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The Union of European Federalists (UEF) and the Young European Federalists (JEF)

Which role for the federalist groups in the EU
system of interest representation

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UEF and JEF: An introduction

This research focuses on the analysis of two public interest groups – or better, citizens’ groups – advocating in Brussels towards the European Union institutions. The aim of this paper is to analyse their strategy in approaching the EU decision-making system and how they manage to keep alive their ideal, which is also their *raison d’être*. By doing this, we will also try to understand if there are some differences between these two sister organisations’ approaches. Finally, we will try to interpret the lobbying activity and the role of these two NGOs by using the theoretical framework provided by the studies on interest representation.

UEF Europe and JEF Europe are the two umbrella organisations of the European federalists: as JEF is the youth organisation of UEF, the former is a member of the latter. This is the reason why we cannot make a distinction between the ideals and objectives of these two groups. However, the same cannot be said for the activities and methodology that they put in place in order to reach those objectives: Even though they often share common campaigns, they generally conduct their lobbying activity in a different way, while also having a different approach towards the idea of lobbying itself.

Federalism is the ideal that both organisations pursue since their creation in the aftermath of World War II, on the initiative of many anti-fascist activists, such as Altiero Spinelli, who with its *Manifesto of Ventotene*¹ was among the first persons to write about the necessity of the creation of a European Federation. Besides the institutional system, federalism means creating the conditions which would make possible the setting of a European democratic regime where justice, prosperity and peace are pursued as the main objective.

Following these assumptions, it becomes clear that, on the one hand, we cannot think about JEF and UEF as of two organisations blindly supporting the European Union policies or willing to maintain the EU institutional *status quo*; and, on the other hand, we cannot describe these two organisations as simply ‘pro-European’.

Moreover, in order to understand the lobbying activity of UEF and JEF, we should keep in mind that they consider themselves as grassroots movements, able to create a bottom-up legitimization of the European unification ideal, by mobilizing people with their political campaigns. This distinguishes UEF and JEF from the other federalists organisations, such as the European Movement International, of which UEF and JEF are member organisations, and the Spinelli Group. In fact, even though these latter have a different history and have been created with a different scope, both of them can be described as composed mainly by professionals, and they address their message firstly to institutions and political elites.

Even though they declare to be independent from political parties and, more generally, from the classical right-left cleavage, still UEF and JEF are two political movements: This has some important consequences, namely on their internal structure, but also on the motivational aspect of the membership to these groups.

In fact, their internal decision making system, following a democratic federal principle, is centred on three bodies: the Congress, which represents the constituent organisations and determines the general policy; the Federal Committee, which is in charge of the implementation of the general policy between the Congresses; and the Executive Bureau, which administers the work of the organisation, by putting into practice the decisions taken by the Federal Committee. All of the political offices are elected by either the Congress or the Federal Committee. This kind of political structure influences also the lexicon used by the two groups: It is of some relevance the fact that members are often called *militants* or *activists*.²

¹Altiero Spinelli, Ernesto Rossi, Eugenio Colomi, *Manifesto per un’Europa libera e unita*, Ventotene, 1941.
URL: www.altierospinelli.org/manifesto/en

² Statute of JEF Europe. URL: <http://jef.communicate-europe.co.uk/about-jef/statutes-rop/>
Statute of UEF Europe. URL: <http://www.federalists.eu/structure/statutes/>

This element leads our analysis to the motivational aspect mentioned before. Actually, both UEF and JEF are federal umbrella NGOs, composed mainly by national member organisations³ or *sections*. Individual members pay a membership fee to their national section, and participate to the organisational and political activities on a voluntary basis and, often, by financing those activities themselves. The reasons for adhering to these organisations and for supporting their ideal and objectives can be various, however if some kind of *selective incentive* exists, it is hardly tangible and certainly not guaranteed, rather it could be a side-effect. Therefore, we can hypothesize that the political nature of these two federalist civil society organisations and the message they carry represent the real, and perhaps the only, motivational incentive for their members.

