

## **REGIONAL LOBBYING AT THE EUROPEAN UNION THROUGH INSTITUTIONS: THE CASE OF CATALONIA**

**Casilda Güell**

*Casildaguell@gmail.com*

*Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*

*Spain*

### **Nota bibliográfica**

*Casilda Güell es licenciada en Ciencia Política por la London School of Economics y doctora en esa misma universidad en Historia Internacional con la tesis The failure of Catalanist opposition to Franco dirigida por Paul Preston y publicada por el CSIC (2006). Es autora también de Lluís Companys inèdit, publicado por Esfera dels llibres (2006). Actualmente imparte clases de Ciencia Política en la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona y colabora con el Consell Català del Moviment Europeu.*

### **Palabras clave**

**Regionalismo, Multi-gobernanza, Lobby, Instituciones, Unión Europea**

### **Resumen**

Las regiones europeas procuran incrementar su influencia en Bruselas a través del lobby a las instituciones europeas en un contexto de multi-gobernanza en el que los estados miembros pierden peso vis a vis las regiones y los poderes supranacionales. Una de las vías para el lobby regional es a través de las instituciones, tanto desde la propia región como a través de los gobiernos nacionales y directamente desde Bruselas. Analizamos por tanto los avances del lobby regional en Bruselas a nivel institucional y tomando como caso la región de Cataluña. Veremos el contexto de las más importantes instituciones europeas, los avances del lobbying de las instituciones catalanas y algunos casos de alianzas regionales de cara a poder hacer lobbying en Bruselas y evaluaremos su eficacia y sus carencias.

Many sub-national European regions have considered European integration to present a new political opportunity for achieving cultural, political and economic goals. With the ongoing transfer of powers from national governments to the European institutions, the regions are increasing their presence and power in Brussels, in pursuit of a regional agenda at the European level, and their own voice in European affairs. Where lobbying has not achieved results at the national level, regions have increasingly directed these efforts toward the European arena in matters of regulation,

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financial interest, or political influence. The case of Catalonia –a relatively affluent region – is indicative of the development of regional lobbying institutions and practices. However, regional agendas may be better off if pursued through ad hoc formation of coalitions around specific interests, rather than through institution building *per se*.<sup>1</sup>

## **1. REGIONAL LOBBYING**

A region may be considered an example of an interest group, the result of collective action by citizens as a way of putting forward their interests (M. Olson, *The logic of collective action*). As Dunleavy has said, most interest groups are much less hierarchical than business organisations (P.Dunleavy, *Democracy, bureaucracy and public choice*). Group leaders form multi-tiered decision choices via manipulation strategies that aim at maintaining the group identity, shaping identity, constructing selective incentives, managing democratic internal group decision-making, and sustaining a balance between size and strategies (*op cit*). Delfour has described a region as the product of a collective construction process between actors and networks of a diverse nature. As it is the immediate reference of the citizen, civil society is fundamental in its construction (C.Delfour, *España, las autonomías y Europa*).

Lobbying is one potential action of an interest group or pressure group, and therefore a region, and one way to bring influence to bear upon those with decision-making power. Lobbying is simply the practice of attempting to influence the decisions of government (Rosenthal, *The Third House*).

Several kinds of lobbying can be identified. The most commonly observed distinction between lobbies is that made between profit-seeking and not-for-profit organisations (Interview with Richard Foltin, June 2007). Lobbies include economic lobbies (those concerned with business interests and business associations), public interest lobbies (motivated by a public purpose or benefit) and ideological or political lobbies

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<sup>1</sup> In preparing this paper, the author conducted a review of the literature on the development of policy at the EU, as well as personal interviews with representatives of both Catalan and European institutions. Full references are listed in the final section.

(promoting an ideology or a political aim). Regional or territorial lobbies could be said to be lobbies promoting or defending the interests of particular territories (e.g. regions, or cities), and arguably could therefore include economic, public interest, and political elements.

