibility of an issue

The second hypothesis is: When a policy issue gets more visibility, diffuse interests are more influential. To find out if this is correct, the visibility of an issue needs to be checked.

The databases of five newspapers, EurActiv, Politico (EU), the Financial Times, the Frankfurter Allgemeine and le Monde, have been checked for articles on the Youth Guarantee. Articles from before April 2013, when the policy was accepted and thereafter are counted separately. Every newspaper published articles on the Youth Guarantee before and after acceptance. In total there were 169 articles found about the Youth Guarantee. However, most of these articles, namely 131, were published after the policy was accepted. The visibility in this hypothesis deals with the influence before the policy was accepted, therefore, the number of articles before the policy was accepted is taken into account. For an issue to be visible it needs to appear at least in two of the five researched newspapers (Dur et al., 2015: 34). As there were 38 articles spread over five newspapers the policy is found visible.

8.3.4. Role of the European Parliament

The final hypothesis is: When the role of the European Parliament is limited, diffuse interests have less influence. To be able to check if this hypothesis explains the influence of the interest groups, the role of the European Parliament needs to be defined. Therefore, it is important to find out if the European Parliament acted as a co-legislator and the Ordinary Legislative Procedure applied.

The policy is adopted as a Council recommendation after a proposal from the Commission (Council Recommendation (2013/C 120/01)). Therefore the Ordinary Legislative Procedure did not apply and the European Parliament did not act as a co-legislature. Therefore, it is concluded that in this case, the role of the European Parliament was limited.

8.3.5. Conclusion

Before the policy was accepted, business interest groups were not very involved in the lobby on the Youth Guarantee. They did not oppose it and therefore, not defend the status quo. However, after the policy was accepted they did oppose the idea of the Youth Guarantee as a structural reform and defend the status quo of member states being in charge of employment policies.

Results show that the youth interest groups were pushing for policy change and that the issue of the Youth Guarantee was very visible. According to the countervailing power approach, therefore, the youth interest groups were supposed to be influential. The final hypothesis deals with the role of the European Parliament. For this policy, the role of the European Parliament was very limited. Accordingly, the interest group should be less influential. As was found, the youth interest groups did have a minor influence on the Youth Guarantee. One hypothesis confirms this result while according to the other two a different result should have been achieved. Therefore it is concluded that the countervailing power approach can partly explain the influence of the youth interest groups on the Youth Guarantee.

9. Conclusion

After completing all the steps of process-tracing and the congruence analysis, now the research question of this study will be answered. The aim of this study is to explain the influence of youth interest groups on the Council recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C 120/01). For which the following research question was formulated: *How can the influence of youth interest groups on the Council recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C 120/01) be explained?*

The process-tracing method is used to determine the influence of the youth interest groups. Thereafter, with a congruence analysis, three theoretical approaches for explaining interest group influence were tested, in order to find out which approach can best explain the influence of the youth interest groups. The following steps of process-tracing were examined: determining the preferences of the interest groups, influence attempts and access to decision-makers, responses of decision-makers, reflected preferences in the outcomes and statements of (dis)satisfaction.

For five out of ten issues the youth interest groups attained their preference. One out of three most important preferences were attained, namely the inclusion of youth interest groups. The other two important issues, namely, more funding and the need for measures against the exploitation of young people including quality job offers, were not included. Also for the two least important issues the preferences were not attained. Therefore, five preferences were attained in the policy. However, two of these five preferences were already attained in earlier policies before the youth interest groups started their lobby. That means that three preferences were attained after the youth interest groups started their lobby. After the policy was accepted the youth interest groups continued their lobby efforts for four preferences.

Because this study defines an actor as influential when they manage to influence outcomes in a way that brings them closer to their ideal point, an intentional action which led to the attainment of preferences is sought-after (Dür & de Bièvre, 2007a: 3). Therefore it is not possible to define influence based only on the number reflected preferences. The other steps of process-tracing are needed in order to see if the preference attainment can be attributed to the effort of the interest groups. Therefore, also the influence attempts and responses from decision-makers are studied. The youth interest groups used both the access and voice path to try to influence the policy. They addressed the European Parliament and the Commission through formal consultations and informal contact. The Council was addressed through formal consultations

and through the national government of Ireland which held the presidency at the time of acceptance.

The European Parliament, especially the Youth Intergroup, was very open to the input of youth organisations. They adopted several resolutions including the preferences of extra funding and the need for quality job offers. The Commission did hardly respond to the lobby efforts, the proposal they made was very fixed and the youth interest groups did not feel much space for amendments. The Council was hardly targeted at the European level and their responses to the formal consultations often remained vague. However, the national government of Ireland did make the Youth Guarantee one of its priorities during its presidency after the interest groups addressed them.