Certainly, this raises two main issues: (1) the effectiveness of a small organisation which advocates in favour of a broad public interest; and (2) the survival of an organisation which does not give to its members any tangible incentive, or, as Mancur Olson would probably say, which is not *rational*, because it is not based on a cost-benefit logic, but on the pursuit of a public good – which is non-excludable and non-rivalrous. In fact, the UEF first and JEF later have been pursuing the objective of the creation of a federal Europe since the end of World War II, and today Europe has not attained that stage of its unification yet – and possibly this will never happen. Nevertheless, the two organisations still exist. Therefore, in the next pages we will try and analyse the strategy they adopt to represent their interests, in order to answer to these questions.

³The statutes of both organisations foresee the membership on an individual basis whenever in a country there is no active and recognised national section.

The Union of European Federalists⁴

The Union of European Federalists was created on 15th December 1946 in Paris. In the years before that date, some national groups of European federalists had already been created: for instance, the Italian European Federalist Movement (MFE) was founded in August 1943, and the French Committee for the European Federation was created in June 1944. The federalist movements were thus created even before the European Movement, which, on the initiative of Sir Duncan Sandys, was anticipated by the creation of the *Joint International Committee of the Movements for European Unity*, and then officially founded on 25th October 1948, after The Hague Congress and before the creation of the Council of Europe, in 1949.

The aim of this short historical introduction is twofold. On the one hand, it shows that UEF has a long history and that it is deep-rooted in the history of the European integration process itself. On the other hand, it becomes clear that the federalist movements as much as the first European international organisations have their origin in the same impetus for unity and peace, ideal and pragmatic at the same time, which was perceived as a necessity in the aftermath of World War II. If we consider this in the logic of interest representation, clearly the federalist movements were the most active and also the most influential public interest groups at that time, and for some years to come. Their main strategy was exactly what today is recognized as ‘lobbying’, because it was primarily aimed at influencing the political class: Many of the members of these movements were also the politicians’ advisors, or in some cases were politicians themselves. As an evidence, Léon Blum, Winston Churchill, Alcide De Gasperi and Paul-Henri Spaak were elected honorary presidents of the European Movement in 1948.

Today, UEF’s role has become more circumscribed: The European integration process has developed a system of representation which is mainly based on pluralism⁵, where many public and private interest groups are given the possibility to advocate for their interests or ideals. Furthermore, as it was already mentioned, the role of UEF changed, because the organisation has expanded its activities in order to reach the citizens, rather than seeking only the contacts with the political elites. Nonetheless UEF has kept its logo representing a green E on a white background, which was originally designed for the European Movement and then adopted by all of the European federalists.

UEF Europe today is active in 22 countries, including four countries outside the EU, and has around 30 thousand members – the members of JEF being not included. As it was mentioned before, at the European level JEF is a part of UEF, thus it could be foreseen that these two groups work closely together both at the European level and at the national level. In fact, the activists conduct the campaigns mainly within their local communities. Actually, we should underline that JEF is not always the youth member of UEF at the national level: In some cases, for example in Belgium, JEF is member of the European Movement, and therefore it works closely with this latter, rather than with UEF. Furthermore UEF campaigns are mainly focused on the European Union, but it should be noticed that some sections of UEF are based outside the EU. This is generally an issue for the European umbrella organisations, because they need to reconcile the necessary attention for the European context as a whole, with the attention for the most developed centre of power on the continent, that is the European Union. In the case of UEF, the organisation has been created with the aim of bringing together all the peoples in Europe, but at the same time, its federalist ideal can become a reality only in the framework of the EU.

According to the Director of the UEF European Secretariat, Mana Livardjani, these two contradictions in the internal structure are not considered as «relevant» from the Brussels perspective. Actually UEF and JEF, but also the European Movement International, have their seat in the same building, and this allows them to work together well and to coordinate their activities. For instance, they often collaborate to apply for

⁴This chapter is partially based on the interview conducted by Roberta Carbone with Mana Livardjani in March 2013, in Brussels. Ms Livardjani is the Director of UEF Europe.

⁵ Simon Hix, ‘Interest Representation’, in S. Hix, *The Political System of the European Union*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 1999.