Regional lobbying at the EU is therefore a mechanism for pressing a region's demands in Brussels directly, bypassing national government actors. Regional lobbying may have some advantages for the sponsor, vis a vis national lobbying: citizens tend to be more interested in local politics as it is perceived to have greater direct impact on their lives, and since they feel their voice is more easily heard than at the national level (Brian E.Adams, Citizen Lobbyists). The success of lobbying depends on a number of factors including the politicians of the moment, the economic situation of the region, the regional policy of the region, the nature of its bureaucracy, the entrepreneurial potential of regional elites and their networking capacity. The interplay of these sorts of factors determines the nature and effectiveness of lobbying dynamics. For that reason, one region's lobbying experience may not simply be extrapolated to describe another's: regional government models vary enormously depending on their economic and social structures, their institutional structures and their social and cultural demands (Udo Bullman in Caciagli, *Regiones de Europa*). So, regions do not all have common interests in policy or institutional change. (Keating, *The EU and the regions*).

## **2. THE MULTI-LEVEL MODEL: EMERGENCE OF THE REGIONS**

Multi-level governance is a result of two sets of developments: European integration on the one hand, and regionalism on the other. The effect of each is to remove certain decision making competence from nation states. The model describes a system of continuous negotiation among governments at several territorial tiers as a result of a broad process of institutional creation and decisional reallocation that has pulled some previously centralised functions of the state up to the supranational level, and some down to regional level (J.Greenwood, *Representing interests in the EU*). It is based on the principle of interdependence and dialogue among institutional and civil society

actors, and is a new way to organise public debate and participation. In Spain, the model describes the relations between the central government, the *autonomías* and the European institutions (Delfour, C., *España, las autonomías y Europa*).

"The Europe of regions" was first popularly articulated as such by Denis de Rougemont in the 1960s, leading to a large number of studies and debates on the course of European integration (F.Saint-Ouen, *Denis de Rougemont et l'Europe des régions*). Actually, concerns with regional development were referred to in the preamble to the Treaty of Rome and regional policy initiatives developed slowly over that decade (J.Greenwood, *Representing interests in the EU*). For many years, conferences were the best tool for regional participation in the EU, until a new period began in the 1980s. By 1989, Interreg was established with the aim of launching transfrontier projects of co-operation. Further, the Maastricht Treaty of 1991 signalled that the path towards the future of Europe depended on regions, since the concept of "region" was recognised by Brussels (Caciagli, *Regiones de Europa*). The Maastricht Treaty for the first time explicitly allowed regional ministers to represent their respective state in the Council of Ministers, a provision first used by the Belgians. (Keating, *The EU and the regions*)

Within this context, Spain moved to democracy in 1977 and established its system of *autonomías*. The multilingual and multicultural character of Spain and the peripheral nationalisms against the state provided and continue to provide ample potential for conflicts of interest (J.Linz in Berger, *Organizing interests in Western Europe*) In Article 2, the Spanish Constitution of 1978 guarantees "the right of autonomy of nationalities and regions" and "solidarity among them". The *autonomías* have full power to organise their territory as it is convenient for them. Regional parliaments and executive branches have decision-making competence in many areas of policy (e.g. health, education, transport), and the decentralised system of *autonomías* is flexible enough for developing regional lobbying (C.Delfour, *España, las autonomías y Europa*). Statutes of autonomy fall into two main categories, special and general. The former includes the three national minorities- the Basque country, Catalonia and Galicia-together with Andalusia, which have full *autonomías* statutes ratified by referendum. (Morata, *Spanish regions in the EU*)

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The participation of the *autonomías* in European decisions has been a topic of perennial debate and intergovernmental negotiation. A national party without a majority in the national parliament (1993-PSOE, 1996-PP, and 2004-PSOE) has to rely on the support of regional parties (CiU in 1993 and 1996, ERC in 2004). This cedes greater influence regarding public policy to the regional parties, including European policy. So, circumstantial majorities, created by a particular electoral result might increase a regional party's power, but, as yet, there is no national institution representing these interests on a permanent basis (J. Molins, *The governance of regional development and the new structural funds regulations*, Florence, March 2007).

Once Spain became a full member of the EU (1 January 1986), the development of public policy favoured the development of pressure groups within diverse social groups (J.M.Molins and A.Casademunt, *Pressure groups and the articulation of interests*). EU membership improved the effectiveness of the collective action of Spanish associations (J.Molins, *Globalization, Social concertation and business organizations. The case of Spain (1986-2000)*). Regional governments were however mostly excluded from EU decision-making processes and this was inconsistent with their role in policy implementation. This is the principal reason regional governments developed their lobbying efforts in the EU (J. Molins and F.Morata, "Spain: Rapid arrival of a latecomer").

