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REGIONAL REPRESENTATION OFFICES AND THEIR LOBBYING ACTIVITIES IN THE EU ARENA

A comparative interview study of Swedish regional offices in Brussels

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Abstract

This thesis aims to study the lobbying activities among regional offices representing administrative regions to explore differences and similarities in relation to three theoretical aspects; mission and principals, resources and lobbying tactics. Moreover, the thesis also aims to analyse how these differences and similarities correspond to theoretical perceptions from previous research on administrative regions' offices and their lobbying activities. Essentially, administrative regions have been defined in previous research as weaker with poorer conditions, resources and ambitions to influence EU policy and their representation offices having a less clear representational function, weak strategic policy agendas, and vaguely articulated ambitions. To investigate these offices' lobbying activities, the thesis uses a qualitative approach based on a deductive analysis with a framework and analytical scheme based on the three theoretical aspects. The empirical material is collected through eight semi-structured interviews with officials working at the Swedish regional offices in Brussels. The results show that main differences are identified connected to concepts within the theoretical aspect of mission and principals, followed by resources and lobbying tactics. Moreover, the results indicate that theoretical perceptions about administrative regions' offices can be questioned as these offices do have ambitions to influence EU policy and practices several activities to increase their voice towards the officials in the EU arena.

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List of abbreviations

CS	Central Sweden European Office
CoR	Committee of the Regions
CPMR	Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions
DG Regio	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
EC	European Commission
EP	European Parliament
EPC	European Policy Centre
ERIAFF	European Regions for Innovation in Agriculture, Food and Forestry
ERRIN	European Regions Research and Innovation Network
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
EUREGHA	European Regions and Local Health Authorities
ITRE	Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
MEPs	Members of the European Parliament
NS	North Sweden European Office
NSPA	Northern Sparsely Populated Areas Network
OECD	Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
PR	Permanent Representation
REGI	Committee on Regional Development
RV	Region Värmland European Office
RVG	Region Västra Götaland’s Brussels Office
RÖ	Region Östergötland EU Office
S	Skåne European Office
SS	South Sweden’s Brussels Office
SR	Stockholm Region EU Office

1. Introduction

Over the last 40 years, more than 300 regional and local representations have been established offices in Brussels with an overall aim to represent and preserve their interests towards the EU institutions (Brussels Commissioner of Europe and International Organisations 2021). Lindh, Lödén et al. (2009) explain that the increase of regional representation offices in Brussels is a sign of regions' search for recognition, voice and influence in the EU arena. The process of European integration and the EU have created new political and financial possibilities for regional representations to be influential in supranational venues through different lobbying activities towards the EU institutions (Lindh, Lödén et al. 2009:18). Whilst the number of representation offices has increased, Kettunen and Kull (2009:17) argue that it does not necessarily mean that all of them are included in the EU policy-making process. Moreover, it is only the EU institutions that matter but the representation offices' themselves, the officials involved in the day-to-day work and the networks they create.

In previous research, regions are often divided into typologies to identify differences in their representation offices' lobbying activities, for example, strong versus weak regions. Strong regions[1] have law-making powers, financial autonomy, good staffing resources and are embedded in national decision-making processes, while weak regions[2] have no law-making powers, are poorly financed and have limited personnel to cover the multiple access points in the EU arena (Callanan and Tatham 2014:190). This typology translate that regions can simply be defined as strong or weak, but can the representation offices' lobbying activities solely be understood based on this distinct dichotomy? To gradate this typology, regions can also be distinguished as either constitutional or administrative (Moore 2008, Rowe 2011). Administrative regions are defined as "formal constructs within the member states between the national and local levels of government, which have very limited if any, independent legislative capacity" (Rowe 2011:9).

[1] These regions exists in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), Portugal (Azores and Madeira) and Finland (Åland).

[2] The remaining European regions are categorised as weak.

Essentially, administrative regions have been defined in previous research as weaker with poorer conditions, resources and ambitions to influence EU policy, with representation offices having a less clear representational function, weaker strategic policy agenda, and vaguely articulated ambitions to influence limiting their scope of lobbying activities (Rowe 2011:97, Callanan and Tatham 2014). However, does this definition apply to all administrative regions' offices? Since most previous studies include a broad range of offices representing different types of regions to investigate their lobbying activities (Marks, Haesly et al. 2002, Tatham 2008, Callanan and Tatham 2014, Högenauer 2015, Panara 2015, Tatham 2015), the large comparative studies have missed that there is a great variation within the group of administrative regions. Above all, there is not enough knowledge about how their representation offices, who are primarily active in lobbying, work with these activities in practice. There are theoretical expectations from previous research that certain types of conditions, such as mission, principals and resources, affect how the offices' work with lobbying, although, this has not been investigated more systematically within the group of administrative regions but only between constitutional and administrative regions in general. Therefore, more research is needed on the variations between regional representation offices in terms of their mission and principals, resources and lobbying tactics. Mission and principals concern the relationship between the principal and the office, while resources concern the office's available financial means and personnel, and lobbying tactics concern the use of strategies, channels and network engagements in their activities.

Lidström (2020) argues that the local and regional governments in Sweden have a strong position and can, independently and without restrictions from the central government, pursue their interests directly towards the EU institutions. The regional level of government in Sweden has been reorganised and empowered to become a stronger actor in the EU arena. At the beginning of 2019, the Swedish government decided that all county councils would be renamed as regions, having the responsibility for regional development policy, including EU issues (Swedish Association for Local Authorities and Regions 2021). However, even though Swedish regions hold the same regional development responsibility, their offices in Brussels represent diverse constellations of principals and have different geographical characteristics, interests, missions and resources, which makes their lobbying activities scientifically interesting to investigate further.

1.1 Aim and research questions

Since previous research has mainly included larger comparative studies of representation offices of both constitutional and administrative regions' and their lobbying activities, the aim of this thesis is to contribute with further research on administrative regions and their representation offices' lobbying activities. The aim is to address the identified research gaps regarding a lack of research on differences and similarities among administrative regions' offices related to theoretical aspects of mission and principals, resources and lobbying tactics. Moreover, the aim is to also address how these differences and similarities correspond to theoretical expectations from previous research. Since most of the previous research consists of studies that compare representation offices from different European countries and region types, this study is more narrowed and solely focuses on Swedish regional representation offices. This thesis aims to answer two research questions.

- *What are the main differences and similarities among Swedish administrative regions' offices related to mission and principals, resources and lobbying tactics?*
- *How do the differences and similarities correspond to theoretical perceptions from previous research on administrative regions' offices and their lobbying activities?*

1.2 Limitations and delimitations

This study is limited to the aspect of lobbying activities among administrative regions' offices in Brussels and theoretical aspects related to mission and principals, resources and lobbying tactics. Although lobbying activities are not a new phenomenon's among European regions' mobilisation in the EU arena, this thesis only investigates the representation offices of Swedish regions are included in this study. Following this direction, this thesis is delimited to a Swedish context and thus will not be able to capture how representation offices of other administrative regions pursue lobbying activities towards the EU. This further limits the possibilities to draw generalisations from the study's results, but instead, it offers an in-depth analysis. However, the development and increase of lobbying activities to influence policy among regional representation offices indicate the possibility of these activities becoming more common features of administrative regions’ agendas, in which this thesis can contribute with new knowledge and insights on this topic.

1.3 Thesis outline

The thesis is structured as followed. After the introduction, chapter two presents previous research and theoretical aspects connected to regional representation offices’ lobbying activities, and how central concepts from these aspects form the theoretical framework. In chapter three, the methodological choices are discussed including research design, case selection, and operationalisation. In chapter four, the results from the empirical material are presented in line with the theoretical aspects presented in chapter two. Chapter five presents the analysis of the results by categorising the offices in the analytical scheme to identify the main differences and similarities. Moreover, these findings are discussed further regarding how they correspond to theoretical expectations from previous research. Lastly, chapter six include a concluding discussion reflecting on the thesis aim, research questions, and suggestions for future research.

2. Previous research and theory

This chapter presents previous research on regional representation offices. Firstly, the chapter outlines the definition of representation offices and their main activities. Secondly, the chapter presents and discusses three theoretical aspects which are highlighted by other researchers as significant for the regional representation offices' lobbying activities. These three aspects concern the offices' mission and principals, resources, and lobbying tactics, where each theoretical aspect includes concepts and variations forming the basis of the study's theoretical framework.

2.1 Definition of regional representation offices

European regions and local authorities started to establish liaison offices in Brussels during the 1980s. The representation offices are distinct compared to other organised interests since they represent the public sector, democratically elected executives and territorial jurisdictions (Donas and Beyers 2013:527, Dialer 2019:185-189). According to Högenauer (2015:148), the offices tend to define themselves as institutions of representative democracy representing legitimate general interests rather than "lobbyists". On the other hand, Greenwood (2011:438) argues that these offices are lobbyists protecting distinct interests as public authorities, especially in issues of implementation or when financial benefits could be gained. Lobbying is defined by Mayrhofer (2014:153) as the act of "representing, promoting and defending a particular interest by influence the political decision-making process".

The multi-level governance concept illustrates the interplay between supranational, national and sub-national levels in decision-making processes, where the EU is a system of continuous negotiation and discussion between different levels of governments (Hooghe, Marks et al. 2010). According to Klüver (2013), lobbying enhances the EU legitimacy by creating a direct communication channel between the EU and the national, regional and local levels. The multiple levels of governments and the EU institutions' high fragmentation provide many access points for interest groups, including regional representation offices, to the EU decision-making process. Scharpf (1999) argues that the increased mobilisation of regions at the supranational level can benefit the shaping of EU policies since different interests are taken into consideration. In general, EU policies address issues that have implications for all regions, for example, directives, regulations, and legislation (Fleurke and Willemse 2007). However, the access to influence EU policies is dependent on the structure and power of the regions in their national context and their amount of available resources to take initiatives, participate in the pre-decision making, implement EU law and engagement in lobbying activities (Wiehler and Stumm 1995). Even though the EU policy-making environment can provide several shortcuts for access and influence, it can also be problematic for regional representations due to the asymmetry of regional powers across member states. The asymmetry creates a diverse capacity for regional representations to take action in the EU arena (Panara 2016:625). If the asymmetry continuous to grown, Tatham and Thau (2014) expresses that it could end up in a scenario where the more economically developed, populated and authoritative regions' offices have the strongest presence in Brussels by pushing away the minor and less-resourced offices from the EU arena.

The national context is highlighted in previous research as essential for the regional representation offices' access to the EU policy-making. Several researchers have divided the offices into different categorises based on their region's type, for example, constitutional regions, administrative regions, and regions from new member states (Huysseune and Jans 2008, Moore 2008, Rowe 2011). However, since previous studies have mainly examined offices of constitutional regions and new member states, the administrative regions' offices are the focus of this thesis. Moreover, Rowe (2011:9-10) argues the activity of administrative regions' offices is dependent on the need of the home region, which makes them more complex with inconsistent patterns in their lobbying activities

2.2 Regional representation offices' main activities and tasks

Tatham (2017) argues that regions have increased their presence in the EU arena where the opening of a representative office in Brussels is one of the most remarkable forms of mobilisation. The representation offices, regardless of their regions type, main ambition is similar - to gain legitimacy by defending regional interests. However, these offices don't necessarily carry out the same tasks, but at least five activities can be of interest for these offices; influence EU policy, search for funding, information gathering, networking and liaison between the region and the EU (Tatham 2017:1090). These activities are also identified and highlighted by other researchers as the main functions among regional representation offices (Marks, Haesly et al. 2002, Greenwood 2007, Huysseune and Jans 2008, Rowe 2011, Mayrhofer 2014, Rodriguez-Pose and Courty 2018, Tatham 2018).

Influence EU policy

The majority of the regional offices, according to Huysseune and Jans (2008), seek to influence the EU and thus engage in substantial lobbying efforts to that effect. Moreover, when offices are forced to rank different activities, influencing EU policy and decision-making process often comes out as priority number one (Tatham 2018). Huysseune and Jans (2008:7) explain that when these offices seek to influence EU policies, they do so by producing position papers, establish issue coalitions and networks to increase their credibility and impact on EU policy-makers, and participate in varies consultations formats (experts groups, surveys, panels, hearings and conferences). Activities to influence EU policy and monitoring legislation tend to go hand-in-hand to the exclusion of other activities, such as searching for funding and networking. Moreover, Tatham (2017) argues that these two activities have a polarising effect; either offices pursue these activities or they don't. Legislative monitoring includes gathering information on upcoming legislation for action preparations and hindering possible implementation challenges (Mayrhofer 2014, Tatham 2017).

Searching for funding

Searching for funding is the second most mentioned activity among the regional representation offices (Tatham 2018). They can offer regular communication on relevant funding streams to their regional actors with briefings on funding programmes and appropriate partners for joint project applications (Rowe 2011). Fund-searching can aim at co-financing public policies and projects or helping private firms in the home area (Tatham 2017). Marks, Haesly et al. (2002) argue that funding activities are not always associated with influencing EU policy, and since representation offices have a limited amount of budget and personnel resources, few of them can dedicate time to both activities.

Information gathering

Marks, Haesly et al. (2002) argue that information gathering is the offices' main function since they gather information on EU legislation, exchange information in networks, mediate information to their regional actors, and provide EU officials with information. The offices go through current and planned EU measures to identify relevant issues for the home arena. Then, they process and package the information to the home arena for them to determine their position on these measures. The representation offices are crucial for the regional administrations to obtain them with unofficial information, monitor policy developments and debates more closely, and maintain close ties with EU officials (Huysseune and Jans 2008).