The youth interest groups, therefore, managed to influence the European Parliament and the national government of Ireland and managed to influence the acceptance of the policy. However, the youth interest groups were hardly able to influence the content of the policy as the Council and the Commission were very closed for the youth interest groups. They were the ones drafting the policy but did hardly change it because of the youth interest groups. Therefore, it is concluded that the youth interest groups had a minor influence on the recommendation on the Youth Guarantee.

Subsequently, the hypotheses from the three theoretical approaches were tested. First of all, the logic of access approach focusses on the exchange of resources as a road to access. There are different types of access goods that an interest group can provide and different access goods that an institution needs. When these match an interest group is influential (Bouwen, 2004). The access good that the youth interest groups provided was European Encompassed interest, information about the preferences of the European target group and a little Domestic Encompassed interest for Ireland provided by the NYCI on the preferences of Irish youth.

The required access good depends on the organisations that play a role in the decision-making. The Youth Guarantee is a Council recommendation followed from a Commission proposal, the European Parliament has, therefore, no formal role in the decision-making. The required access good by the Commission is expert knowledge and the Council requires Domestic Encompassed Interest. Therefore, there is a mismatch between the provided access good and the required access good. As only the domestic encompassed interest that the NYCI provided to the National Government of Ireland matches their required access good. Besides, as all youth interest groups are associations this affects their flexibility and efficiency as decision-making is more complex

and therefore they should be less influential. According to the logic of access approach, the youth interest groups should have little influence. Which matches with the influence the youth interest groups had.

The next approach is the issue characteristics approach. This approach argues that certain characteristics of a policy issue determine if an interest group is influential (Klüver, 2011). Two hypotheses were formulated dealing with the lobby coalition and the salience of a policy issue. The first hypothesis was: The interest groups that are part of the bigger lobbying coalition are more influential. It was found that 16 interest groups were lobbying in favour of the Youth Guarantee. One interest group was opposing the Youth Guarantee and one interest group, the big interest group Business Europe, had changing preferences over the Youth Guarantee. Therefore the youth interest groups belonged to the bigger lobby coalition. The second hypothesis was: Salience of an issue makes the bigger lobby coalition more influential. The salience of the issue means the number of interest groups lobbying on an issue and is measured over time. This number of interest groups did increase over time. The youth interest groups were, in the beginning, the only ones lobbying on the Youth Guarantee. But from 2012 onwards, the number of interest groups involved increased. Therefore, the salience of the issue increased and the interest groups which were part of the bigger coalition were supposed to be influential. This does not match the results from process tracing where it is found that the youth interest groups only had little influence.

Finally, the countervailing approach, this approach argues that diffuse interests are more influential than business interests. Because diffuse interests are often in favour of changing the status quo along with the Commission and Parliament, while business interests are defending the status quo (Dür et al., 2015). The findings show that Business Europe started their defence of the status quo, only when it became clear that the Youth Guarantee would be more than just a crisis measure and aimed at being a structural reform. The first hypothesis is: an interest group is more influential if it's pushing for policy change. In this case, the youth interest groups were pushing for a policy change. The Youth Guarantee was a new policy and on many of the issues no policy existed yet. However, in this case, business interest only started to defend the status quo after the policy was accepted. The second hypothesis is: when a policy issue gets more visibility, diffuse interests are more influential. Therefore the visibility of the issue is checked. There were 38 articles found about the Youth Guarantee before its acceptance, spread over all five newspapers. Therefore, the issue is considered visible. The final hypothesis was: When the role of the European Parliament is limited, diffuse interests have less influence. The European

Parliament had no formal decision-making role for the Council recommendation, therefore, their role is considered limited. According to two hypotheses the youth interest groups should be influential and according to one hypothesis, they should be not influential. As according to the process-tracing results the youth interest groups had little influence this hypothesis can partly explain this.

Altogether, the logic of access approach and the countervailing approach provide explanations for the little influence the youth interest groups had. The limited role of the European Parliament is a factor explaining the limited influence in both approaches. According to the countervailing approach, the European Parliament is a body in favour of changing the status quo and listening to the citizens. However, the wish to change the status quo and the visibility of the policy issue did not lead to much influence as would be expected from the countervailing power approach. The logic of access explains the lack of influence because of the mismatch between the required and provided access good. What the youth interest groups mainly provided was European encompassed interest which is required by the European Parliament, domestic encompassed interest and expert knowledge were needed by the real decision-makers, the Commission and the Council. The influence there was can be explained by the provided domestic encompassed interest to the Irish Government and the limited role behind the scenes of the European Parliament and the role of the Commission and Council who are also, to some extent, in need of European encompassed interest (Bouwen, 2004). The issue characteristics approach, finally, does not provide a correct explanation for the minor influence of the youth interest groups.