### **3. THE RESPONSE OF THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS TO LOBBYING**

At a formal level, the EU only recognises national member states. European institutions have, since the 1980s, considered regional and local authorities as 'natural allies' however, faced with the reluctance of certain member-states to give up any share of their sovereignty (Tömmel I., "Transformation of Governance: The European Commission's Strategy for Creating a Europe of the Regions"). Five European institutions are most closely linked to the lobbies' development: namely, the Commission, the Council of Europe, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, and the Committee of Regions. From the EU institutions' perspective, the increase of lobbying practices is a consequence of the Europeanisation of problems, and the nature of the solutions called for. Regional EU lobbying mainly benefits regions but

also has advantages for the EU institutions themselves, providing information, conveying issues between institutions, selling EU policy to national and local authorities, and constituting a source of legitimisation for the EU institutional policymaking process (F.Morata, *La Unión Europea*). Although civil interest groups have been involved in policy-making in the EU since its creation, their structured incorporation into the European policy formation process is relatively recent.

The dialogue between the Commission (the executive branch of the EU institutions) and interest groups is mainly produced through Committees of Experts that advise the Commission. The *autonomías* have a presence in 98 of approximately 400 consultative committees of the European Commission. The representation of the Committees in the Commission was agreed in September 1987 between the central government and the Catalan and Basque governments. In 2002, the number of committees opened to the participation of the *autonomías* increased up to 98 for the period 2003-2007. (Ramon I Sumoy, *Multilevel governance*) Moreover, the Commission has formalised dialogue with civic groups by adopting general principles and minimum standards governing the process of consultation with interested parties. In 1993, a Commission communication included a number of measures to improve the structure of the relations between the Commission and interest groups. First, the Commission established a list of not-for-profit organisations. Second, the Commission collaborated with the European Parliament in order to establish a list of interest groups. Third, the Commission invited interest groups to develop a code of conduct. Fourth, a committee was established to monitor potential conflicts of interest (Morata, *La Unión Europea*). A number of elements are still far from clear however, such as the scope of application of the standards adopted by the Commission, the legal status of the entitlements of interest groups to participation, and the relationship between standards and principles such as the proposed but not adopted Statute for a European Association (Interview to Manel Camós). It was, in effect, a first step for formalisation and regulation with more to follow (D.Obradovic, 'Good governance requirements concerning participation of interest groups in EU consultations' in *Common Market Law Review* 43).

The Council of the EU, the principal law-making and budget-setting body, brings together national ministers, and meets quarterly to set the EU's agenda and

priorities. It has not established any regulation in relation to lobbies, which have to act through the national administrations of the member states. Nonetheless, some regions play a role in national representation through the Council of Ministers. Furthermore, the strong Euro groups can seek to influence the Council of Ministers via media campaigns, making their views known on an issue by issue basis (Morata, La Unión Europea).

The European Parliament (EP) acts as co-decision-maker together with the Council of Ministers and has wide budgetary powers. It has a committee on regional policy, regional planning and relations with both regional and local authorities (Interview with Maite Calvo). The EP alone includes deputies elected under their regional representation (D. Sidjanski, L'Europe du Sud dans la Communauté Européenne). The EP has developed relations with lobbies by making parliamentarians participate in a complex process of negotiations based on an exchange of information among the institutions and the other actors in the political process (Morata, La Unión Europea). The only existing standards for lobbyists are voluntary codes adopted in 1994 by a group of Brussels lobbying firms and the EP in 1996. Under these codes, lobbyists may not sell Commission documents for profit, should declare whom they represent, avoid conflicts of interests, and should not offer inducements to Commission officials (e.g. to obtain documents). The codes do not apply to the Commission or to the Council of Ministers unless they choose to adopt them. At the present time then, there is nothing in place to regulate lobbying (Mack, Business, politics and the practice of government relations).