European funding projects; they also organise together some social events, such as the ‘European Federalists’ Winter Reception’ – which is not only an occasion to gather their members, but also to keep in contact with some important personalities of the EU sphere, ranging from the representatives of partner organisations to the MEPs. Sometimes they also merge their forces to organise some pan-European campaigns or activities: There are some very recent examples of this sort. In fact, within the ‘UEF-JEF Joint Taskforce for joint federalist action’, two pan-European *actions* were recently organised jointly by UEF and JEF, and carried out by many national sections all around Europe. The first one was the ‘Action Week’ titled ‘To Stop The Crisis, Federal Europe Now!’, which was held during the week before the October 2012 European Council.⁶ A second example is the *action* ‘12.12.12: Time to decide, time for a European Federation!’, which was held before the December 2012 European Council.⁷

Nevertheless, UEF Director underlines that the main role of UEF Europe is not to organise specific activities, which are most often organised and carried out by local member organisations. Rather, it focuses on the lobbying activity within the EU decision-making system, and it coordinates the campaigns, according to the general political orientation decided on the occasion of the European Congresses and Federal Committees. Therefore the local sections can organise whichever activity they want, and they can collaborate with whatever partner organisation they choose. This is, probably, the reason why from the Brussels’ point of view the abovementioned internal systemic issues are not perceived as relevant.

If the lobbying activity is UEF Europe’s main role, it is of fundamental importance to understand what is the meaning of *lobbying* according to UEF. «Lobbying means to communicate and advocate for your position. To promote your ideas towards the institutions and politicians». Therefore, according to this definition that UEF Director gave us, we should make a distinction between the UEF activities which are aimed at raising the citizens’ awareness, and the other activities aimed at advocating for the federalist ideas and proposals.

As a matter of fact, the first lobbying tool of UEF is the direct role of its members. First of all, we should mention the creation of a joint UEF-JEF ‘Federalist Intervention Taskforce’: The members of this group have been charged with the task of spreading the federalist proposals in the EU-Brussels sphere, by participating to a large number of events organized by the EU institutions or by the political parties, where they are supposed to make questions and, more broadly, to intervene during the debate. Apart from this specific *taskforce*, this represents one of the most important activities for UEF members at all levels: In fact their first way to spread their ideas is speaking and writing, for example by contributing with their articles to both traditional or online newspapers and magazines, or by writing books, or else by participating to a large number of conferences and debates, exactly as the *taskforce* does. However, UEF members can be an even more important resource for the organization when it comes to well-known personalities or politicians in the European sphere. Beginning with the President, Andrew Duff, who is a British liberal MEP and also chairman of the Spinelli Federalist Intergroup of the European Parliament. As the President, many other UEF members are also members of the Spinelli Group, both within the European Parliament or outside it: This is one of the reasons why there is a constant collaboration between the secretariats of UEF and of the Spinelli Group. Another example of one important UEF personality inside the EU institutions is Mercedes Bresso, former UEF President and today President of the Committee of the Regions.

There are, however, also other, more systematic, methods which can be included in the lobbying activity of UEF Europe. First of all, the Secretariat uses on a daily basis different media – social media, newsletter,

⁶ The Action Week took place from 12th to 17th October 2012 in around 40 cities across Europe. The aim of the action was as follows: «With their pan-European action week, UEF and JEF want to stress the need to give a solid fiscal, economic and political foundation to the European monetary union, launch a major European project to promote continent-wide growth, and address the crucial questions of reforming and governing Europe democratically and effectively.»

URL: www.federalists.eu/uef/news/action-week-to-stop-the-crisis-federal-europe-now

⁷ The objective was mainly to submit the federalists’ proposals for the future of the EU to the European Council: «With our pan-European initiative we want to make pressure on national governments to act – and act now – by approving a road for a constitutional convention with a mandate to arrive to a democratic federal Eurozone while preserving the achievements of the Union. We also want to make pressure on the members of the European Parliament to have their say and not let the initiative for a plan for a political union in the hands of the national governments alone.»