Networking

Networking and developing ties with like-minded representation offices are other core activities among the offices (Rowe 2011:105). Networking activities include serving information, coalition-building exercise, exchange of experience and best practices, or setting up joint ventures with other offices (Tatham 2017). Policy networks are examples of how offices can influence the EU through collaborations, and to create opportunities to shape the European Commission incentives for regional collaboration in particular policy areas. ERRIN is an example of a network that started as a partnership between a few regional representation offices related to research and development issues. Later on, the network expanded and included more regional representation offices and began to liaise with EC officials, which later on resulted in a funding programme for regions (Rowe 2011:106).

Liaison between the region and the EU

The offices can also have a more passive role as an intermediary between the region and the EU where the offices facilitate the exchange between the two arenas (Tatham 2017). The offices communicate information about the EU to the home arena in a broad variety of forms through, for example, websites and newsletters. The offices can also provide assistance on EU projects and programmes, partner search, and contact details to EU officials for their colleagues in the home arena (Huysseune and Jans 2008).

In sum, previous research highlights that to influence EU policy and search for funding are the two top-ranked activities among the representation offices, but to influence EU policy tend to be to the detriment of other activities such as searching for funding, networking and liaising (Tatham 2017:1103). These activities are presented as separate and distinct from each other, although, they are not mutually exclusive and can be complementary or distinct to each other. Due to the great diversity among administrative regions, both across and within countries, their representation offices' mission focus can be very different since their objectives and policy goals are less "clear-cut". There is no consistency in the overall behaviour, which create difficulties to identify patterns to what extent they pursue lobbying activities to influence policy (Rowe 2011:88-89).

2.3 Theoretical aspects

The following sections present the theoretical aspects which form the base of the thesis theoretical framework, which is applied to analyse and understand the regional representation offices and their lobbying activities.

2.3.1 Mission and principals

The first theoretical aspect focuses on mission and principals, which highlight the relationship between the principal and the office. The relationship is a key issue to assess and understand their lobbying activities related to how their mission is defined and interpreted. This relationship is explained by the principal-agent theory where the principal is the office's owner and resource provider, and the office is the agent who carries out the mission delegated by the principal (Greenwood 2011:446). The principal-agent theory argues that the agent has an advantage of possessing great knowledge and direct insights on performed actions, what could have been done differently to obtain better results, the circumstances of fulfilling the task, necessary labour input to fulfil the task etc. Moreover, the agent has also other advantages which the principal don't possess, for example, access to head positions in public institutions and opportunities to meeting influential decision-makers (Stempien 2012). In the case of regional representation offices, their officials have informational and expertise advantages with knowledge about EU policies, organisational procedures and programs. Moreover, they have opportunities and incentives to lobby politicians and processes to gain political influence. The relationship between the principal and the office can be understood and captured by three concepts; mission focus, principal model and level of autonomy.

Mission focus

Callanan and Tatham (2014:191) argue that the offices' objectives, defined as mission focus, can be distinguished as either more emphasis on regulatory mobilisation or financial mobilisation. Regulatory mobilisation is a proactive and dynamic process where regional offices seek to influence legislative outcomes and the production of binding rules when legislation has an administrative or financial impact on the regional administration. Financial mobilisation is a more reactive process to track and gather information on EU funding for specific regions, localities or areas, shape allocation rules and gain access to funding streams distributed according to geographical, socioeconomic or policy criteria (Tatham 2018:676). However, regulatory mobilisation and financial mobilisation are not mutually exclusive since, for example, lobbying on the EU rules governing cohesion policy constitute regulatory mobilisation, but the outcome might be assessing new funding opportunities, which is defined as financial mobilisation. Despite the overlapping, Callanan and Tatham (2014:192) argue that there is a theoretical value in separating them as different mobilisation types since some offices emphasise regulatory mobilisation while others emphasise financial mobilisation.

Callanan and Tatham’s research show that offices representing regions in federal or semi-federal countries are more dedicated to regulatory mobilisation to influence legislation outcomes, while offices of regions in non-federal countries put more emphasis on financial mobilisation to information gathering and search for funding. Moore (2008:526) agrees with this conclusion and argues that administrative regions’ offices tend to prioritise activities related to funding and financial framework programmes. The offices monitor funding programmes, transfer the information to actors in the home region and search for potential partners in other regions. Although, Callanan and Tatham (2014:206) admit that since their results are based on a small selection of regional representation offices, there is no guarantee that other studies with different office selections would end up in the same conclusions.

Principal model and level of autonomy

Other concepts highlighted in previous research related to the principal-office relationship are principal model and level of autonomy (Moore 2008, Greenwood 2011, Rowe 2011).

According to Rowe (2011:115), the daily work of the administrative regions' offices is driven by the demands of a broad subscriber base where the offices provide information and advice to more than one single agency in the home arena. Regardless of the governing arrangements in the home arena, Moore (2008:522) argues that there are three common features among offices representing administrative regions. Firstly, the office operates according to a business plan of the home region, in consultation with the office. Secondly, the office implements a strategy that is complementary to the home region's strategic policy objective. Thirdly, a reporting function demand that office account to the home region by offering an overview of annual achievements and deliverables. These features illustrate that the relationship between the principal and the office is based on consultation and dialogue between them. Although, the actual shape and scope of the features still vary widely since they are quite general. Therefore, the relationship can be understood through their principal model and level of autonomy.

Moore (2008) argues that the principal model of administrative regions' offices can be distinguished as either one small team within a regional administration or having several regional partners, including local government actors, education institutions, voluntary organisations, and business groups. However, Moore claims that the one small team within a regional administration model is more common among regions of new member states while several regional partners model is common among English and Scandinavian regions.

The degree of devolved authority, defined as the level of autonomy, is discussed by Greenwood (2011) who argues that representation offices of regions from medium devolution countries, such as Sweden, Finland, Netherlands and the UK, have a different level of autonomy compared to high devolution countries, such as Germany and Spain. Greenwood illustrates a key distinction between offices with a delegated mission to carry out vs offices with a less defined mission to carry out. Moreover, Greenwood argues that since representation offices of regions from medium devolution countries often have a wider range of principals, it enables them to develop a broad range of activities to exploit and pursue their interests. This distinction assumes that offices representing regions from high devolution countries have a lower level of autonomy, while offices representing regions from medium devolution countries have a higher level of autonomy. Based on this distinction, the offices' level of autonomy can be distinguished as either lower with a distinct delegated mission with orders or higher with a less distinct delegated mission.

Table 1. Summary of central concepts with variations from the theoretical aspect of mission and principals.

Mission focus	Regulatory mobilisation	Financial mobilisation
Principal model	One small team within a regional administration	Several regional partners
Level of autonomy	Lower (distinct delegated mission with orders from the principal)	Higher (less distinct delegated mission from the principal)

Sources: Callanan and Tatham (2014), Moore (2008) and Greenwood (2011)

2.3.2 Resources

The second theoretical aspect focuses on available resources as crucial assets for representation offices in their capacity to be influential in Brussels and information providers towards the EU institutions (Knodt, Greenwood et al. 2011, Rowe 2011, Dür and Mateo 2012, Klüver 2012, Beyers and Braun 2014). This aspect is explained by the organisational theory that points out an identifiable causal link between human resource management and organisational performance (Hiltrop 1996, Rynes, Giluk et al. 2007). The organisational theory argues that financial and human resources as necessary conditions for interest groups to achieve their goals and supply information to EU officials. Moreover, due to the complexity of EU decision-making processes, resources are necessary for monitoring, providing information on new policy initiatives, responding to informational demands, participating in consultations, attending to hearings and working groups, and establishing informal contacts with officials (Klüver 2012).

Resources can be divided into material (budget and number of staff) and non-material, (experience and know-how) (Tatham 2017:1092). Tatham (2017) argues that the greater material and non-material resources the representation office possess, the more capacity it has to engage in costly activities, such as influence EU policy and monitoring upcoming legislative developments. Regional representation offices with less material and non-material resources are more likely to prioritise other activities, such as searching for funding, networking and liaising. Similar conclusions are established by Chalmers (2013:824) by measuring lobbying potential based on the number of staff and the office's organisational age. Offices with more staff are better at monitoring EU activities, conduct research, produce relevant policy information and pursue multiple lobbying strategies. The office's organisational age reflect the office's experience in lobbying and credibility among EU decision-makers (Mahoney 2004:452). Offices that have been present in Brussels during a longer period have had more time to learn the EU system, develop effective practices and establish contacts with other lobbyists.

However, Rowe (2011:127-128) argues that human resources are more insightful measures than financial spending since the representation offices' budgets are not always transparent or comparable. Some budgets include staffing costs of locally engaged staff and the high-level permanent managerial positions, while others include salaries and associated costs of seconded staff, financed by individual departments of the home administration. Therefore, studying differences and similarities among the representation offices' lobbying activities based on their budgets can be problematic since their budgets don't specify the numbers of financial means distributed to different kinds of lobbying activities. Therefore, it is more reasonable to focus on the offices' human resources, i.e. the emplyees.

One way to strengthen the lobbying activities to influence policy is, according to Lidström (2020), to improve skills and knowledge about the EU by hiring specialized employees at the representation offices. Offices representing regions from high devolution countries are more likely to recruit from their pool of employees, while offices representing regions from medium devolution countries are more likely to recruit employees with strong EU connections who are multi-lingual, multi-national and have EU knowledge, rather than being tied to the sending authority (Greenwood 2011:444-445). However, Kettunen and Kull (2009:126) argue that one of the Finnish offices, representing regions from a medium devolution country, adopt a different employment approach. In the Kuntaliitto office, the employees come from and return to the region to ensure that useful knowledge and experience is transferred from Brussels to the home arena. Although, for the other Finnish offices, it is more important to find employees with experience in EU programmes and international issues. This observation indicates that there are variations in human resources preferences among regional representation offices from medium devolution countries.

Klüver (2012:495) highlights two concepts of organisational theory related to human resources which can be used to analyse the representation offices' lobbying activities; functional differentiation and professionalisation.

Functional differentiation

Functional differentiation includes the specialisation of employees and the distribution of tasks among the employees. Employees who focus on one specific policy field become specialists in that area, can develop important expert knowledge, have frequent interaction with EC officials and other institutions in their policy area, and be a part of policy communities to ensure the flow of information and contacts with decision-makers. Interest groups that are supported by other colleagues with expertise are expected to be more effective in their influence and participation activities (Klüver 2012). The functional differentiation concept is captured by specialisation within a policy field, specific knowledge, and communication with officials in the EU institutions and the home region. If these characteristics are fulfilled, then the office possesses a higher functional differentiation, but if these characteristics are not possessed, then the office has a lower functional differentiation.

Professionalisation

Professionalisation includes the employees' qualifications related to lobbying, which require a high level of educational training and professional experience. Lobbying activities need constant monitoring of policy developments and building networks with the EU institutions and other interest groups. Klüver (2012) argues that employees need to have legal and policy expertise and a good understanding of the institutional environment at the EU. According to Rowe (2011:139-140), recruiting from the Brussels pool is a common pattern among the administrative regions' representation offices. The employees often have a wide range of EU skills and experiences, while only a minority have professional experience from the region or regional government at all. Experience of professional roles in the home region is a preferred attribute, although, knowledge of the Brussels scene and links to the EU institutions and other organisations are highly valued; even more than local linkages. In sum, the employees' educational background varies with no single educational or professional background being more dominant. Moreover, the main challenge among the employees of these offices is to learn about the region they represent and the subscribing partners' demands (Rowe 2011).

The professionalisation at the administrative regions' offices can be captured by three concepts; the employees' educational background, professional experience and valued qualifications in lobbying. The educational background can be categorised as either similar or diverse among the employees, their professional experience can be categorised as either dominated by a strong connection to the EU and Brussels or lower connection with more experience from the regional government. Lastly, the valued qualifications in lobbying can be categorised as either more emphasise on educational background or professional experience.

Table 2. Summary of central concepts and variations from the theoretical aspect of resources.

Functional differentiation	Higher	Lower
Professionalisation **Educational background**	Similar among employees	Diverse among employees
Professionalisation **Professional experience**	Strong connection to the EU and Brussels	Lower connection with more experience from the regional government
Professionalisation **Valued qualifications**	Educational background	Professional experience

Sources: Klüver (2012) and Rowe (2011)

2.3.3 Lobbying tactics

The third theoretical aspect focuses on lobbying tactics to understand how the representation offices work with efforts in practice using different strategies, channels, and networks.

Strategies

According to Dür and Mateo (2013), interest groups uses different strategies in their efforts to influence policy where the choice of strategy is dependent on what kind of actors the interest group consist of, its resources and the issue context. The researchers distinguish between two main strategies; inside lobbying and outside lobbying. Strategies of inside lobbying focus on gaining access by direct contact with decision-makers and officials without public exposure, for example, meetings, telephone calls, e-mails, or participation in expert committees. Strategies of outside lobbying on the other hand focus on raising awareness among the public through, for example, media, press releases, conferences, contact with journalists, social media advertising and public campaigning. The purpose of outside lobbying strategies is to address the decision-makers and officials indirectly, not necessarily by approaching them directly.