The Committee of Regions was founded in 1992, after the Maastricht Treaty, and is the only European regional association officially recognised by the Commission (J.Greenwood, Representing interests in the EU). The regions and local authorities provide members for the Committee of Regions, which represents a platform for networking in the main political arena for regions wishing to press for an agenda. Regions' participation is fourfold. First, members are present in plenary sessions where major policy lines are approved; these will then be presented to the other European institutions. Second, regions may have a presence in the commissions. Third, regions can address the presidency, which is the main decision-making body of the Committee of Regions. Last, regions have access to a consultative organisation,

which has to make representations on specific questions in response to the Commission, the Council and the EP. (S.Bolgherini, Come le regioni diventano europee)

Catalonia has only been active in major debates. For example, in 1997, Jordi Pujol took a very open stance in the Maastricht Treaty, on the basis that it was to entail a whole revision of the treaty of the EU (S.Bolgherini. Come le regione diventano europee). To date, the Committee of Regions has not managed to become a powerful institution at the European level since it has only limited advisory power. Moreover, it faces two considerable challenges: a need to reconcile and encompass in a single organisation the heterogeneity of local and regional interests in Europe; and the evolving process of European integration that demands continual adaptation and no longer allows for rigid structures (L. Huici, *El Comité de las regiones: su función en el proceso de integración europea*).

## **4. THE DEVELOPMENT OF CATALAN LOBBYING INSTITUTIONS & PRACTICES**

### **4.1 The new Catalan Statute**

Arguably, effective regional lobbying requires a good body of technocrats, experience in handling foreign relations, and a good relationship between the region and its national government's embassy in Brussels; it is difficult to overstate the importance of diplomatic competence. In Catalonia, regional lobbying is done within the framework of the Statute, which is the body of law that governs Catalan institutions. The new Catalan Statute, approved on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2007, includes nine articles on Catalonia's relation to Europe, which opens a new window of opportunity and has the potential to change most of the region's statutory laws. At the time of writing (2007), the Statute is applicable, but in some cases requires a legislative development in Congress or Parliament that remains outstanding; moreover, the Statute is subject to the ruling of the Constitutional Court, which is pending (J.Molins, The governance of regional development and the new structural funds regulations, Firenze, March,

2007). This does not necessarily impede its application however ( Interview to Leonor Mayor).

From 28 November 2006, it is the department of the presidency of the *Generalitat* that is in charge of policy and all activity concerning the EU (Decree 421/2006, 28th November, Administration's determination of the Departmental competences of the *Generalitat* (Art. 3) <http://www.gencat.net/diari/4771/06332125.htm>). The creation of the post of Secretary for the EU is a consequence of the new framework created by the approval of the new Catalan Statute, and its main aim is to enhance the influence of the *Generalitat* in EU decision-making. The Secretary for the EU hopes to improve the level of participation and institutional presence of Catalonia in the EU (Interview with Anna Terrón). So, one significant Catalan government development designed to support its regional lobbying effectiveness has been the creation of the office of Secretary for the EU, independent of the Foreign Affairs counsellors charged with handling EU business (Interview to Anna Terrón). On 27th December 2006, the functions and the structure of the office of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs were defined. Its main function is the promotion of Catalonia outside of its own territory (Decree 633/2006, 27 December, functions and structure of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs

<http://www.gencat.net/diari/4789/06356077.htm>). The Secretary supports the President of the *Generalitat* in whatever relations he may have with the EU, and coordinates the activities of the administration of the *Generalitat* in its policies relating to the EU (DECRET 631/2006, 27<sup>th</sup> December, creation of the Secretary for the European Union

<http://www.gencat.net/diari/4789/06361032.htm>).

The Secretary for the EU is also in charge of the Catalan government delegation in Brussels. The Secretary for the EU participates in EU initiatives, and in the consultative processes initiated by the Commission and is responsible for strengthening the Catalan presence at the EU institutions. Furthermore, the Secretary for the EU has the following functions: support and advise the president of the *Generalitat* in all policies concerning the EU; promote and coordinate all administration activities relating to the EU; offer technical support for all EU projects relating to Catalonia; act as a linking organisation between Catalonia and the EU

institutions, and in all consultative procedures; supervise the participation of the government of the *Generalitat* in multilateral and bilateral mechanisms in the definition of the position of the Spanish state in the Council of Ministers of the EU, taking into account the interests of Catalonia (Interview with Anna Terrón).

The benefits of a coordinating body are clear, but the Catalan government will need to ensure that energy goes into building flexible mechanisms of participation in the decision-making process at Brussels, and that it is not consumed by growing bureaucracy.