URL: www.federalists.eu/uef/news/121212-time-to-decide-time-for-a-european-federation-guidelines

press – and has contacts with the European think-tanks and with other civil society organizations, in order to put in place different kinds of collaborations – for instance the intervention of one UEF representative on the occasion of a debate or a conference organized by a think-tank or by another organization. All this helps spreading the federalists’ ideas. Furthermore, we should mention those campaigns which target specifically the political representatives: Among these, the 2009 campaign titled ‘Who Is Your Candidate?’. It was led during the campaign for the 2009 European elections, and its aim was to convince the European political parties to nominate their candidate for the Presidency of the European Commission. There are many other campaigns of this kind which are being or have been led by UEF Europe, such as the ongoing campaign asking the European Parliament to convene a European Convention, with the aim of drafting a Constitution for Europe. Finally, we can also mention one recent strategy put in place by UEF: Some representatives of UEF participated to the 2012 congresses of the European political parties, such as the PES congress in Brussels in September; the EPP congress in Bucharest in October; and the ALDE congress in Dublin in November.

After this analysis of UEF lobbying strategies, we could conclude that this group does not need a great budget for this particular activity, because this latter relies mainly on the public role of some of its members, and partially on the voluntary, non systematic, activity of all of its *militants*. Actually, on the European Transparency Register, the Union of European Federalists declares a budget of € 174,679. UEF Director explained us that 62% of that budget consists in public financing by the EU institutions: This is the *operating grant*⁸ from the EU programme ‘Citizens in Action’. The rest comes from private contributions and membership fees. Although this is not a particularly remarkable budget⁹, it is of some relevance that it is not mentioned in the Transparency Register what is the amount specifically destined to lobbying. In fact, as Ms Livardjani told us, the majority of that budget is employed for the rental and maintenance of the UEF offices in Brussels, for the salaries of four members of the staff, for the material and for the organisation of events such as seminars. Therefore, by considering the previous analysis, we could hypothesize that the shortage of financing is probably the result of an organisation which is mainly based on the voluntary work of its members. This makes it also difficult to distinguish the ‘real’ lobbying activity from the rest of the activities conducted by UEF Europe.

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⁸ The purpose of an *operating grant* is to provide financial support towards the functioning of an organisation in its core activities - over a period that is equivalent to its accounting year - in order to carry out a set of activities. An *action grant* is a funding for specific projects. Source: www.europa.eu.

⁹ Especially if we consider it as compared to the budget of other NGOs, such as WWF European Policy Programme: € 4,743,101, of which almost 500,000 directly related to the lobbying activity. Source: EU Transparency Register. Last update: 13/09/2012.

The Young European Federalists¹⁰

The Young European Federalists – or JEF if we use the French acronym, which is also the official one – began their activities in the early 1950s, in their office in Paris, as the young section of the Union of European Federalists. At that time, this group of young activists had still not constituted an officially recognized NGO: Their activity was mainly based on the guidelines of UEF. Both JEF and UEF underwent a difficult period in the late 1950s, mainly over the issue of what should have been the best strategy in order to pursue the objective of the European federation. At the end of that period there was a ‘renaissance’ for both organisations, in the mid 1960s, as a response to the crisis of the European integration process. In fact, JEF’s liaison office was created in 1970, leading to the official foundation of the Young European Federalists with the Congress of March 1972.¹¹

JEF Europe was one of the first youth organisations to apply for the membership and funding of the newly constituted *European Youth Foundation* of the Council of Europe in 1972. The *European Youth Forum* of the European Communities was created only some years later, in 1978, and today JEF is one of its member NGOs. As a former Secretary General of JEF states, «The fact that the Community played no role [at the beginning] has a lot of consequences until now».¹² In fact, still today JEF Europe is an organisation divided between its EU orientation towards the European Union and its vocation towards the broader Europe. Some factors can be presented as an evidence of this assumption.

First of all, the funding on which JEF Europe’s activities are based. According to the data reported in the Transparency Register, JEF declares an annual budget of € 177,424, of which almost 21.5% comes from the *European Youth Foundation* of the Council of Europe. As the President of JEF Europe explains, this has a direct impact on the activities planned by JEF. In fact, the resources supplied by the *European Youth Foundation* must be used respecting some criteria, which are not always perfectly coinciding with the federalist objectives of JEF, because while the federalist ideas are well-suited for the EU, we cannot maintain the same assertion for the Council of Europe. Therefore, the seminars that JEF organises periodically all around Europe generally are not focused on the EU policies, politics, or polity, but on more inclusive topics, such as the values of human rights, freedom of speech, intercultural dialogue.