De Bruycker and Beyers (2019) argue that strategies of outside lobbying are not more or less successful than strategies of inside lobbying, however, the strategy's effectiveness is dependent on the chosen tactics and what policy issue the interest group wants to influence. Chalmers (2013:52-54) claims that strategies of inside and outside lobbying are equally effective, therefore, a combination of them is preferable. Smaller regional offices often use a combination of different strategies and often focus on a set of policy fields (Kettunen and Kull 2009:118). Chalmers argues that although most interest groups use inside lobbying strategies more frequently since they require fewer resources, both types of strategies can be used by interest groups to increase their opportunities to influence. Moreover, within the strategies, the regional representation offices can choose to work with up-stream and down-stream lobbying. Up-stream lobbying aims at exerting influence at an early stage of the policy process, for example on a new EU directive or a revised policy proposal. Upstream lobbying can include arranging seminars where the office provide information to EU officials and increase the knowledge about EU issues in the home arena. Downstream lobbying aim at influencing the implementation of EU decisions at regional level (Lidström 2020:144).

Channels

There is a split among researchers on the importance of intra-state channels versus extra-state channels for regions and their representation offices' in lobbying efforts. Although both routes have been used frequently and have increased over time (Tatham 2018:675), the development of extra-state channels is particularly striking according to Van Hecke (2016), while Beyers, Donas et al. (2015) argue that regional offices focus on both the national (intra-state channels) and supranational (extra-state channels) venues. Moreover, almost all representation offices develop extensive contacts with the PR in Brussels, regardless of the policy issue in question. Lobbying activities in supranational venues require more resources from the offices to provide information towards the EU institutions in exchange for access while building contacts with national venues do not require the same amount of resources (Beyers, Donas et al. 2015). The extra-state channels go directly to the EU level through the EC, EP, CoR, and different networks (Callanan and Tatham 2014:194).

Tatham (2015:390) claims that the EC is the most important EU institution for all types of regional representation offices due to its responsibility for processing new legislation and structural funds where offices want information about the different programs or to influence the application of grant rules (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001:111). Moore (2008:527) argues that administrative regions' offices tend to focus on officials within the EC. The representation offices are more likely to engage with the EC during the policy process's early stages, in the phases of agenda-setting and policy formulation, as these are most important for contacts with officials (Bouwen 2002, Eising 2007, Eising 2008). Although the access differs between regions where the democratically elected and richly institutional regional authorities have an advantage (Tatham 2008:504), the EC still recognise all interest groups as good sources of information and contribute with support and legitimacy in the EU's complex multi-level system (Mazey and Richardson 2001:72).

Huysseune and Jans (2008:7) argue that although the CoR is portrayed as the principal institution for regions with representatives from the regional and local level, regional representation offices are often sceptical towards the CoR by questioning its actual impact on policies. Regional representation offices consider the CoR as an interlocutor of limited importance in actions to influence policy outcomes, but the CoR can get the EC and the Council attention. Therefore it is still considered as a key policy ally for regional representation offices according to Tatham (2015:390). As a result of increased legislative powers of the EP during the past two decades, the institution has become an important access point, particularly the EP rapporteur since most lobbying activities are channelled through the Committees (Beyers, Donas et al. 2015). However, Tatham (2008:504) argues that the EP is often overlooked by the regional representation offices even though the institution can be used as an effective channel to promote regional interests. In addition, Moore (2008) argues that the relations with MEPs are variable among administrative regions' offices.

Network engagement

The intermediation of regional interests gets more weight if they are represented by several representation offices in which they can choose to cooperate with other offices based on different logics. Network theory highlights two common principles in interest groups' engagement in networks; similarity principle and dissimilarity/complementarity principle. The similarity principle is based on the presumption that ties are more likely to emerge among actors who share an attribute or have similarities in socio-demographic and spatial characteristics, while the dissimilarity principle is based on the presumption that ties can be developed among actors based on opposites to complement one another and potential to create synergy (Salk, Nielsen et al. 2001). These two principles can be considered as variations for the concept of network engagement.

Since the political dimension is more low key among administrative regions' offices, Moore (2008:527) argues their engagement in networks is different. They often engage in policy networks to share experiences, develop joint opinions on public consultations or interact directly with policy officials. Rowe (2011:97) explains that the regional representation offices often form a common position in collaboration with other offices sharing policy interests. Some networks are quite formal with meetings regularly, rotating presidencies and regular contacts with the EC, while other networks are more ad hoc and during a shorter period during, for example, a certain policy proposal. Trobbiani (2016:24) argues that to achieve results, the representation offices have to cooperate by sharing information and organising events for project calls and lobbying efforts. Regional representation offices can create networks among themselves or they can create wide networks by cooperating with offices from a broad range of countries (Kettunen and Kull 2009).

Table 3. Summary of central concepts and variations from the theoretical aspect of lobbying tactics.

Strategies, including timing in the policy process	Inside lobbying (direct contact with EU officials)	Outside lobbying (raising awareness in public)
Channels	Extra-state channels (EU institutions and networks)	Inter-state channels (state government, PR)
Network engagement	Similarity principle	Dissimilarity principle

Sources: Dür and Mateo (2013), Salk, Nielsen et al. (2001), Tatham (2018)

3. Method and material

Since the aim of this thesis is to identify similarities and differences among administrative regions' offices and their lobbying activities and to examine how these correspond to theoretical perceptions, this study approached the investigation using a qualitative methodology. This chapter presents the overall research design, the selection of offices and interviewees, the interview guide and the operationalisation of the theoretical framework creating an analytical scheme.

3.1 Research design

The overall design of this thesis is based on a deductive approach. The deductive approach follows the path of logic where the reasoning starts from a theoretical aspect which forms the basis of the analytical framework (Elo and Kyngäs 2008). For this thesis, the analysis of the empirical material starts from theoretical aspects with central concepts and variations which are used to identify differences and similarities among the regional representation offices. The theoretical aspects are chosen based on their relevance for representation offices' ability to pursue lobbying activities, which include concepts to capture these aspects within the empirical material. Interviews are considered an appropriate and relevant method as they can provide qualitative empirical material with updated and detailed information on these aspects. Even if some information can be found on their respective websites and external documents, these sources are not sufficient since the content and amount of published information is very diverse among the offices. Some of them have a separate homepage with more detailed information, while others are integrated into the regional administration's homepage with more limited and compressed information. Therefore, interviews are the most suitable method to fulfil the thesis aim and to answer the research questions.

By conducting interviews, the researcher explores how individuals, in this case, the offices' officials, are reasoning about a current phenomenon, or how they view consequences related to a certain field. There are different types of interviews, for example, structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. For this thesis, semi-structured interviews are the chosen option since it enables and focuses on the interviewees' knowledge and experiences related to their activities (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015). Semi-structured interviews combine both the structured and unstructured interview styles including predetermined questions and unprepared questions (Halperin and Heath 2020). Moreover, two main principles can be distinguished in the interview methodology; respondent interviews and informant interviews. The informant interviews view the interviewees are a sort of "truth-teller" who have detailed information of interest for the researcher to get a deeper understanding of a certain issue or situation. When conducting informant interviews, it is not as important to ask the same questions to all interviewees as they have different perceptions about the issue at hand (Esaiasson 2017). Respondent interviews, on the other hand, are conducted to capture the opinions and emotions of the participants. For this thesis, the main emphasis in the interviews is to gather detailed information, not necessarily to make generalisations but rather to get knowledge and insights about regional offices' lobbying activities (Halperin and Heath 2020). However, since these insights also reflect the interviewees' perceptions and opinions, there are also elements of the respondent principle which can't be ignored. Therefore, the semi-structured interviews for this thesis consist of a combination of these two principles to get factual information and to capture opinions.

3.2 Selection of offices

Given the thesis's focus on administrative regions' offices and their lobbying activities, where Sweden is considered a scientifically interesting country due to a high diversity among its regions, the author chooses to conduct interviews with officials working at the Swedish regional representation offices. There are currently eight Swedish regional representation offices in Brussels[3]. Although, other public administrations have also established representation offices in Brussels for similar reasons as the regional offices, for example, city representation offices. Compared to regional representation offices, the city representation offices have generally smaller budgets and fewer employees. Therefore, they have more limited resources to engage in lobbying activities. Moreover, they represent and cover a smaller geographical area, and in the case of Sweden, there are only two city representation offices in Brussels; Gothenburg European Office and Malmö EU Office. The regional

[3] Central Sweden European Office, North Sweden European Office, Region Värmland European Office, Region Västra Götaland's Brussels Office, Region Östergötland EU Office, Skåne European Office, South Sweden's Brussels Office and Stockholm Region EU Office

representation offices on the other represent and cover the whole geographical area of Sweden. Therefore, the city offices are excluded from the selection. Nevertheless, broadening the thesis's selection by including regional representation offices from other European countries with administrative regions would have been interesting and probably developed more diverse and interesting comparative results. However, due to the time frame of this thesis, the selection only includes administrative regions' offices from one country.

The quality of interviews depends largely on choosing the right informants. Therefore, the selection of interviewees from the offices is based on their expertise, experience and knowledge of the office's work with lobbying activities. The offices' officials can be considered as a type of "elite individuals" who are influential, prominent, and well informed about their organisation and the role of regions in EU policy-making. Through elite interviewing, the researcher gets access to valuable information from the interviewees based on their positions in the organisation and knowledge about the organisation's policies and plans (Marshall and Rossman 2006:304). The interview request is sent by email to the representation offices' directors. The request includes a brief presentation of the author's interest in regional offices and their lobbying activities, the overall aim of the thesis, and how their participation can contribute to further research on regional lobbying (see Appendix 3). All directors agree to participate in the interview and gave their consent to record the interviews. The author carefully considers whether the interviewees should be anonymized. However, since the interviewees accept their participation and publication of the study, and no confidential information is mentioned, the interviewees are not anonymised. Seven offices are represented by the office director, while one office is represented by a communication strategist since the office director has only been working at the office for six months and therefore recommended another official for the interview. The interviews were conducted from the 10th of May to the 25th of May through Zoom and lasted between 60-90 minutes.

Table 4. Overview of interview participants

Representation office	Name of participant	Date of interview	Title	Year of office establishment	Representing geographical area
Central Sweden European Office	Johanna Bond	2021/05/12	Director	1998	Region Dalarna, Gävleborg and Örebro county
North Sweden European Office	Mikael Janson	2021/05/18	Director	1997 (including Mid Sweden since 2020)	Region Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland Härjedalen and Västernorrland
Region Värmland European Office	Kajsa Sundström Van Zeveren	2021/05/25	Director	2014	Region Värmland
Region Västra Götaland's Brussels Office	Robert Casinge	2021/05/18	Director	2010	Region Västra Götaland
Region Östergötland EU Office	Isabelle Johansson	2021/05/20	Acting Director	2015	Region Östergötland
Skåne European Office	Michael Johnsson	2021/05/19	Director	2010	Region Skåne
South Sweden's Brussels Office	Sven Kastö	2021/05/11	Director	2010 (including Region Halland since 2017)	Region Halland, Kronoberg, Jönköping, Kalmar and Blekinge
Stockholm Region EU Office	Sofie Sjöblom Lundell	2021/05/21	Communication strategist	1994	Region Stockholm, Gotland, Sörmland, Uppsala and Västmanland.

3.3 Interview guide

An interview guide is created to outline central topics to be discussed during the interviews (see Appendix 1 and 2), and the topics are chosen in line with the theoretical framework by focusing on mission and principals, resources, and lobbying tactics. Each topic is presented to the interviewee with a more open-ended question to start the conversation, and the interviewer is prepared follow-up questions related to the theoretical framework's concepts. The follow-up questions are prepared for the interviewer to request potential clarification or additional reflections on the responses from the interviewee. To avoid leading questions, the interviewees are informed to elaborate their answers freely based on their knowledge and experiences. To collect empirical material from semi-structured interviews comes with problems of subjectivity and bias, which is kept in mind during the analysis of the material (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015).

By using an interview guide with questions formulated in connection to the thesis's aim and research questions, it helps to maintain a high level of validity. The analysis of the interviews is carried out through a deductive approach, which is very flexible since this approach can be applied across different theoretical frameworks, with both smaller and larger sets of interviews. The deductive analysis requires a predetermined structure in which the author applies the theoretical framework. The analysis is guided by central concepts and variations, which have been established and used in other studies within the same research field, which strengthens the reliability of the study. Although, to achieve the same analytical interpretations and results when conducting qualitative research with semi-structured interviews can be very difficult and subjective (Lewis-Beck, Bryman et al. 2004), however, this is not the main goal of this thesis. The interviews are recorded to facilitate the transcribing process, and the empirical material is analysed several times to get truthful and adequate results which increase the thesis's reliability by having the opportunity to return to the empirical material.

The transcribing process is conducted in two steps. In the first step, the recording is transcribed to text through Microsoft Azure Cognitive Speech Services, a software that uses AI technology to automatically transfer audio into text. When the transcription is completed by the software, the text is transferred into a Word document. In the second step, the author listens to the recording while reading the transcription in the Word document to correct potential mistranslations and formulations. As technical complications can occur when using software to transcribe recordings, it is important to also perform a manual check of the empirical material. After correcting the text, it is translated into English.