#### **4.2 Catalan representation in Brussels**

The Secretary coordinates activities in Catalonia and in Brussels, and also coordinates the delegation of the *Generalitat* in Brussels, which is now the same entity as that of the *Patronat Català* (incorporating the former Regional Office of Catalonia in Brussels). The Catalan government set up an office in Brussels in order to have direct representation at the heart of the European institutions, Catalonia's office in Brussels was opened in 1986 (by 2004, there were 230 regional offices in Brussels). The Brussels office was in charge of what was called 'Para diplomacy' and now has four main functions. First, it serves as a link between EU institutions. Second, the office gathers information for its paymaster about EU policy and new political developments (J.Greenwood, Representing interests in the EU). Third, these offices also serve to represent regions insofar as they act as consulates for regions in Brussels. Fourth, they also work to provide technical assistance, helping in the scoping and delivery of regional projects, preparing candidacies for cooperation programmes, whether practically or more theoretically (Caciagli, Las Regiones de Europa). A sentence from the Constitutional Tribunal of 26<sup>th</sup> May 1996 recognised the competence of the *autonomías* in maintaining direct relations with the institutions of the EU (Morata, La Unión Europea) This allowed for direct relations between regional offices and the EU institutions in what concerned regional competences. The office in Brussels merged with the *Patronat* into a single body, which was, in turn, subsumed by the Catalan delegation in Brussels and most recently by the office of the Secretary for the EU (Interview with Immaculada Buldú).

The *Patronat Català Pro-Europa* is a public consortium that was created to take care of coordinating activities relating to the EU, and was tasked with such non-governmental responsibilities as keeping the population informed (Interview with Rita Sancho). The *Patronat* is promoted by the Catalan government, the Federation of the Savings Bank, universities, schools, town hall and some municipalities. Its primary function is to promote and coordinate the activities of documentation, information management and study of anything concerning relations with the European institutions. For a long time, the *Patronat* served as a key instrument of coordination. Since 1986, the institution pushed for better integration of the economic and cultural sectors of the region. The *Patronat* has to supervise the adaptation of Catalan legislation to the new European legal framework, and organises debates and courses on European issues (S.Bolgherini, Come le regioni diventano Europee). The *Patronat Català Pro-Europa* reports to the Vice-presidency of the *Generalitat* (Decree 421/2006, 28th November, Administration's determination of the Departmental competences of the *Generalitat* (Art. 3)

<http://www.gencat.net/diari/4771/06332125.htm>). Since the merging of the organisations last year, many of the technocrats of the *Patronat* now work for the Secretary for the EU.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2004, the delegation of the government of the *Generalitat* in Brussels was created in order to represent and defend the interests of Catalonia at the EU, and in order to monitor information concerning new initiatives and programmes at the EU institutions. The officer in charge of the Delegation of Government in Brussels also leads the *Patronat Català pro-Europa* and is elected by the government of the *Generalitat*. The mission of the Catalan delegation in Brussels is to inform; to manage the economic and professional interests of Catalonia; to act as technical counsellor for public and private Catalan entities; and to act as a linking organisation for equivalent delegations of other regions with a base in Brussels (Decree 314/2004, 22nd June, creation of the delegation of the Government of the *Generalitat* in Brussels. <http://www.gencat.net/diari/4165/04168110.htm>). After the recent changes, the *Patronat* now carries less weight; civil relations have faded away, leaving the Delegation with greater institutional presence, but one defined politically rather than socially. Relations with EU institutions are as a result much more dependent on political affinities (Interview to Carles Gasòliba).

#### **4.3 Regional participation in national government representation at Brussels**

Regions also seek to lobby the EU via an effort to shape national governments' capacity to manoeuvre in Brussels. In 2006, the presence of regional authorities inside the Spanish embassy as observers of the national government's interactions with the EU was approved (J.Molins, Regional governance and new European rules: The Spanish case, Florence, March, 2007). These regional counselors are only used as an information gathering mechanism by the *autonomías* however, and do not participate in the decision-making process (Interview with Joaquim Llimona). Moreover, just one delegate of the *autonomías*, appointed by the central government, is responsible for coordinating the activities of the Spanish embassy and the delegations of the *autonomías* in Brussels, as well as for collecting and disseminating information (Interview with Carles Gasòliba). Moreover, since 2005, the *autonomías* participate directly in the meeting of the Council workshops and in four ministerial formations (through the presence of this delegate of the *autonomías* that rotates every six months in the Environmental Council, Agriculture and Fishing, Employment, Social Policy, Health, Consumption and Education, Youth and Culture).