Secondly, not all of the almost 30 thousand members of JEF Europe are based in an EU member state: Actually, more than a third of the 30 national sections of JEF is based in a non-EU country. Even though we should be careful when interpreting this data, because one third of the national sections represents far less than one third of the individual members, this fact raises the question of how to pursue the federalist ideal both inside the EU and outside it. Questioned about this, JEF’s President Pauline Gessant explained that the existence of some JEF member sections outside the EU is relevant when planning the campaigns, when discussing about a political resolution regarding the EU, and also when it comes to the different needs of the various sections. In fact, JEF organises many types of activities throughout the year – some of them are annual recurring *actions*, while some others target a specific issue in a specific context –, and these activities are not always focused on the EU. For instance, the Visa action titled ‘JEF for a Visa-Free Europe’ has the aim «to increase awareness among young people within and outside of the EU about the obstacles that young Europeans outside of the Schengen zone are facing when they would like to travel to any of the EU countries».¹³ Another significant example of one pan-European action which is not specifically focused on the EU is the ‘Free Belarus Action’: It consists in a demonstration in favour of the freedom of speech and, more broadly, in favour of democracy in Belarus, and in a protest against the Belarusian dictatorship, which

¹⁰ This chapter is partially based on the interview conducted by Roberta Carbone with Pauline Gessant in March 2013, in Brussels. Ms Gessant is the President of JEF Europe.

¹¹ Tobias Flessenkemper, *JEF. Back to the Future. 25 Years of JEF Europe*, ‘The New Federalist’, January 1997, pp. 13-16.

¹² Op. cit., p. 14.

¹³ Source: <http://jef.communicate-europe.co.uk/activities/street-actions/visa-action/>

started in 2006 and then became a very successful action, taking place every year, not only in Europe, but all over the world, and involving many partner organisations.¹⁴

Nonetheless, the most relevant difficulty could be foreseen when considering the lobbying activity of JEF Europe. In fact, if for the Young European Federalists *lobbying* means «to make public policy change in favour of more Europe», as JEF President told us, it probably becomes difficult, if not impossible, to advocate for ‘more Europe’ towards the Council of Europe. Actually, when looking at JEF’s strategies and activities which aim at lobbying, we fall completely in the field of the European Union affairs. In order to understand how this particular kind of activity is tackled by the JEF members, we should begin by analysing JEF’s dossier in the Transparency Register. A first noticeable element is the number of persons in charge of representing the interests of the organisation: 70, but nobody is accredited for the European Parliament. Questioned about this high number of people involved in Brussels, Pauline Gessant explained that it was not easy to fill in the form for the Transparency Register, because it is shaped on the model of the private company. An NGO, in particular if composed almost exclusively by volunteers – as it in the case of JEF – cannot be structured as professionally as a private company, which generally has a liaison office in Brussels in charge specifically of representing the interests of the company itself towards the EU institutions. The way JEF tries to influence the EU public policies and institutions in favour of a more united and federal Europe is, instead, focused on the engagement of every single activist. «I should have written that we have 30 thousand lobbyists!», Ms Gessant told us. Therefore the choice to consider as active lobbyists the members of the Federal Committee – which includes the President, the Vice-Presidents, the Secretary General, and the Treasurer –, even though only the Secretary General and the two interns who work with him at the European Secretariat are based in Brussels and receive a salary.

Ms Gessant underlines that there is a strong difference between advocating for a private interest or for a public one, above all because the involvement of the person is different: «There are some persons who are members of JEF for their own interest, as everywhere, but generally speaking everyone benefits from JEF membership for many different reasons», sometimes it is for their future career, but most often because it was an enriching experience. What she considers as the most important, though, is that «the organisation is strong because people believe in the cause». Unfortunately, she says, it is difficult for the EU institutions to make a distinction between the different kinds of lobbies, also because the latter are fundamental for the information they provide.

As a consequence of what has been written until now, we understand that almost every activity that is carried on by JEF activists can be partly considered a way to advocate for JEF ideas and objectives. Among these, we can point out the numerous *street actions*, such as the already mentioned ‘Free Belarus Action’ and ‘JEF for a Visa-Free Europe’, or the one organised on the occasion of ‘Europe Day’, but also the actions organised with UEF Europe, such as the ones of last October and November. Moreover, we should talk about the debates organised by JEF, where important personalities of the EU political sphere are invited; the joint UEF-JEF ‘Federalist Intervention Taskforce’; and also the online JEF magazine, *The New Federalist*¹⁵. These are some ways to spread the federalist ideas, and perhaps also to influence the EU public sphere.