3.4 Operationalisation of the theoretical framework

In the deductive analysis of the empirical material, an analytical scheme is composed to be used as an analytical tool for identifying the main differences and similarities among the offices related to the theoretical aspects. The interview guide and the analytical scheme are divided and structured in line with each other to facilitate the deductive analysis of the empirical material. The first aspect, mission and principals, is captured with three concepts; mission focus, principal model and level of autonomy. The second aspect, resources, is captured with four concepts; functional differentiation, educational background, professional experience and valued qualifications in lobbying. The third aspect, lobbying tactics, is captured with three concepts; strategies including timing in the policy process, channels, network engagement.

The concept mission focus examines whether the office places more emphasis on regulatory mobilization or financial mobilization (Callanan and Tatham 2014). The office's mission focus is decided based on the interviewee's description of the mission, what is included in the mission and how much of the mission focuses on influencing policy vs other tasks. The second concept, the principal model, examines the office's principal constellation, in which the office can be described as one small with a regional administration or as having several regional partners (Moore 2008). The third concept, level of autonomy, exaines the office's role and participation in the mission formation. If the office has a delegated mission with distinct orders, or work with the same issues identified by the principal with limited ability to shape the agenda, the level of autonomy is categorized as low. If the office has no distinct orders and it is primarily the office that identifies relevant issues, the level of autonomy is categorized as higher (Greenwood 2011).

The functional differentiation concept examines the specialization and division of labour between the office's employees (Klüver 2012). If there is a specialisation of the employees in a policy portfolio, with support from the home arena in the office's work and communication with officials at the EU institutions related to their policy portfolio, then their functional differentiation is categorized as higher. If these criteria are not fulfilled, then it is categorized as lower. The professionalisation concept is examined based on the employees’ educational background, professional experience and valued qualifications in lobbying. If the employees have an educational background within the same orientation, it is categorised as similar, but if they have mixed orientations, it is categorised as diverse. If the employees have mostly work with EU issues in Sweden or Brussels, it is categorised as dominated by a strong EU connection. If the employees have more experience for a regional government or other organisations, then it is categorised as a lower connection to the EU.

The choice of strategies examines the office’s approach towards EU officials. If direct contact through meetings, events or other non-public communication is mostly highlighted, it is categorised as an inside lobbying strategy. If more emphasis is put on changing public opinion to influence EU officials indirectly through media, it is categorised as outside lobbying (Dür and Mateo 2013). The choice of channels is categorised whether extra-state channels (EU institutions and networks) or intra-state channels (state government and the PR) are considered the most important contacts in lobbying (Beyers, Donas et al. 2015). Lastly, the concept of network engagement is categorised based on whether the office mostly engages with other offices sharing an attribute or socio-demographic/spatial characteristics or having opposites to complement each other and to create potential synergies (Salk, Nielsen et al. 2001).

In uncertain scenarios of the categorisation, the author is carefully taken these into account by not “forcing” them into one category, but rather acknowledging that there may be scenarios where an office can’t be categorised in either of the variations or perhaps fit in both. When the empirical material is analysed, the offices will be categorised in the analytical scheme to identify similarities and differences among the offices, and then discuss how these findings correspond to theoretical perceptions from previous research on administrative regions’ offices' lobbying activities.

Table 5. Analytical Scheme

Mission and principals	**First variation**	**Second variation**
Mission focus	Regulatory mobilisation	Financial mobilisation
Principal model	One small team within a regional administration	Several regional partners
Level of autonomy	Lower (distinct orders from the principal)	Higher (less controlled by the principal)
Resources	**First variation**	**Second variation**
Functional differentiation	Higher	Lower
Professionalisation **Educational background**	Similar among employees	Diverse among employees
Professionalisation **Professional experience**	Strong connection to the EU and Brussels	Lower connection to the EU and Brussels
Professionalisation **Valued qualifications**	Educational background	Professional experience
Lobbying tactics	**First variation**	**Second variation**
Strategies, including timing in the policy process	Inside lobbying (direct contact with EU officials)	Outside lobbying (raising awareness in public)
Channels	Extra-state channels (EU institutions and networks)	Inter-state channels (state government, PR)
Network engagement	Similarity principle	Dissimilarity principle

Sources: Rowe (2011), Klüver (2012), Salk, Nielsen et al. (2001), Callanan and Tatham (2014), Dür and Mateo (2013), Tatham (2018), Moore (2008), Greenwood (2011)

4. Results

This chapter presents the results from the empirical material, in relation to the three theoretical aspects included in the interview guide and the analytical scheme. Each aspect presents one office at a time, with quotes from the interviewee to illustrate how the office is categorised into the concepts' variations. Some of the quotes are abbreviated to exclude redundant sentences that are not relevant for the categorisation, these are marked with […].

4.1 Mission and principals

Central Sweden European Office

The interviewee describes the office's mission as consisting of two main parts; political lobbying and project development, in which the office focuses on four policy areas; cohesion policy, research and innovation, energy and sustainable society and, transport and infrastructure. Political lobbying concern legislation affecting their regions which the office provide information on or perform lobbying efforts to influence legislation on their regions' request. Project development concerns a specific project in need of input from other European regions or external funding from the EU. The interviewee argues that political lobbying and project development often go hand-in-hand since monitoring possible funding opportunities also include monitoring opportunities to influence the call of proposals.

> As we perceive our mission, when it comes to project development, it includes that we monitor a lot to be able to provide early information about what programs are available, its priorities, the work programme and upcoming calls of proposals. We can go in and work proactively hands-on also in project development by guiding a project idea to a finished application, but there are quite a few such cases. Project development and political lobbying flow together because I think that monitoring funding opportunities, also include monitoring opportunities to influence which calls are published, then we get directly into policy but within project development.

Moreover, the interviewee explains that the office collaborates with other offices with a common aim to extend the railway infrastructure, and highlight that the region should be considered as the main highway in the European transport network to receive EU funding. The statement indicates more emphasis on financial mobilisation in lobbying activities by find opportunities to influence financial programs through, for example, written positions to the EC, to impact how funding is distributed geographically.

The office is organised as a non-profit association founded in 2010 with three members: Region Dalarna, Region Gävleborg and Region Örebro län. The regional development administrations of three regions determine the office's mission where the office is incorporated within the regional administrations. Since the office is incorporated in the regional administration, its principal model can be considered as one small team within a regional administration, even though the office has more than one regional administration as its principal. Each regional administration places an annual order to the office with prioritised areas on which the office should focus. The orders are quite comprehensive, but still thematically defined within the respective area. The interviewee argues that the principals are in control of the orders where the office's involvement in the mission formation is described as being more of a mediating character.

> We should not influence the orders […] We are not involved in the writing of the orders, they do it themselves […] when we have received the orders from them, we reconcile them into our operational plan. At this stage, the office overview which areas have been identified as relevant to see what is happening at the EU level in those areas, and then suggest in what way we can work with them. The office formulates a draft of the operation plan which is discussed with the principals, if we have perceived their orders correctly and whether our and their perspectives are reconciled.

Since the office is controlled by the principals through a delegated mission with distinct orders in which the office is not involved and the principals also determine the mission focus including main direction and issues. This indicates that the level of autonomy can be categorised as lower.

North Sweden European Office

The office's overall mission is to contribute with support towards their regions for them to benefit from the EU cooperation. The mission focuses to a large extent on policy influence. The interviewee expresses that 80-90 % of their efforts is to ensure that legislation, regulations, support systems and financial models are suited for the regions' needs. Cohesion policy, transport policy, environmental policy and innovation policy are highlighted as important policy areas. Moreover, the office's efforts to influence policy include an additional dimension focusing on the allocation of funding for sparsely populated areas. The allocation represents approx. 50 % of the regional aid for its regions. The allocation is very crucial for the realisation of regional initiatives and projects. The interviewee mostly highlights efforts to shape allocation rules and gaining access to specific funding streams distributed according to geographical criteria, which indicate that the office put more emphasis on financial mobilisation.

> The allocation to sparsely populated areas has been an extremely important factor for what is happening today since a lot of it would not have been possible without the funding. So, of course, a lot of effort is put into this and we cooperate with northern Finland and Norway through Interreg, but there are also state aid rules which need to be constantly monitored since our regions have specific exceptions and we want to make sure that the definitions are in-line and consequently point out the same areas i.e. our regions.

The office is governed and owned by a wide range of actors; four regions[4], two municipalities federation[5], three universities[6], three chambers of commerce[7] and one federation of business owners. The office's constellation of principals indicates a strong association with the several regional partners model. Every year, the principals meet in an ownership council where appointed representatives from each owner organisation participate. The interviewee explains that during the yearly meeting, the office presents a work directive to the owners' council, which include priority areas for the upcoming year and an operational plan with designated areas for action and objectives. Moreover, there is also cooperation called Europa forum Norra Sverige where officials from the regions and local authorities meet in working groups, in which the office can present written positions and get feedback from representatives.

[4] Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Jämtland Härjedalen and Västernorrland
[5] Norrbottens municipalities and Association of Local Authorities of Västernorrland
[6] Umeå University, Luleå University of Technology, Mid Sweden University
[7] Norrbotten Chamber of Commerce, Västerbotten Chamber of Commerce, and Mid Sweden Chamber of Commerce

> We are to a large extent those who produce positions and other things which they decide on a mandate […] It is about us trying to translate, reformulate and gather what we see that our principals have interests in working with based on their plans. We don't get any specific missions from them but rather that we intercept their interests and that these are highlighted when they read our directives and plans.

The interviewee's statement highlight that it is often the office that produces and create the work directive and positions. Moreover, the office doesn't get any specific missions or orders, which indicate that the level of autonomy can be categorised as higher where the office has more liberty for interpretation on important EU issues.

Region Värmland European Office

According to the interviewee, the office's mission includes three main parts; external monitoring and lobbying, member service, and project development support. Important policy areas are bioeconomy, smart specialisation, infrastructure and transport, environment and climate, research and innovation, and cohesion policy. Project development support includes providing information about EU funding programmes, for example, Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe, and helping the region's municipalities to find the project funding and collaboration partners. The interviewee argues that the office work with influencing policy, although not so much on legislative policy but gathering information on the upcoming policy. Moreover, the interviewee highlight that the office is very involved in efforts within the structural funds to influence the allocation towards its region. Since the interviewee argue that the office is not focusing mainly on legislative policy, and highlight efforts to influence the allocation of structural funds, it indicates that the offices put more emphasis on financial mobilisation.

> When we work with issues within the Structural Funds for this period, we have a lot of focus on monitoring and having direct contact with the EC officials, we have monitored how the ERUF programs will look like and try to influence so that the funds will go to Northern Midsweden.

Since 2019, Region Värmland is a municipal association set up by the county council and its sixteen municipalities, and the office is organised under the regional development department of Region Värmland. Since the office is integrated and organised within the regional development department of a regional administration, the office's principal constellation is categorised in one small team within a regional administration model. In 2017, an operational description was established in which the office's mission is formed and integrated with the regional development department's operational plan. The interviewee explains that the office's work focuses on the same issues as those identified by the regional development department.

> There is no certain mission that is established for each or every other year, it is rather the same priorities as the regional development department and of course, some issues are more connected to the EU-level than others […] I use to work for three regions before so to work for one region is more simple, clear and less complicated politically with our regional development committee, board and politicians who decide.

It is not the office identifying prioritised issues since the office work with the same issues as the regional development department. Moreover, the office has a fixed description of activities, which indicate that the level of autonomy can be categorised as lower since the mission is attached to decided priorities of the regional development department.

Region Västra Götaland's Brussels Office

The interviewee explains that the mission is currently under revision, although the current mission has a strong focus on influence, including external monitoring and collaboration with other offices. Four thematic areas are highlighted as particularly important; environment and climate, research and innovation, infrastructure and transport, and cohesion policy. The interviewee argues that external monitoring activities and home reporting are central tasks of the mission, even though it is decided that the office should focus on influence. Moreover, the word legislation is mentioned several times when the interviewee describes the office's lobbying activities to influence policy.

> If you are going to draw a line for policy influence, I mean, of course, it is policy influence when we join a meeting with the Commission and express that "we have a carbon budget which is 20 years ahead of your the zero vision" to show that we believe that there are regions which want be much ahead we intend to fulfil the Paris Agreement and that they can put higher demands. However, much of it is also about wanting an

allocation of funds which often goes through the ministries, but is it policy influence? I do not know.

Based on the interviewee's description of mission focus on legislation, it indicates that the office put more emphasis on regulatory mobilisation to influence legislation which has a financial impact on the regional government, for example, taxonomy. Although the interviewee acknowledges that influencing policy may include allocation of funds, it is not expressed as the main mission focus in their lobbying activities.

The office is organised under the unit of external relations within the regional development department of Region Västra Götaland. The office only represents Region Västra Götaland in the EU arena, and since the office is organised as a team within the regional administration, the principal constellation is categorised as the one small team within a regional administration model. The interviewee argues that the office has no ownership and right to decide how the principal should act or think in certain issues, although, it is often the office identifying relevant legislation, consultations and other events on the EU arena. Moreover, the office rarely gets any orders from its principal, which indicate a higher level of autonomy as the office is less controlled by the principals in lobbying activities.

> […] right now we are the ones identifying legislation in the pipeline and inform our colleagues back home […] We have had a so-called lobbying agenda that include important issues for the region that we are supposed to work with. Although it has not always been specific for the Brussels office and when they are specific for the office, it is not always the case that there is an opportunity to influence […] The lobbying agenda has been more or less played out, it is more about what we considered as relevant to monitor, report and inform about towards the home arena.