Sectoral conferences (organizations of intergovernmental cooperation between the *autonomías* and the ministries) constitute the political framework where the *autonomías* choose their representatives and the common positions that they should defend in each Council of Ministers. These representatives also participate in the correspondent preparatory ministerial meetings. For the areas of agriculture and fishing, they agreed on appointing the representation to the most affected community. For environment they decided to choose a system of rotation so that each state delegation includes three autonomies but with one single counselor. Moreover, the *autonomías*, as explained, are present in 90 of the Committees presided by the Commission. (Interview to Jorge Moragas)

The new Catalan Statute also provides for the creation of the bilateral *Generalitat*-State Commission, which is intended to be a framework through which relations between the institutions will be channeled

([http://www.map.es/prensa/notas\\_de\\_prensa/notas/2007/02/2007\\_02\\_26.html](http://www.map.es/prensa/notas_de_prensa/notas/2007/02/2007_02_26.html)). The bilateral Commission is made up of six representatives from each side and meets on the request of either party. The presidency will rotate. A sub-commission superintends European Affairs and Foreign Affairs. So, one of the new body's roles is to supervise EU policy decision-making and to ensure that the appropriate transfers and co-operation described in the Statute take place. It is a further step towards Catalonia's participation in the national government's decisions concerning Europe, but the institution is as yet not fully defined and has only supervisory power ([http://premsa.gencat.net/display\\_release.html?id=25488](http://premsa.gencat.net/display_release.html?id=25488)). It has also been suggested that the bilateral Commission will tend to meet and function to the extent of the correlation between regional political colours and the central government's (Interview with Carles Gasòliba).

To date, the extent of the participation of the regions in the decisions taken in Madrid concerning EU matters has disappointed their advocates. Clearly, regional participation currently ebbs and flows according to electoral currents, making national parties more or less dependent for support on regional ones. To move away from that, Catalan governmental institutions will need to increase the region's quota of representatives in the Spanish embassy in Brussels, and achieve direct participation rather than its current monitoring role.

Lobbying effectively in Brussels requires coordination of the activity of several layers of decision-making and policy-making institutions: the European institutions, the Member-States institutions, and regional and local institutions, not to say corporate and other organisations. The process of integrating the web of interests is complex and dynamic. This calls for clarity of regulation as to legitimate and unacceptable forms of lobbying, and clear protocols about the activity required of each institutional layer, so as to minimise intergovernmental confrontation. Furthermore, lobbies should not seek to exist as fixed structures but rather as fluid constructions which can take an appropriate form on an ad hoc, issue by issue basis. Thus, lobbies need to be regulated by laws intelligently designed in order to adapt to each particular interest and circumstance.

## **5. LOBBYING VIA REGIONAL ALLIANCES**

Like other regions, Catalonia participates in a number of regional alliances aimed at increasing regions' influence in the European arena. Regional alliances are institutional alliances: whenever regions ally for particular purposes, they do it through their regional institutions, though the alliances created are not necessarily stable. The networking capacity of a region is therefore important.

### **5.1 Trans-regional Brussels offices**

Trans-regional Brussels offices have been established to support the inter-regional transfer of knowledge and experience, communication and relationship-building. Some have specifically aimed to influence funding programme decisions. For example, the Assembly of European Regions (AER) was established in 1985 to promote cooperation between the regions of Europe, and the idea of regionalism and federalism. Its main objective was to achieve recognition of the "fait régional" and, thereby, the inclusion of regions in the institutional EU framework (Caciagli, *Regiones de Europa*). The AER was the most significant association of its kind between 1985 and 1995 and exerted a great influence in the Maastricht Treaty. It advocated and achieved inclusion of German and Belgian regional representatives in the Council of Ministers, and contributed to the creation of the Committee of Regions. Between 1992 and 1995, J.Pujol, President of the *Generalitat* at that time, presided over the ARE. Catalonia today maintains its participation (S.Bolgherini, *Come le regioni diventano europee*). The role of the AER is now diminished by its success; the 'fait régional' is already accepted by the EU institutions. The AER is no longer the vehicle of choice for regions pursuing a particular purpose.