Finally and most importantly, we should mention the *campaigns* and the petitions: These are the most important tools for JEF to influence the political class and the EU institutions. One example is the ‘Petition on Federal Union’, which is another initiative promoted together with UEF Europe. Then, we could mention the 2009 campaign to convince the Czech President Vaclav Klaus to sign the Treaty of Lisbon: Every JEF member was invited to send him a pen and a letter as a symbolic way to encourage him to sign. Finally, probably the most successful campaign led by JEF together with other civil society organisations is the ‘Initiative for the European Citizens’ Initiative’, a «Campaign for a citizen-friendly and useable designed European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI)»¹⁶, which took place during the legislative process for the ECI

¹⁴ Source: www.jef.eu ; www.free-belarus.eu.

¹⁵ URL : www.thenewfederalist.eu

¹⁶ Source: www.citizens-initiative.eu.

Regulation.¹⁷ JEF first contributed to this campaign by participating to the Open Consultation of the European Commission on the ECI draft Regulation¹⁸, then it joined a ‘coalition’ of civil society organisations, all of them willing to improve the Commission’s draft Regulation. The aim of this campaign has been the improvement of the functioning of an instrument that is considered fundamental for bringing the European citizens closer to the EU: «JEF-Europe together with pro-democracy groups seized the opportunity to inject more democracy in the EU and thus bring the Citizens and European decision-makers closer to each other.»¹⁹ Pauline Gessant told us that much of the work done by JEF targeted the MEPs. All of the JEF sections were invited to send a letter to their national MEPs and Ministers of Foreign Affairs, while JEF Europe contacted directly the MEPs within the parliamentary committee working on the ECI Regulation. At the end of the legislative process, many of the requests made by the ECI Campaign were satisfied, thus JEF considered this campaign a very successful one. Today that Campaign still exists, and is working on the 2015 revision of the ECI Regulation, but JEF is not working actively on it anymore.

Besides this last example, the conclusion that can be drawn is, however, that the majority of JEF activities never came to reach the objective. Pauline Gessant presents it like this: «That’s almost as if it were the failures that make us continue to exist». In a sense, this could be considered as the best explanation for the longstanding activity of JEF Europe: In fact, the aim of this NGO is to come to the creation of a federal Europe, and as long as this objective will not be attained, the organisation will continue to exist. Pauline Gessant herself told us that even though for decades JEF has been struggling for an objective which is postponed again and again, there is always something to struggle for: The idea of a «United Europe» is a strong ideal which includes peace, human rights and democracy, and there are many countries, also among the European neighbours, where these values are still not guaranteed.

Certainly, there are two main issues to consider when looking at the survival on the long term of an NGO like JEF: First of all the sources of financing, and then if it will be able to reach a large number of people with its message. As for the first point, we should recall that the public financing amounts to 68.5% of JEF’s budget²⁰. According to Ms Gessant, it is certain that JEF needs to diversify more its sources of financing, for example by looking for new donors among the foundations, and that it would be impossible to continue to organise all of the activities without the public financing. Nonetheless, JEF is also a member of other organisations – the Union of European Federalist, the European Youth Forum, the European Movement International, the World Federalist Movement – and collaborates with other NGOs, such as the European Students’ Forum (AEGEE) and the Political Parties Youth Organisations (PPYO). On the one hand, all of these partner NGOs help spreading the message and reaching more people. On the other hand, the existence of some sister organisations is a guarantee that they will always try to help one another. But finally, according to Pauline Gessant the most important reason why JEF would survive even without the public financing is that as long as the ideal of a European federation will not be reached, there will always be the national sections which will continue to struggle for this objective and that will keep JEF Europe alive, even if that would be much more difficult.

¹⁷ Regulation (UE)No 211/2011.

¹⁸ Green Paper on a European Citizens’ Initiative, COM (2009) 622 final. JEF contribution to be found on www.jef.eu.