Region Östergötland EU Office

The office's mission consists of three components; support in terms of knowledge and information about funding opportunities, collaboration with regional actors in the home arena and support in monitoring activities and lobbying. The interviewee describes policy influence as a process where the office tries to deliver early information towards the home arena and monitor the EU institutions' work within selected areas. Moreover, the interviewee highlights both legislation and structural funds in the description of the office's mission.

[…] we analyse what is going on. It may be that we get informed about new legislation in the pipeline or that we to some extent try to influence policy documents and strategies, but also to some extent calls for proposals and funding opportunities.

[…] cohesion policy and the structural funds hold a third of the EU budget which goes back to the EU regions, so it has been very important for us to see under which conditions and how these financial means can be used in which areas, what synergies with other kinds of financial means can be found […] we have also looked at, together with our colleagues and politicians at home, what kind of legislation can be considered as a threat towards our current process.

The two statements show that the mission includes efforts to influence legislation outcomes having a financial impact on the regional government and influence the allocation of funds to the region. Since these examples highlight both regulatory and financial mobilisation as the mission focus, it is difficult to determine which of the variation categories is most accurate to categorise the office. Therefore, it is concluded that the office's mission focus emphasizes both mobilisation types.

The interviewee claim that the office has no formal principal as the office is integrated within the unit for international cooperation at Region Östergötland. Since the office consists of a team within the regional administration, its principal constellation is categorised as the one small team within a regional administration model. The regional administration has a politically international strategy in which selected areas for lobbying efforts are outlined by the regional board annually where the office is involved through consistent dialogues.

We have to be more specific, we can't have too many areas and it is also developing over time. An issue which we worked with for the last two years may not be current today so we must have a consistent dialogue […] We prepare the groundwork to make sure that they know what they are taken decisions on […] We have a very close dialogue with the elected representatives across the spectrum, the regional executive board, the three committees, and our regional directors. They are very well informed about what we do and they get updates […]. We come up with suggestions and proposals, but those who sit higher up in the hierarchy decide which direction we should have.

The interviewee highlight that the relationship between the office and its principal is imprinted by consistent dialogue in the mission formation. However, since the interviewee argue that the prioritised policy areas are decided by the regional board every year and even though the office can come with suggestions, it is the principal who decides the office's direction which indicates that the level of autonomy can be categorised as lower since the office has more limited ability to influence the mission formation.

Skåne European Office

The interviewee describes the office's mission as consisting of two main parts. The first part concern visibility of the region towards the EU institutions and other cooperation partners in Brussels, by showing regional strengths and expertise connected to relevant policy areas. The second part concern information gathering towards the home arena, politicians, officials and cooperation partners, on funding opportunities, cooperation with other regions, and opportunities to influence the EU institutions. Moreover, the office assists in project development by providing information on funding opportunities for projects. The interviewee argues that the office currently put more effort in monitoring funding opportunities, for example, EU funding programs, calls for proposals and finding project partners, which indicate that the mission focus has more emphasis on financial mobilisation. Moreover, monitoring policy development is highlighted as important for finding available funding.

> […] right now we are focusing on funding opportunities, I would say that a great part goes to monitoring policy development and especially in the communication towards actors in the home arena. However, I also think that it depends on where we are in the European landscape now that there has been a longer period of negotiations regarding the new multiannual financial framework which we have monitored closely. Now we are in an implementation phase, with available funding connected to the Green deal and digitalisation and then it becomes more natural to focus on that.

The office has one principal, Region Skåne, where the office is a part of the unit EU and international relations organised under the regional development department. The office has previously been organised as a separate corporation in Belgium but since 2020, the office is integrated within the regional administration. Therefore, the office's principal constellation can be categorised as one small team within a regional administration. The interviewee argues that the transition from an independent corporation to an integrated team within the regional administration might have an impact on the office's influence on its mission formation.

> It may have been a little bit different when we were an independent corporation and wrote our operational plan but now we are a part of Region Skåne, of course, we are part of the formation in some way and being involved in dialogues in all possible ways. […] we are involved and being able to set the agenda as well.

The statement indicates that the office may have had a higher level of autonomy as an independent corporation statement, but even after the reorganisation, the office still participates in the mission formation and setting the agenda which indicate that the level of autonomy can be categorised as higher.

South Sweden's Brussels Office

The interviewee describes the office's mission as "connecting the office's five members and help them to engage in European policies, networks and collaborations to find strategic partners in thematic fields of interest". The mission covers three matters; policy including legislation and initiatives, cooperation to use own competencies and exchange with others, and searching for funding opportunities. Moreover, the interviewee highlight that issues connected to the use of the forest includes several political legislative proposals affecting regional actors. Besides legislation, it could also concern an initiative, which is not a legislative proposal. This kind of initiative has become more important according to the interviewee.

> EU decide to work with a principle, for example, Bauhaus policy to create a better society, better housing etc. We engage and express how we want to work with it. If we do so in a good way, then the EU can come back and give funding […] They ask themselves, can they contribute to common European benefit? If the answer is yes, then there is cooperation – policy but not laws or funding but cooperation to solve common challenges. In the next step, the EU can step in and offer support because we have shown that we cooperate with universities, other European regions etc. These are two different principles: a purely thematic issue with legislation or a political initiative – that is policy for us.

The interviewee's reasoning on efforts to influence policy includes two different examples; legislation affecting the regional government financially or administratively and an initiative where the regions can access EU funding. Since both legislation and funding are mentioned as components in efforts to influence policy, it indicates that the office's mission focuses emphasis both regulatory mobilisation and financial mobilisation. Therefore, the office can't be categorised in one of the variation categories since both of them are highlighted.

The office represents several regional actors, including five regions[8] and two universities[9]. Based on this principal constellation where the office represents regional administrations and educational institutions, the office can be categorised as a several regional partners model. The office's mission is formed and based on a four-year direction of management, and a one-year operational plan including priorities of the office. The organisation has a steering group that decide the strategic and long-term direction with comprehensive issues. Although, the interviewee argues that the office is very much involved and quite influential in the mission formation since knowledge about the EU is quite low in the home arena. Since it is expressed that the determination of the mission formation is heavily influenced by the office without direct orders from the principals, it indicates that the level of autonomy can be categorised as higher.

> I would like to answer the opposite, but yes, it is probably quite heavily influenced by us. The reason for this is that the knowledge about EU issues is quite low but that is also why we exist. The intention is that we should have a finger in the ground, be able to see what it looks like in the home arena, we monitoring and can hopefully make a qualified assessment and say that "based on your conditions, we have produced this". If they do not agree, then they complement, but in most cases, they approve pretty much straight off.

Stockholm Region EU Office

The interviewee describes the office's mission as consisting of four parts. The first part concern information gathering and information exchange in five prioritised areas; sustainable green transition, including energy, environment and climate issues, sustainable transport systems, digitalisation, research and innovation, and EUs recovering and cohesion policy. The second part concern proactive lobbying to influence EU policy development. The third part

[8] Region Blekinge, Region Halland, Region Kronoberg, Region Kalmar County and Region Jönköpings County
[9] Jönköping University and Linnaeus University

concern profiling in the EU arena, and the fourth part concern communication and interaction with the principals in the home arena. The interviewee argues that three of the four parts include efforts to influence EU policy.

> Proactive lobbying and profiling in Brussels are long-term approaches to influence EU policy but information gathering and networking are included because if you want to influence a certain issue, you need to know what is going on […] In that sense, to influence EU policy is a great part of our mission. However, all issues do not always lead to policy influence. Have you influenced an issue if you answer a consultation? Yes, to some extent […]

Moreover, the interviewee expresses that policy influence is often related to legislation, directives and decisions because these are more concrete measures, which will be implemented at the regional level. The office's employees discuss what kind of issue they wanted to influence by providing comments on strategies, action plans, and road maps. Moreover, the interviewee highlight that the office also focuses to some extent on funding programmes and financial instruments within, for example, transport policy and TEN-T. Although, since the interviewee express that policy is often connected to influence legislation outcomes, the office's mission focus is categorised as more emphasis on regulatory mobilisation. However, in certain policy areas, for example, transport policy, financial mobilisation including funding programmes and financial instruments are also highlighted as important to monitor.

The office is owned and governed by an association with three principal owners[10] who represent the regional level and five additional members[11] who contribute to the office's budget. The association's board consist of three representatives from each principal with the formal right to decide on the office's mission, while the other members participate in the discussions and contribute with input. As the office is governed by a wide range of actors of three main owners and five additional members, its principal model is categorised as a several regional partners model. The office's mission is determined by the association board where the representatives establish an EU agenda including prioritised issues. The office's

[10] City of Stockholm, Stockholm Regional Council and Storsthlm.
[11] Region Gotland, Region Sörmland, Region Uppsala, Region Västmanland och The Council for Stockholm Mälar Region

participation in the mission formation includes contributing information and proposals towards the principals. It is confirmed by the interviewee that the office often expresses their concerns and how the mission can be revised, which indicate the office can influence the mission direction.

> The office prepares a lot of groundwork and contributes with proposals on potential modifications and what we see as essential […] we discuss with colleagues working within the governing organisations so that before we go to the political representatives, we have already discussed with the officials. For example, "this is our perception on what will be important in the upcoming years, we should modify our mission in this way, we would like to add this section and reformulate to make it more clear". These proposals are then discussed with the political representatives and they take the final official decision.

The interviewee's description of the office's participation shows a higher level of autonomy since it is the office that highlights important and relevant modifications in the mission formation and prepares the groundwork for the principals.

4.2 Resources

Central Sweden European Office

The office's personnel consist of three employees, two strategists and one manager. The two strategists' work within a specific policy portfolio, one focuses on energy and climate, and transport and infrastructure and the other focuses on cohesion policy, and research and innovation. The manager has a comprehensive operative responsibility and monitors issues that don't fall within the scope of other policy portfolios. Moreover, the interviewee argues that consistent dialogue and exchange of information with the home arena is important to understand how certain issues affect their regions, where the colleagues in the home arena contribute with knowledge and analysis. Since the task distribution and the employees' specialisation is connected to specific policy portfolios, with support from colleagues in the home arena, and direct contacts with EU officials, the office's functional differentiation is categorised as higher.

The educational background among the employees is dominated by a social sciences orientation with majors in linguistics, political science and human rights, which is categorised as similar. All three employees started as trainees at the office in Brussels. Two of them have previous work experience from a regional administration or municipality, however, their professional experience is still dominated by a strong connection to the EU and Brussels. The interviewee argues that there is no template for required educational background when working with lobbying, but professional experience from the regional level and working with regional development issues are valued. This indicates that professional experience, particularly in regional development, is more valued than educational background.

> We who work in the office come mainly from the Brussels bubble and we have a huge need for knowledge about regional development where we need to understand the regional development mission in Sweden for us to be able to do a good job. We need to learn and come home to the regions, and do short-term work since our colleagues in the regions want to come to Brussels to learn more about the EU system […]

North Sweden European Office

The office’s personnel consist of six employees, one director, four senior advisers and one communication/coordination manager. The communication and coordination manager is responsible for the supervision of trainees, social media platforms and newsletters, administration of meetings and other practical tasks. The senior advisers' responsibility and tasks are divided into different policy portfolios; climate, energy and raw materials including forest and industrial transition, research and innovation policy, cohesion policy including funding programmes and arctic issues, and transport policy including bioeconomy and agriculture. The director is responsible for the business management and the overall coordination of North Sweden in the EU. The advisers work independently within their respective policy portfolios. Although many issues are affected by each other, it is not always easy to determine which issue belongs to which policy portfolio. In those situations, the advisers have to cooperate. However, since the advisers have their policy portfolio including tasks, responsible monitoring areas and support from colleagues in the home arena, the functional differentiation is categorised as higher.

The majority of the employees has a social science-oriented educational background with majors in political science, journalism, political philosophy etc. However, two of them have an educational background in engineering and chemistry. Since the employees' educational background consists of mixed orientations, it is categorised as diverse. Their professional experience is mostly dominated by a strong EU connection with previous work experience from regional offices and the Swedish PR in Brussels. Although, some of them have work experience from regional administrations, municipality executive boards, a research institute for EU funded projects, and consulting firms. The interviewee argues that it is often requested that employees have some previous experience which they can use and benefit from in their work at the office. Moreover, other qualifications are mentioned as more beneficial than others.

> Personality is very important and I think it is good if you have an understanding of social sciences and how society works. You are welcome to have studied further and maybe have some EU knowledge, but you will learn about it in practice and how it works. It is good to have working experience from a public or regional authority to have a basic understanding of whom we work for and relevant questions. You learn about the EU arena pretty quickly when you get here.

The interviewee's statement indicates that professional experience is more valued than educational background since the employee will gain knowledge about the EU through practice. Moreover, professional experience from a public or regional authority is preferred.

Region Värmland European Office

The office's personnel consist of two employees, one manager and one EU policy officer. The EU policy officer's policy portfolio includes two areas; bioeconomy and smart specialisation and the manager's policy portfolio also included two areas; infrastructure and culture. The monitoring of cohesion policy is divided equally between them. The interviewee claim that the employees are specialised within their policy portfolio with knowledge about current issues on the EU agenda and how the information should be delivered towards the home arena. Moreover, they were supported with information and expertise from colleagues in the home arena, which indicate a higher functional differentiation.