The aim of this research was to find out what the influence of the youth interest groups was and how this influence can be explained. This was the first study looking at the influence of youth interest groups. The findings, therefore, provide strength to the theoretical approaches. It further strengthens the proposition that the logic of access should not only be used to explain business interests (Bouwen, 2004: 360). Furthermore, the results show that the newer countervailing power approach can help explain influence as well. Moreover, the findings shows that the existing theories can provide explanations for a group of interest groups not studied before. Finally, the result that the role of the European Parliament plays an important role for youth interest groups relates to earlier studies that found that the European Parliament is very open for diffuse interest (Kohler-Koch, 1995: 7; Michalowitz, 2007: 141) .

All in all, the influence of the youth interest groups on the establishment of the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (2013/C 120/01) can best be explained by the limited role of the European Parliament. The logic of access approach

explains this best because the interest groups were not able to provide the required access good by the EU decision-making bodies: the Commission and the Institution. The countervailing power approach also provides some explanatory leverage, because the push for policy change by the youth interest groups did not lead to influence because the European Parliament had a limited role. The issue characteristics approach could not provide an explanation for the influence of the youth interest groups in this case.

10. Discussion

This study contributes to the existing literature on interest group influence, by focussing on the influence of youth interest groups on the Council Recommendation on the Youth Guarantee. Because, existing research, especially in the field of diffuse interests, has led to inconclusive, or even contradicting results (Dür, 2008a: 1213), it was chosen to study three different theoretical approaches. In a congruence analysis, their ability to explain the influence of the youth interest groups was tested. The results provide support for the resource exchange approach and the countervailing power approach, while it disproves the support for the issue characteristics approach. Moreover, this research contributes to the literature on youth interest groups. A group of interest groups that is often overlooked, as most research on diffuse interests focussed on environmental interest groups. However, it is important to study these interest groups, because they represent a large social group in society. The insights from this study focus on the influence on employment policy, which is one of the most important issues to youth (Chabanet, 2014: 489). The results show if the youth policy in the EU is drafted based on input from youth. An important goal, because according to the EYF and some scholars, an ideal youth policy is constructed based on a dialogue with youth (Williamson, 2007: 100).

This study is a qualitative case study, a design that is very suited for influence research. Quantitative research on influence is often very difficult, as influence is a complex concept to capture and measure (Mahoney, 2007: 35). Qualitative research can give a broad picture of the case, exploring the concept and paying attention to the specific context of the case. Moreover, the use of multiple data sources also adds to this broader picture of the case. Finally, qualitative case studies have a very high internal validity (Bryman, 2012: 390).

Nevertheless, there are certain limitations to this research. The external validity of qualitative case studies is generally low. Findings cannot be generalized to other cases as the findings often are linked to contextual factors and give insight in the specific case. However, the goal of this research is not to provide generalizable findings but to create indebt knowledge and to contribute to the literature. Moreover, a congruence analysis is very suited for single case studies and does not have the goal of presenting generalisable findings. It helps with theory building by providing empirical evidence for the relative strength of theoretical approaches, compared to other theoretical approaches (Haverland & Blatter, 2011: 144).

The internal validity of single case studies is usually very high because the researcher studies the case very deeply. However, studying one case also gives certain limitations. First of all, as was mentioned before, defining and measuring influence is difficult (Mahoney, 2007: 37). Also

in this study, it was found that influence is difficult to operationalise and that it is often easier to be measured when it is compared between cases or interest groups. However, the process-tracing method is very suited for singular case studies in the field of influence (Dür, 2008b: 563). Furthermore, there exists a risk with process-tracing that a lack of evidence is presented as a lack of influence, this risk has been reduced by using several data sources to cover all the steps (ibid).

This study is one of the first studies in the field of youth interest groups and the findings, therefore, lead to recommendations for further research. First of all, the theoretical explanations for this case refer both to the lack of the role of the European Parliament. Because the parliament is seen as a body very receptive to diffuse interests (Dür et al., 2015), further research on the influence of youth interest groups in a case where the European Parliament does play a role can further test the strength of the approaches. Especially for the countervailing power approach, this can give more insights in the explanatory leverage of the other aspects of this theoretical approach and therefore the strength of this approach.