### **5.2. Inter-regional partnerships**

The Pyrenees co-operation between France and Spain involved the regions of Aquitaine, Midi-Pyrénées, Languedoc-Roussillon, the Basque country, Navarra, Aragon and Catalonia in an effort to develop relationships between adjacent frontier territories. In the so-called Euro-regions, like the South euro – the region that

encompasses the Central Pyrenees, Languedoc-Roussillon and Catalonia, the EU works as a middleman, offering a framework for inter-regional co-operation. The Commission proposes active co-operation among institutions, business and civil society agencies (C.Delfour, España, las autonomías y Europa), but appears to lack focus; it is difficult to point to specific policies with more concrete objectives or deliverables.

### **5.3 The 4 Motors**

Catalonia has been particularly involved in the formation of the '4 Motors'. In 1988, the Presidents of the regions Baden-Württemberg, Catalonia, Rhône-Alpes and Lombardy signed an agreement of economic cooperation in different areas (art, culture, research, technology and telecommunications) in what has been called a club of the rich, the "quadriga européen", or "4 Motors". Subsequently, they also started to collaborate in the areas of education, cooperation among administrations, unions and organisations (Caciagli, *Regiones de Europa*). The 4 Motors was conceived as a space in which business and civil society could interact and exchange information and know-how (Interview to Joaquim Llimona).

The first objective of the 4 Motors is political: members wish to contribute to the development or establishment of the concept of region in Europe. The group participated actively in the Council of Europe and was the first to argue for the necessity of a chamber of European regions. The members also seek more decentralisation, and self-determination vis a vis legislation and decision-making power. The second aim is an economic one: it is about creating better conditions for technological innovation, scientific development and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. Further, each member region is allocated a particular role: Catalonia is tasked with providing and securing support in "cultural and social matters". The 4 motors lobby has contributed to reinforcement of the concept of a Europe of the regions, but the economic and political disparities between the regions and the elitist air of this group have militated against any specific achievements. Representatives are the political elites of the regions, but have not achieved a more meaningful connection with their peoples (C.Delfour, España, las autonomías y Europa). Broad lines of cooperation have their place, but a programme of specific

policies would help to bridge problems deriving from varied regional structures and provide something more concrete to present to the public.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Formally, the EU institutions only recognise EU national governments. However, they are slowly accepting the idea of the fait regional and start to consider regions as their natural allies. It is clear that there is now a regional dynamic within the structures of the European Union whose potential has yet to be realized. There is certainly an awareness of the necessity to regulate lobbying institutions and practices, but a reluctance to regulate on account of the expected bureaucratic effort involved. A balance needs to be struck between regulation and flexibility.

The Catalan institutions have clearly responded to the opportunity presented by lobbying at the EU. There is now a Secretary for EU affairs charged with coordinating EU affairs, and the new Statute specifically allows for a more direct pursuit of Catalan interests in Brussels. The way forward is not about simply creating more institutions in this area however; more direct mechanisms of participation have to be found which would derive from improved lobbying regulation and more flexible governmental structures. Regional alliances also need to be drawn up around specific projects and would similarly benefit from a clear, but flexible regulatory framework.

Arguably regional lobbying can be more effective than national lobbying for a number of reasons: reduced scale speeds up the process; regions may deal more directly with citizens due to proximity; they can concentrate on specific interests; and national member consensus is not required beyond EU institutional acceptance. Lobbying practices do need to be regulated however, lobbying structures need to be flexible and organisational effort should flow into specific interest lobbies and not sustainable structures at the EU, as an end in themselves.

Equilibrium between regulation and flexibility has to be found at all decision-making levels: at the level of the EU institutions, and the national and regional institutions. Some believe the US model of regulation offers a desirable combination of control and flexibility. There, lobbying activities are regulated by government at both the federal

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and state levels, and all lobbies and lobbying organisations are required to register. Lobbyists today in the US represent every conceivable interest group and are active at every level of government (Interview with Eliseo Neueman). As the case of Catalonia shows, both regions and the EU institutions have an interest in regulating lobbies and in creating conditions for flexible structures adopting these practices. It is in the interest of the regions to develop such regulation for lobbies, and should therefore fall to them to take the process forward.

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