The manager has an educational background in European business and the EU policy officer in international administration and global governance, which indicate simulant orientations and can therefore be categorised as similar. The employees' professional experience has a strong EU connection as both of them have mostly worked for regional offices and networks for regional and local authorities in Brussels. The interviewee argues that previous experience from the public sector can facilitate and help to understand how the office's works and the communication between the home arena and the office. Basic knowledge about the EU and the decision-making process can also be beneficial, although, professional experience is a more valued qualification in lobbying.

> It depends on how long you are going to be here. Those who are full-time employees working at a regional office will be there for a while and it takes time to build connections and networking. The most important I would say is the social competence and being able to build networks and contacts are very crucial. […] You can learn most things, and working for a region or city I would say give an experience which makes you adapt faster since you know which information to deliver and what kind of dialogue to have with the home arena. It facilitates some experience within the public sector […]

Region Västra Götaland's Brussels Office

The office's personnel consist of three employees, one manager och two EU policy advisors. The manager is responsible for monitoring environmental policy and horizontal issues which are not included in the other employees' policy portfolios. One of the policy portfolios includes research and innovation policy, and infrastructure and transport policy, while the other portfolio includes cohesion policy. The interviewee argues that the employees have expertise about the EU system, how to find information and a broad network of contacts. In some issues, for example, international procurement instrument, the office need advice and expertise from colleagues at the purchasing department of the regional administration. Since the employees have in-depth knowledge within their policy portfolios and contacts on the EU arena within their policy areas, the functional differentiation is categorised as higher.

The employees' have simulant educational orientations in political science and European studies, and therefore, their educational background is categorised as similar. They have professional experience from Brussels with years of experience from the EP and other interest organisations, which indicate that the professional experience is dominated by a strong connection to the EU and Brussels. Moreover, professional work experience from Brussels is argued by the interviewee as an important competence and valued qualification, while the educational background is barely mentioned as a required competence in lobbying.

> Work experience from Brussels is super important. The region is certainly very complex and there is a lot to learn and understand, but it is better to learn about that than to learn about the EU from scratch. It's pretty good that you have this kind of experience in some form.

Region Östergötland EU Office

The office's personnel consist of three employees, one information manager, one strategist and one manager. The manager's responsibilities include, for example, invoices, supervision of trainees and task distribution to make sure that the employees had a decent amount of workload. The manager also has responsibility for monitoring cohesion policy, the multiannual financial framework, health care policy, culture policy and to some extent digitalisation policy. The strategist has responsibility for the policy portfolio including bioenergy, business, smart specialisation, digitalisation and to some extent transport policy. The information manager is responsible for the homepage, newsletter and contributes groundwork to the other employees. The interviewee expresses that as each employee focus on issues within their policy portfolio, they became specialised within their portfolio, which indicate that the functional differentiation including distribution and specialisation of employees is categorised as higher.

The strategist and the information manager have an educational background in political science while the manager has an educational background in law and economics, which indicate a mix of orientations and is therefore categorised as diverse. Their professional experience is dominated by a strong EU connection since all employees started their working careers as information managers at the office without any previous work experience besides traineeships. Curiosity, ambition and social competence are highlighted as important qualifications since the working environment involves interactions with other officials. Moreover, the interviewee argues that lobbying efforts require knowledge and understanding of the EU legislative process and the EU institutions, often gained from an educational background in law or political science, which indicate that educational background is more valued than professional experience.

Skåne European Office

The office's personnel consist of three employees, one managing director, one policy advisor (who is on parental leave) and one junior policy officer. The managing director holds the policy portfolio with a focus on the Green Deal and industry policy, while the junior policy office has a policy portfolio focused on digitalisation and health issues. Both policy portfolios include monitoring of funding opportunities within their policy areas. The managing director also has administrative responsibilities for invoices and other practical tasks. The employees' specialisation is described by the interviewee as being both specific and general with skills in communicating information to the home arena. Moreover, the employees have gained more competencies and knowledge within their specific policy portfolios, which indicate that the functional differentiation can be categorised as higher.

> When you are involved during a longer period, you become pretty knowledgeable within your policy areas but you have to separate between being able to understand and have knowledge about the different programs and de facto participate in the projects which our colleagues in the home arena are very good at. In, for example, the Green Deal and existing directives, we become more generalists. None of us has an educational background in environmental science, we only monitor and cannot judge the content of the directive.

The employees' educational background consists of mixed orientations with majors in national economy, business law and political science, which indicate the educational background can be categorised as diverse. The junior policy officer had no previous professional experience before working at the office, while the policy advisor had previous work from Brussels in EU advocacy and communications consultancy and the managing director had over 20 years of working experience from Brussels at the EC and the Skåne European Office. The director also had work experience from the Ministry of Employment in Sweden. Based on these previous experiences, the professional experience among the employees can be categorised as dominated by a strong connection to the EU and Brussels. The interviewee argues that know-how about the EU system, participation in different activities and networking skills as the most important lobbying qualifications, which is mostly gained from work experience. Therefore, the interviewee's reasoning indicates that professional experience is more valued than educational background.

South Sweden’s Brussels Office

The office’s personnel consist of three employees, one manager and two EU policy officers. The employees have been given several thematic issues such as cohesion policy, research and innovation, labour market, bioeconomy, eatables and transport which are divided into different policy portfolios. The employees’ policy portfolios cover many different issues where the interviewee express that the distribution of policy areas can sometimes be problematic as the policy areas have become more horizontal than thematical over time. Although, they become specialised within their policy portfolio and create broad networks with EU officials, which indicate that the functional differentiation can be categorised as higher.

> It was a lot easier before because it was clearer pipelines, meaning that an issue related to the forest was more isolated to the forest. Today, the issues are horizontal – for example the climate is equally connected to public health, biodiversity and transport which becomes tricky as the thematic issues are gliding into each other. We have one person who is responsible for innovation but innovation also affect transport, health and forest issues.

The policy officers have an educational background in European studies and the manager has an educational background in economics, which indicate a mix of different orientations and can therefore be categorised as diverse. The employees’ have mostly professional experience from regional offices in Brussels, Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, an Interreg programme and Europe Direct Office in Sweden, which indicate that the professional experience is dominated by a strong connection to the EU, but not only from Brussels. The interviewee argues that communication skills and personality are very important and valued qualifications in lobbying. Moreover, academic thinking and analytical skills are highlighted as crucial in lobbying while previous professional experience is not emphasised, which indicate that educational background is more valued.

> It is about personality, the ability to put a question in context and visualise abstract goals. […] Those people, who have strong logical thinking, have a harder time to handle the

> thought of speculating what can potentially happen […] otherwise, it is important to have learnt to think academically. Communication is an important part of representativity. I'm looking for a mix between being able to analyse texts and having social competence, the ability to present in writing and live.

Stockholm Region EU Office

The office's personnel consist of five employees, two EU policy officers, one communication strategist, one managing director and one administrator. Each policy officers hold responsibility for different policy portfolios with prioritised areas, where one include research and innovation, digitalisation and cohesion policy and the other include energy, climate, environment and transport policy. The communication strategist is not responsible for a specific policy area but rather a horizontal perspective with a strategic approach, the social media platforms and newsletter. Moreover, the communication strategist helps the other employees with advice on relevant contacts and how to communicate the information to the home arena.

> They follow their policy portfolios but none of us is an expert in any area. In general, very few are experts in Brussels I would say. There are many generalists which are our expertise and we have knowledge about the EU legislative process. We need help from our members when it comes to a new directive connected to for example revision of the water directive and what it includes […] we can read about issues to a certain degree but when it comes to technical details, we need to talk to an expert or several experts in the home arena.

The statement highlight that the employees have expertise connected to their policy portfolios, the EU legislative process and key contacts in the EU arena. Moreover, the employees are supported by the officials in the home arena by being provided with input and expertise on technical details, which indicate that the functional differentiation can be categorised as higher.

The employees possess educational background with mixed orientations of majors in international economics, communication, nature, society and environmental policy, European studies, and political science, which indicate that the educational background can be categorised as diverse. The policy officers' professional experience is mainly from Brussels at

European network organisations, Swedish innovation agency, and city representation office. The managing director has previous experience from the regional and local level in Sweden and the communication strategist has worked for a public-relations consulting firm in Sweden. These previous working experiences indicate that the employees' professional experience is not dominated by either a strong connection or lower connection to the EU but rather a mix between the two. Therefore, the office can't be categorised in either of the variation categories for professional experience. The interviewee argues that qualifications in lobbying are not entirely dependent on educational background or professional experience since it is more important to have a general public interest and curiosity for how political processes operate. Based on the interviewee's response, it can't be determined whether educational background or professional experience is the most valued qualification in lobbying since neither of them are more emphasised than the other.

4.3 Lobbying tactics

Central Sweden European Office

Direct contact with officials at the EU institutions is, according to the interviewee, a strategic choice of the office to influence policy by accessing early information, ask questions and attract attention to get the office's opinions heard. Moreover, the interviewee argues that there is an ambition to engage early in the policy process to provide information towards the home arena since it can be difficult to determine which issues are relevant for the regional administrations to monitor. This description of the office's strategy indicates that it can be categorised as an inside lobbying strategy and the timing in the policy process as up-stream lobbying.

The interviewee mention several actors whom the office contact to make efforts to influence policy; EC, EP, PR, and the state government. The office is currently reviewing their contacts at the EU institutions, more specifically which units and officials the office need to keep track of to receive accurate and early information on issues that are relevant for the principal regions. Moreover, the interviewee mentions that the office has put a lot of focus on the writings of the regional programs for the ERDF in which the office has built a good contact with the Swedish desk at the DG Regio where the regions' principals and officials can receive answers to their questions. The EP and PR are not contacted for active lobbying, rather for information gathering on upcoming legislative proposals and negotiations. In some policy areas, the interviewee acknowledges that the office needed to interact with the state government as well to make sure that the national stand-point is in line with the office and the region's ambitions. Based on the interviewee's responses, EU institutions and the state government are highlighted for lobbying to influence policy, however, the EU institutions, particularly the EC, are the most important which indicate the office's channels can be categorised as more emphasis on extra-state channels.

> Lately, a lot of attention has been put on the writing process of the regional programs for ERDF where we have worked up good contact with the Swedish desk at DG Regio for a long time to help our regional administrations to get answers to their questions […] Our ambition is to at least be updated on which officials are working with the issues to ask questions to the Commission when we have physical meetings and that we attend to seminars where these officials are represented to interact with them directly.

According to the interviewee, the office prioritises networks in which their principals are members of but there are other Brussels-based networks, for example, ERRIN and EPC, in which the office engage. These networks are very helpful in monitoring activities to get early information, input on analysis and opportunities to pursue joint lobbying efforts. However, the interviewee argues that joint lobbying efforts are less prioritised and more emphasis on getting invited to seminars to get in touch with EC's officials. The office's engagement in networks indicates it is mostly associated with the dissimilarity principle since the office is provided with complementary information from other offices that could potentially end up in synergies.

North Sweden European Office

Lobbying is described by the interviewee as complex and ongoing, including many different steps, including maintaining commitment and contacts. The office organises seminars and conferences, both of ad-hoc character and more specific focus, to invite officials from different organisations and institutions, such as OECD and EP, to participate as panel commentators or speakers. According to the interviewee, the purpose of these events is to interact directly with officials from the institutions to express opinions and concerns, and sometimes request a meeting to discuss the issues. Another element in the strategy is that the office tries to build its platform of contacts to get early information on the current EU discussions from EU institutions and network engagements. These examples indicate that the office's strategy can be categorised as inside lobbying since the interviewee highlight direct contact with officials, and timing in the policy process is categorised as upstream lobbying by making efforts to be involved in the early phases.

> I often say the when we arrange seminars and webinars, it is not the public audience we want to reach but rather the officials in the panel whom we want to reach. […] then it also becomes natural that we express our views and opinions directly towards those whom we know hold the key to the whole thing. […] When we have some questions about this and what does it mean, then you can request a meeting with the officials.

The office has several contacts in lobbying efforts to influence policy depending on the policy issue. However, the interviewee argues that the office often contacts officials at the EC regardless of their title since officials of different positions are of interest and can provide relevant information. Moreover, the interviewee argues that a good relationship with the director of the Commissioner's cabinet can give more opportunities for delivering input to the discussions on policy. In sum, the interviewee's response indicates that the office mostly uses extra-state channels in lobbying efforts, particularly the EC and sometimes the EP.

According to the interviewee, the office's trademark in the EU arena is strongly connected to cooperation with representations offices of regions in the same geographical area as North Sweden with common challenges. CPMR, Baltic Sea Commission, ERRIN, Svereg and NSPA are some of the networks mentioned. Engagement in networks with other offices is based on joint interests, similar characteristics and common challenges related to geography, which indicate that its network engagement can be categorised as based on the similarity principle.

Region Värmland European Office

The interviewee argues that the office maximises its influence on policy by working in line with the operational plan and the prioritised issues with an EU perspective. The interviewee highlight engagement in networks as a form of strategy where the office participate in working groups, arrange seminars with other offices or have meetings with parliamentarians. Moreover, the office participates in public consultations by writing position papers to influence policies and contribute information to parliamentarians, particularly rapporteurs. These examples emphasise the importance of direct interaction with officials in the EU arena and engage early in the policy process through public consultations, which indicate that the office's strategy can be categorised as an inside lobbying strategy with up-stream lobbying, which includes a combination of public events and exclusive meetings.