¹⁹Source: <http://jef.communicate-europe.co.uk/activities/campaigns/european-citizens-initiative/jefs-achievements-and-campaigning-history-for-the-eci/>

²⁰ This includes the contributions from the European Youth Foundation and from the EU, both as *action grant*, and as *operating grant* in the framework of the programme Youth in Action.

Conclusions

In this essay we tried to analyse two very particular groups of interest representation in the European Union. Particular because, as we underlined, they are longstanding federations of national organisations, *orumbrella organisations*, advocating for an institutional objective – that is the creation of a united and democratic Europe, in the institutional form of a federal state. It is therefore difficult to collocate these two federalist movements in the theoretical framework of the studies on interest representation, as they do not advocate in favour or against one specific EU policy. This leads to a situation where generally it is almost impossible to identify what is the impact of their *actions* or *campaigns*, because there can be no immediate consequence on the institutional system. We could present this by using Bugdahn's categories, who distinguishes between the 'output' of NGOs – i.e. the fact to be consulted by the institutions – and their actual 'impact' on the negotiations.²¹

Moreover, the fact that these two federalist movements advocate for a broad institutional cause collocates them in what has been called the 'Advocacy Coalition Framework', namely a system where the groups of interest representation form alliances based on «a set of normative and causal beliefs».²² In fact, only in some specific occasions JEF and UEF participate to a 'policy coalition'²³ or 'ad hoc issue coalition'²⁴, and even when they do it, as in the case of the ECI campaign, they always share the same values with their partner organisations, even when not sharing the federalist ideal. Taking the example of the ECI campaign, all of the NGOs in the 'coalition' share the objective of creating a more democratic European Union.

Therefore we can maintain that for this kind of NGOs, which make the values as the objective of their lobbying activity, the main aim that they try to attain by creating a network is to show «the size and breath of support for a proposal».²⁵ This means that one of the most important reasons of the existence of NGOs probably is their legitimating function towards the EU institutional system. If we stick to Greenwood's argument, according to whom «the weakness of EU representative democracy is grounded in its lack of 'public space'»,²⁶ we should agree with his conclusion that the EU institutions are trying to complement their 'output legitimacy' with an 'input legitimacy', by transforming the EU in a *participatory democracy*: «This model of 'participatory democracy', and the systematic empowerment of organized citizen groups as a means to achieve this, explains why organizations articulating interests stated as those of the citizen have arrived at the centre of EU policymaking».²⁷

At this stage, what becomes clear is that these arguments radically contradict the 'rational-choice' theories, according to which interest groups are «'rent-seeking' agents in their interactions with government, distorting wealth creation and imposing public costs by extracting special privileges».²⁸ Instead, it seems that citizens' groups, which are the exact contrary to the abovementioned definition of interest group, are both encouraged by the EU institutions, and able to motivate their members, even if it is for a public interest. In particular, the analysis of UEF and JEF demonstrated that these two federalist groups have been able to motivate their members and to keep an important role on the European stage for almost seventy years, without providing any guaranteed *selective incentive*, and even without the possibility to have an immediate result from their activities. We could therefore conclude by saying that this research provides one grounded reason to affirm that the EU is a pluralist system of interest representation.

²¹ Sonja Bugdahn, *Travelling to Brussels via Aarhus: can transnational NGO networks impact on EU policy?*, 'Journal of European Public Policy', 15:4, June 2008, pp. 588-606.

²² Paul Sabatier, *An Advocacy Coalition Framework of Policy Change and the Role of Policy-Oriented Learning Therein*, 'Policy Sciences', Issue 21, 1988, pp. 129-168.

²³ Alex Warleigh, *The hustle: citizenship practice, NGOs and 'policy coalitions' in the European Union – the cases of Auto Oil, drinking water and unit pricing*, 'Journal of European Public Policy', 7:2, June 2000, pp. 229-243.

²⁴ Christine Mahoney, *Networking vs. allying: the decision of interest groups to join coalitions in the US and the EU*, 'Journal of European Public Policy', 14:3, April 2007, pp. 366-383.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Justin Greenwood, *Interest Representation in the European Union*, Basingstoke, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 204.

²⁷ Op.cit., p. 129.

²⁸ Op. cit., p. 200.

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