Second of all, this study focusses on the influence of youth interest groups on youth policy and employment policy, these fields are both member states competences with a supporting competence for the EU. Therefore it would be interesting to also study the influence of youth interest groups on policies outside the field of youth. This is also supported by the youth interest groups who expressed the feeling that this policy was very symbolic.

Moreover, further research could also focus on the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. This research focusses on the influence on the establishment of the Youth Guarantee. Hence, the aim of this study is not to test if the Youth Guarantee meets its goals and is correctly implemented. As the Youth Guarantee is the latest commitment in the field of youth unemployment, research on the implementation can give interesting insights.

Finally, it would be interesting to link this study and future studies on youth interest group influence with research on the decline in youth participation in democracy, both at the national level as well as in the EU. Earlier studies found that when young people know they can have influence on policies, their motivation to contribute increases (Laine & Gretschel, 2009: 196). Studying this further could, therefore, lead to interesting findings on the trends in youth participation.

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Appendix I: Questionnaire

The following questionnaire is used to interview the respondents from the youth interest groups.

Topic: influence of youth interest groups on the Council recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee.

1. In which youth interest group were you active, in which position and between which dates?
2. What were the preferences of your interest group regarding the Youth Guarantee?
3. Which issues were most important to your interest group?
4. Do you feel that your organisation influenced the recommendation?
5. Did your organisation attend meetings related to the Youth Guarantee with the EU institutions?
 - a. What kind of meetings? (consultations, hearings, other)
 - b. Where these meetings formal, informal or both?
 - c. With which institutions did you attend meetings?
 - d. How often did you attend these meetings between 2010 and 2013
6. Did your organisation try to influence the public opinion and increase the visibility of the issue? (i.e. by organising campaigns, statements in the media)
7. Do you think the issue of the Youth Guarantee was visible to the public?
8. Did your organisation provide information to the European institutions?
 - a. What kind of information? (technical information/expert knowledge, information about the European encompassing interest or information about the domestic encompassed interest)
 - b. To which institution did you provide this information?
 - c. In what form did you present this information? (i.e. news articles, reports, position papers)
9. How did the EU institutions respond to your lobby efforts?
 - a. Were there formal or informal responses to your lobby efforts?
 - b. From which institution?
10. How satisfied are you with the Council recommendation?
 - a. What are the issues you are satisfied with?
 - b. What are you dissatisfied with?
11. Did you continue to lobby for improvements of the Youth Guarantee after the acceptance of the recommendation?

- a. If yes, how did you try to improve the policy?
- 12. Was your organisation part of a lobby coalition?
 - a. Which organisations were part of this coalition?
- 13. Did other interest group lobby on the Youth Guarantee?
 - a. Which interest groups?
 - b. Did their preferences overlap or contrast with yours?

Appendix II: List of respondents

The following people were interviewed for this thesis

- Interview 1: Mirosław Krzanik, *board member AEGEE/European Students' Forum 2010-2011; board member European Youth Forum 2013-2014*, (16 May 2017), Skype interview
- Interview 2: Anthonija Parat, *board member AEGEE/European Students' Forum 2014-2015; policy officer for Employment*, (26 May 2017), personal interview
- Interview 3: Clementine Moyard, *European Youth Forum policy officer for employment from 2014 onwards*, (2 June 2017), Skype interview
- Interview 4: Florence Franks, *Project manager youth employment project AEGEE/European Students's Forum 2012-2013*, email communication

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Appendix IV: Codebook

The following codes are used for analysing the data.

- Preferences
 - Age
 - Career support
 - Discrimination
 - Funding
 - Green economy
 - Inclusion of partners
 - Youth organisations
 - Other organisations
 - Exploitation of young people
 - Recognition of skills
 - Timing
 - Voluntary
- Influence attempts
 - Access
 - Formal consultation
 - Informal contact
 - Voice
 - Interviews
 - Statements in media
- Responses of decision-makers
 - European Parliament
 - European Commission
 - Council
- Statements of (dis)satisfaction
 - Satisfied
 - Dissatisfied
 - Age
 - Implementation
 - Cooperation public-private-people
 - Inclusiveness

- Discrimination
 - Exploitation of young people
 - Funding
 - Inclusion of partners
- Provided access good
 - Association
 - Represented members
 - Organisational structure
- Required access good
 - Expert knowledge
 - Domestic encompassed interest
 - European encompassed interest
- Lobby coalition
 - Pro Youth Guarantee
 - Against Youth Guarantee
- Pushing for policy change
- Visibility
- Role of the European Parliament