When the interviewee reflects on the important contacts in the office's lobbying activities, EC officials are highlighted, particularly those in the DG Regio, as the most important who can provide information and dialogue on legislative proposals. Moreover, the Swedish MEPs and other MEPs can also be useful as well as the PR's ambassadors and officials in transport and regional issues. However, the EC and the EP are argued as the most important and used contacts, which indicate that the office's channels can be categorised as more emphasis on extra-state channels than intra-state channels.

The interviewee highlight the close collaboration with the Swedish and Norwegian regional offices in lobbying efforts as important since a lot of the region's citizens commute to Norway for work, and many tourists come from Norway to visit the region. Since these collaborations mostly include engagement with offices sharing attributes and having common spatial characteristics, it indicates that the office's network engagement can be categorised as more based on the similarity principle.

Region Västra Götaland's Brussels Office

The interviewee argues that the most efficient and easiest way to influence policy is to be involved early through good communication with the EC' officials, which is achieved by being able to express your standpoint to them. Moreover, the interviewee emphasis the direct interaction with officials through, for example, meetings, seminars and letters, indicating that the office’s strategy can be categorised as inside lobbying and upstream lobbying by early engagement in the policy process.

> When we have adopted a position that is relevant and politically supported, we have to make sure that we know and talk about the right things, have a politically strong will, knowledge and competence, will to put in necessary financial means and that we make our own decisions – then they will listen because you are interested and then you end up in the sweet spot of a lobbyist, which is to be approached and consulted with. […] I think we are very active and take a lot of contacts on different levels, including writing long letters directly to different Commissioners.

When the interviewee gets the question of which are the most important contacts for the office in its lobbying activities, EC’s officials is firstly mentioned, secondly the EP through the MEPs and lastly the ambassadors at the PR. Although, the interviewee argues that the PR is more or less impossible to influence since it is controlled by the government ministries and is therefore mostly contacted for information and to signalise the office’s concern and opinions on issues. Moreover, the office can also strengthen its voice through collaboration with other representation offices and find alliances in networks since it is often difficult to achieve results alone according to the interviewee. The interviewee graded the EC as the most important contact for lobbying efforts, which indicate the office’s channels can be categorised as emphasising extra-state channels over the inter-state channels.

The interviewee points out the informal network of Swedish regional offices in Brussels as an important platform where the office can collaborate with others who share similar missions. Although, the interviewee mention that the office has more things in common with some of the Swedish regional offices, for example, Skåne European Office, which is related to challenges and interests of regions with bigger cities. As most of the office’s network engagement is more based on shared attributes or spatial characteristics, it can be categorised in the similarity principle category.

Region Östergötland EU Office

A strategy which the office uses to maximise its influence on policies is to connect officials in the home arena with officials at the EU institutions. The interviewee argues that when the office approach officials in the EU arena, the employees have to be diplomatic, understanding and deliver concrete examples or numbers, and avoid “fluffy” terms. Moreover, The office’s participation in the policy process is mostly about engaging in the early phases through, for example, public consultations. This description indicates that the office put more emphasis on direct contact with officials and early engagement in the policy process which can be categorised as an inside lobbying strategy with upstream lobbying.

> What we use, especially when we direct at for example the Parliament, it can be beneficial to involve our politicians, for example, if we are going to meet a social-democratic parliamentarian, it can be very convenient to bring a social democratic politician from the home arena as a way of creating a relationship based on trust and good will.

EC’s officials who are involved in the work with legislation proposals are the best access points according to the interviewee. However, the interviewee acknowledges that these officials can be difficult to access as they are under high pressure, therefore, the office use networks as an alternative entry since they are easier to influence and access. The EP, particularly the rapporteur of a legislative proposal in the committee, is also highlighted as a great contact. The interviewee argues that attempts to influence the Swedish PR are not a successful approach since its mandate comes from the respective ministry. These examples indicate more emphasis on EU institutions and networks, therefore, the office’s channels can be categorised as more emphasis on extra-state channels than inter-state channels.

According to the interview, the office’s networks are often focused on certain policy areas, such as research and innovation (ERRIN) and health care (EUREGHA). Some of the networks are focused on creating projects by connected regions, while others are more focused on influencing policy by writing joint position papers towards the EU institutions. Since the office’s network engagements are mostly of collaboration with other offices based on shared attributes, it indicates that the office can be categorised in the category of similarity principle.

Skåne European Office

The interviewee argues that the office's strategy to increase its influence in Brussels include direct contact through, for example, exclusive meetings where officials from the EU institutions and officials from the home arena are invited, or interactions via different networks. The emphasis on direct contact with officials at the EU institutions and the office's activity in networks indicate that these two approaches are considered the most effective ways to be influential. Moreover, The interviewee points out public consultations are a great way to get involved in the policy process when different proposals are published, and the ambition is to be involved before and focus on the early stages of the process. As these approaches and examples are strongly associated with characteristics of inside lobbying and up-stream lobbying, the office's strategy can be categorised as a strategy of inside lobbying with elements of upstream lobbying.

> You can maximize the outcome to some extent if you are more people who have the same opinions and can pursue a common issue forward […] the chances of success will become greater through a network which gathers 130 regions that covers a huge range of the European regions. You can use the networks to reach the EU institutions […] direct contact is, of course, important with the EU institutions and is sometimes built on personal relations, working within the same arena or that you have been previous colleagues.

The interviewee argues that among the EU institutions, the office has more regular contact with the EC since their officials write drafts for legislative proposals in which the office do efforts to influence in different ways. In the EP, the office mostly contacts the parliamentarians and their assistants who are active in the ITRE and REGI committees. Contact with the PR is for information purposes to get updates on, for example, negotiation processes. The interviewee's highlighting of officials in the EU institutions as preferred contacts for lobbying indicate that the office's channels can be categorised as more emphasis on extra-state channels than inter-state channels.

According to the interviewee, the policy area's relevance for the region and the financial aspects determine the office's activity in different networks. Three networks are mentioned as particularly important; EUREGHA connected to health issues, ERRIN within research and innovation issues, and Vanguard initiative for smart specialisation issues connected to nanotechnics. Since the office's engagement in networks is more based on collaboration with other representation offices which share an attribute, it indicates that the office can be categorised in the similarity principle category.

South Sweden's Brussels Office

The interviewee argues that mapping and monitoring as important elements of the office's strategy to influence EU policy. These two elements include investigating the process more closely and finding information on when decisions have been taken, which actors have been involved, and identifying relevant officials to contact. Moreover, the interviewee points out that the office makes efforts to influence policies either through written position papers or direct dialogue with regional experts in the home arena and EU officials. In terms of timing in the policy process, it is expressed by the interviewee that the state government usually involve regions and municipalities during the implementation phase, although the regional representation regional offices are involved long this phase. The office's try to be involved in the early phases of the process by engaging in committees. These examples and ambitions indicate that the office's strategy can be categorised as an inside lobbying strategy with great emphasis on direct contact and upstream lobbying.

According to the interviewee, the EC' officials are the most important and accessible contacts for lobbying activities. The office doesn't interact with the EP as much since very few Swedish MEPs work with issues that are important for regions. The interviewee illustrates this by highlighting that among the elected Swedish MEPs in 2018, only one of them wanted to join the committee for regional development issues. Moreover, the interviewee argues that PR is a great contact that is more used as a source for information. Although, the interaction with the PR is often based on one-way communication since the office is often advised to express opinions and feedback towards the state government's ministries instead of directly to the PR in Brussels. Based on these arguments, the office's channels indicate a strong emphasis on extra-state channels, particularly the EC, than intra-state channels.

The interviewee argues that the office's networks are often focused on relevant thematic issues, such as innovation and research (ERRIN) or forest and agriculture (ERIAFF). The networks are about building cooperation where the representation offices can complement each other. Those regional offices which are involved in the office's chosen networks could be very diverse since it is their competencies that counts rather than spatial characteristics. Therefore, the office's network engagement can be categorised as more based on a dissimilarity principle.

Stockholm Region EU Office

The interviewee mentions two strategies that the office use to increase influence and get its opinions and views heard among many other representation offices in Brussels.

> One strategy is if we want to influence an issue through, for example, the EP, it is reasonable to focus on the Swedish MEPs. They are "low hanging fruits", meaning that they are introduced in the Swedish context and understand what is important for Stockholm […] whom we contact depends on the issue and which committee they sit in, but we also have informal contacts and I know quite a few assistants in the EP so you can get in contact through them. […] another strategy is that we focus on a set of question formulations each year, what are the most important […] the new EU innovation program has launched and how do we work with that? One example was that we organised an event together with the Stockholm trio, which was directed to the Brussels public to highlight Stockholm and our members are interests partners for projects.

The two strategies include examples that highlight direct contact with officials in the EU institutions, either through informal networking to build a relationship or organising events to attract attention among officials working in Brussels which can hopefully end up in exclusive collaborations or meetings. These examples indicate that the office's strategy can be categorised as an inside lobbying strategy. Moreover, the interviewee expresses that the office always tries to be involved in the early phases of the policy process, which indicate more emphasis on upstream lobbying.

The interviewee argues that the process's different stages have different contacts that are important. In the first phases, before and after a proposal has been published, and in public consultations, the office put a lot of focus on contact with the EC. The office tries to be updated on the discussions among EC's officials and decision-makers which can provide information that the office can highlight and present in their lobbying efforts towards the EC.

When a proposal has been published, the office shifts its focus to the EP and PR which include discussions with colleagues in the home arena on how they can interact with the state government. The Swedish MEPs are among the most important contacts, according to the interviewee, since they can influence their colleagues from political groups and committees. These contact preferences indicate that the office's channels can be categorised as more emphasis on extra-state channels, even though the office also try to use inter-state channels as well.

According to the interviewee, the office engages in formal networks which organise seminars and write reports since these are good sources of information and for developing new contacts. Moreover, the office also engages in informal networks with representation offices of other capital regions from Scandinavian, such as Copenhagen, Oslo, Helsinki and other Swedish regions to organise joint events, exchange information and discuss issues. The interviewee mentions the informal Baltic Sea group which include representation offices of regions located around the Baltic Sea. Since these networks mostly include collaboration with regional representation offices sharing geographical characteristics and common interests, it indicates that the office's network engagement can be categorised as based on the similarity principle.

5. Analysis

This chapter presents the categorisation of the offices in the analytical scheme to identify differences and similarities among them within the aspects of mission and principals, resources and lobbying tactics. Moreover, the identified differences and similarities are discussed in relation to theoretical perceptions from previous research on administrative regions' offices and their lobbying activities.

5.1 Categorisation – identifying differences and similarities

The categorisation of the offices in the analytical scheme indicates that the main differences are founded in all concepts within the aspect of mission and principals, followed by the aspect of resources in the concepts of educational background and valued qualification in lobbying and lastly the aspect of lobbying tactics in the concept of network engagement.

The concept mission focus examines whether the description of the office mission indicates more emphasis on regulatory or financial mobilisation. The results show that four of the interviewees articulate more emphasis on financial mobilisation and two of the interviewees articulate more emphasis on regulatory mobilisation. Moreover, two interviewees, from South Sweden's Brussels Office and Region Östergötland EU Office, articulate equal emphasis on both financial and regulatory mobilisation in their description of the mission. The second concept, the principal model, examine the office's constellation of principals based on the represented actors and how the office is organised in the constellation. Five offices are categorised in the first variation as one small team within a regional administration while three offices are categorised in the second variation as having several regional partners. The last concept, level of autonomy, examine the office's participation in the formation of its mission, including distinct orders and ability to influence. Three offices are categorised in the first variation, lower level of autonomy, and five offices are categorised in the second variation, higher level of autonomy.

In the concepts related to resources, the results indicate differences in the employees' educational background and valued qualifications in lobbying, and similarities in functional differentiation and the employees' professional experience. The functional differentiation concept examines the specialisation and division of tasks among the office's employees. All offices possess strong characteristics of higher functional differentiation where the employees' possess specialised knowledge about the EU legislative process, responsibility for specific policy portfolios, get support from colleagues in the home arena and have created personal connections with EU officials. The professional experience among the offices' employees is categorised as dominated by a strong connection to the EU and Brussels since the majority of them have years of work experience from for example EU institutions, Brussels-based networks working with EU related issues, and regional and city representation offices. Although, the Stockholm Region EU Office, is not categorised in either of the variations of professional experience as the employees' professional experiences consist of an equal division between the two variations.

The categorisation of the educational background shows that three offices have employees with a similar educational background within the same orientation while five offices have employees with diverse educational backgrounds from different orientations. Valued qualifications in lobbying also indicate differences among the offices' interviewees. Five of the interviewees highlight qualities gained through professional experience as the most valued qualifications, for example, work experience with development issues for a public, regional or local authority or from an interest organisation in Brussels. Two interviewees emphasise qualities gained from an educational background as the most valued qualifications, for example, academic thinking, knowledge about EU legislative processes and the EU institutions. The interviewee from the Stockholm Region EU Office doesn't emphasise educational background or professional experience as more important than having a general public interest and curiosity for political processes.

Lastly, the categorisation of the offices in the concepts related to lobbying tactics only show differences in the office's network engagement and similarities in the choice of strategies and channels. All interviewees highlight strategies of inside lobbying, including direct contact with officials in the EU institutions through exclusive meetings and organised events. Moreover, all interviewees express that the office put more emphasis on extra-state channels, particularly the EC, the EP and Brussels-based networks, than inter-state channels for lobbying efforts, with upstream lobbying through early engagement in the policy process. The categorisation of the offices' network engagement reveals that six offices are categorised in the first variation, the similarity principle. These offices emphasise collaboration with other representation offices based on shared attributes or geographical characteristics. Two offices are categorised in the second variation, the dissimilarity principle since they highlight collaboration with other offices to complement each other and create synergies.

Table 6. Categorisation of the offices in the analytical scheme

Mission and principals	**First variation**	**Second variation**
Mission focus	RVG, SR, (SS), (RÖ)	CS, NS, RV, S, (SS), (RÖ)
Principal model	CS, RVG, RV, RÖ, S	NS, SS, SR
Level of autonomy	CS, RV, RÖ	NS, RVG, S, SS, SR
Human resources	**First variation**	**Second variation**
Functional differentiation	CS, NS, RV, RVG, RÖ, S, SS, SR	None
Professionalisation **Educational background**	CS, RV, RVG	NS, RÖ, S, SS, SR
Professionalisation **Professional experience**	CS, NS, RV, RVG, RÖ, S, SS, (SR)	(SR)
Professionalisation **Valued qualifications**	RÖ, SS, (SR)	CS, NS, RV, RVG, S, (SR)
Lobbying tactics	**First variation**	**Second variation**
Strategies, including timing in the policy process	CS, NS, RV, RVG, RÖ, S, SS, SR	None
Channels	CS, NS, RV, RVG, RÖ, S, SS, SR	None
Network engagement	NS, RV, RVG, RÖ, S, SR	CS, SS

5.2 Findings in relation to theoretical perceptions from previous research

The identified differences in the first aspect, mission and principals, show some noteworthy findings which nuances theoretical perceptions about administrative regions' offices and their lobbying activities. The mission focus among the offices indicates that they articulate ambitions to influence policy and search for funding. Although the majority of the interviewees emphasises financial mobilisation more in their description of the mission, they also mention examples associated with regulatory mobilisation, such as influencing legislation outcomes. Their mission focus and ambitions challenge theoretical perceptions from previous research that activities to influence policy tend to be to the detriment of searching for funding and networking (Tatham 2017). Moreover, the results also challenge the theoretical perceptions that administrative regions' offices mostly focus on activities to search for funding, including finding potential partners in other regions (Moore 2008).

Regarding the principal model of the administrative regions' offices, Moore (2008) and Rowe (2011) argue that the second variation of the principal model, several regional partners, is the most model common among Scandinavian offices. Concerning the level of autonomy, Greenwood (2011) argues that having several principals enable the office to have a more diverse agenda and therefore gives a higher level of autonomy. These theoretical perceptions don't fully comply with this thesis results. The majority of the Swedish regional offices have a principal model in which the office consists of one small team within a regional administration, and only a minority have a model consisting of several regional partners. Moreover, the level of autonomy among the Swedish regional offices indicate that having several principals doesn't necessarily give the office a higher level of autonomy.

The results on the aspect of resources indicate that they mostly comply with the theoretical perceptions. The offices' employees have a professional experience dominated by a strong EU connection, which is a common pattern among the personnel at administrative regions' offices (Rowe 2011). No single educational background is more dominant since some of the offices have employees with mixed backgrounds while others have employees with similar backgrounds. Although, some of the employees also have professional experience from a region or municipality, which challenges the perception by Rowe (2011) that this kind of experience is more uncommon at administrative regions' offices. Moreover, not all offices emphasise knowledge about the Brussels scene over professional experience from the home regions.

Lastly, the results on the aspect of lobbying tactics also show some interesting findings which to some extent contradicts theoretical perceptions. The interviewees' highlight examples associated with inside lobbying strategies and extra-state channels as the most efficient contacts in lobbying activities. These findings comply with the theoretical perceptions by Chalmers (2013) and Tatham (2015) that most interest groups use inside lobbying strategies, and the EC is the most important institution among representation offices. Moreover, all interviewees emphasise the contact with MEPs as essential, although Tatham (2008) claims that the EP is often overlooked as an important contact among representation offices.

However, the results have some methodological limitations to consider. One such limitation is that the study doesn’t include an analysis of the scope of lobbying activities, i.e. how much and how often the offices conduct different types of activities. In addition, it is reasonable that larger offices with more financial means and personnel have greater possibilities to pursue several types of activities, such as writing position papers, arranging seminars and attend to meetings. Moreover, the results are based on empirical material from interviews which reflect certain personal opinions and experiences of the interviewees, which have been interpreted by the author in relation to the theoretical framework. The study’s validity could be strengthened by conducting more interviews with other officials at the offices to nuance the image of each office. However, due to time constraints, it is not possible to conduct more interviews within the set time frame.

6. Concluding discussion

This chapter presents a concluding discussion on the thesis aim and answers to the research questions in relation to the results and analysis in chapters five and six. Moreover, this chapter also elaborates on potential suggestions for future research.

6.1 Conclusions of the research questions

The overall aim of this thesis is to study administrative regions' representation offices and their lobbying activities. This is examined by analysing the Swedish regional representation offices in Brussels within the aspects of mission and principals, resources and lobbying tactics. The first research question aims to identify differences and similarities among the offices, while the second research question aims to discuss how these differences and similarities correspond to theoretical perceptions from previous research. In sum, the results show that administrative regions' offices are very diverse, but at the same time also similar in some aspects. Despite having different conditions in terms of principal model, level of autonomy and resources, all of them have some kind of ambition to pursue different lobbying activities to influence policy. This study contradicts and questions the definition of administrative regions as representing weaker regions with limited conditions and vaguely articulated ambitions to influence EU policy. The results of this thesis confirm that theoretical perceptions from previous research on administrative regions' offices don't reflect the whole spectrum of administrative regions and their representation offices. Even though administrative regions' offices are categorised as weaker and putting more emphasis on funding activities compared to offices of constitutional regions (Moore 2008), this thesis concludes that variations also exists within the group of administrative regions.

The application of a theoretical framework combining different theoretical aspects related to lobbying activities contribute ewith new insights on representation offices' lobbying activities, particularly those representing administrative regions. Overall, the regional representation offices' ambition and ability to pursue lobbying activities can to some extent be explained by their relationship with its principal, resources in terms of functional differentiation and professionalisation, and choice of lobbying tactics. Although, since this thesis only covers regional representation offices of administrative regions within one country, there is a need for further research on administrative regions' offices and their lobbying activities to nuance and development more knowledge on this topic.

6.2 Suggestions for future research

Despite the theoretical contributions and results that this thesis provides, some limitations can be overcome and discussed with the help of more research on regional offices and their lobbying activities. I have three suggestions for what future studies can address and have in mind.

Firstly, this thesis is limited to a selection of regional offices representing regions operating in the same national context, which affects the nuance and complexity of the results. To confirm and follow up the results, future research should include a broader selection of regional offices from other countries with administrative regions. In addition to a broader selection of offices, future studies may also conduct more interviews with officials working at the representation offices, which thus reduce the possibility that the results are based on one-sided perceptions.

Secondly, a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews is an appropriate method for gathering empirical material, which provides unique results. However, to measure the scope of their lobbying activities, it may be appropriate to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. This kind of combination can in turn contribute with insights on how the offices' lobbying activities can de facto affect EU policy, however, it can be difficult to measure. However, it can give results that indicate which conditions are the most important for regional offices' lobbying activities to influence policy.

Thirdly, previous research lacks a well-developed theoretical framework for examining and analyzing regional offices' lobbying activities. Although this thesis develops a framework with several theoretical aspects and concepts, future research can continue to develop the framework further and make it applicable to regional offices representing different types of regions.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 - Interview guide in Swedish

Inledning

Stort tack för att du har tagit tid för den här intervjun! Som jag nämnde i mejlet så kommer vi att prata om ert regionkontors påverkansarbete i Bryssel utifrån olika teman. Jag hoppas att det går bra att jag spelar in ljud från vårt samtal som ett stöd för mina anteckningar. Det inspelade materialet används endast för transkribering och kommer inte att sparas i efterhand. Om det är någon fråga som känns otydlig eller som du inte vill svara på så är det bara att säga till. Vill du börja med att kort berätta om dig själv och din roll på kontoret?

Uppdrag och uppdragsgivare

Första temat handlar om uppdrag och uppdragsgivare. Kan du berätta om kontorets uppdrag och vilka som är era uppdragsgivare?

- Hur sker utformningen och bestämmelsen av kontorets uppdrag? På vilket sätt är kontoret delaktig i utformningen av uppdraget?
- Hur stor del av ert uppdrag fokuserar på policypåverkan i relation till andra aktiviteter?
- Vad inkluderas i regionkontors arbete med policypåverkan?
- Vilka policyområden är viktigast för ert kontor och varför?
- Hur ser kommunikationen ut i det dagliga arbetet med uppdragsgivaren/arna?

Resurser

Det andra temat handlar om resurser. I de flesta verksamheter finns det begränsningar i form av resurser såsom budget och personal vilket kan påverka nödvändiga prioriteringar och påverkansarbete generellt. Kan du berätta om hur det ser ut hos er, när det gäller personal och resurser i relation till påverkansuppdraget?

- Hur ser arbetsfördelningen ut mellan de anställda såsom arbetsuppgifter och ansvarsområden?
- Finns det någon form av specialisering inom specifikt policyområde hos varje anställd?
- Vilken utbildningsbakgrund och erfarenhet besitter de anställda?
- Vad för typ av kompetens i form av utbildning och erfarenhet är särskilt viktig i påverkansarbetet?
- Vilken del av påverkansarbete är mest tidskrävande?

Lobbying taktiker

Sista temat handlar om regionkontorets olika lobbying taktiker. Kan du berätta om kontorets huvudsakliga taktiker för att leva upp till påverkansuppdraget?

- Vad för typ av strategier används för att maximera kontorets möjligheter till att påverka EU policy och i påverkansarbete generellt?
- Vilka är de viktigaste kontakterna i regionkontorets påverkansarbete?
- Kan du berätta lite om regionkontorets deltagande i EU:s policyprocesser?
- Kan du ge exempel på hur ni framför er synpunkter på förslag och liknande från EU?
- Vilken typ av information framförs i era synpunkter?
- Har ni samarbete med andra regionala aktörer, t.ex. andra regionkontor eller regionala intresseorganisationer? Kan du berätta mer om dessa samarbeten?

Avslutningsvis

- Är det något som du skulle vilja tillägga eller prata mer om som har missats under vårt samtal?

Appendix 2 – Interview guide in English

Introduction

Thank you so much for taking the time for this interview! As I mentioned in the e-mail request, we are going to talk about the regional office's lobbying work in Brussels related to different themes. I hope you agree that I will record this interview as a compliment for my notes. The recorded material is only used for transcribing and will not be saved afterwards. If there is any question that feels unclear or that you don't feel comfortable answering, just let me know.

Could you tell me a little bit about yourself and your position at the office?

Mission and principals

The first topic is about mission and principals. Can you tell me about the office's mission and its principals?

- How is the office's mission formed and decided? In what way is the office included in the formation of the mission?
- To what extent does the mission focus on policy influence compared to other activities?
- What is included in the regional office's work with policy influence?
- Which policy areas are most important for the office and why?
- How does the communication look like daily with the principals?

Resources

The second topic is about resources. In the majority of organisations, there are limitations in terms of resources such as budget and personnel, which can affect necessary priorities and the lobbying work in general. Could you tell me about what it looks like at the regional office, in terms of staff and resources, in relation to the stated mission?

- What is the division of labour between the employees, such as tasks and areas of responsibility?
- Is there any form of specialisation within a specific policy area for each employee?
- What educational background and professional experience do the employees possess?
- What type of qualifications in terms of education and professional experience is particularly important when working with lobbying?
- Which part of the lobbying work is the most time-consuming?

Lobbying tactics

The last topic is about the regional office's different lobbying tactics. Can you tell me about the office's main tactics related to the overall mission?

- What kind of strategies are used to maximise the office's opportunities to influence EU policy and lobbying in general?
- Who are the most important contacts in the regional office's lobbying efforts?
- How does the regional office's participation in the EU policy process look like?
- Can you give examples of how the office's present their views on proposals from the EU institutions?
- What kind of information can be presented in the office's feedback?
- Do you collaborate with other regional actors, e.g. other regional offices or regional interest groups? Can you tell me more about these collaborations?

Ending

- Is there anything you would like to add or talk more about that has been forgotten during the interview?

Appendix 3 – Letter request for interviews

Dear (name),

My name is Rebecca Sava and I'm currently writing my master thesis in European Studies at the University of Gothenburg. I did my internship at the Gothenburg European Office during the spring of 2020 and after the internship, my interest in Swedish regional offices and their activities in Brussels has grown. Therefore, I decided to write my master thesis about the regional representation offices with the aim to investigate and compare the regional offices lobbying activities to influence EU policy where more updated research is required.

The idea is that the thesis research will be based on interviews with the employees working at the offices in Brussels since you have direct insights and experiences of your region's EU work and the organisation of the Brussels office. Would you or any of your colleagues consider participating in an interview? The estimated time required for the interview is approximately 45 minutes. It would be very appreciated and instructive for me personally, but above all crucial, for me to be able to complete my thesis. With your help, my thesis can contribute to research on the activities of regional offices and their importance in bringing the regional voice in the EU arena.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact my supervision Linda Berg, her contact information can be found below.
E-mail: linda.berg@pol.gu.se
Phone: +46 31-786 40 62 or +46 739 31 59 15

Thank you for taking the time to read this e-mail and for your contribution.

Best regards, Rebecca Sava