

DESIGNED FOR DIFFICULTIES

A Case Study of the Institutional Design of a European Level Youth Lobby Group from a Post-Socialist State

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ABSTRACT

Recent research suggests that there are a number of significant issues faced by lobby groups from the European Union's post-socialist sphere when attempting to influence policy at a European level. Specifically, the research highlights four major factors which prevent lobbyists from achieving their ends: inexperience among lobbyists entailed by the absence of a lobbying tradition, insufficient resources, a domestic – rather than European – focus and an underdeveloped institutional capacity to learn from experiences at the European level. However, while such factors have been found to exist broadly for lobby groups from Europe's post-socialist private sector, there has not yet been an assessment of the validity of such conclusions for the sub-sector of post-socialist youth lobby groups. This paper seeks to address this gap in the literature through a case study consideration of the International Association for Political Science Students (IAPSS) based in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

This paper is presented in four parts. The first part introduces the specific European lobby group literature and the recent research results that suggest the four key factors that negatively impact post-socialist lobby group efforts at a European level. The second part introduces the focus of the case study, IAPSS, and presents a short précis of the Association, the goals it maintains for lobbying at a European level and the means through which these goals are pursued. The third part considers the institutional design of IAPSS in relation to the four factors outlined in part one and finds that the design of the institution itself hampers the success of its European level lobbying efforts. The fourth part of the paper is both a discussion of the findings in part three and a series of suggestions by which IAPSS might address their lobbying difficulties.

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Introduction

In the supranational environment of the European Union the state politics of the twentieth century are now writ large on a pan-continental scale in the twenty-first. From the North Sea to the Russian Border, the Arctic Circle to the Cypriot coast, across twenty-seven nation-states, twenty-three official languages and a population of nearly half a billion the European Union has emerged as the world's leading regional institution and a the centre of the political universe on a once divided continent. Like other political actors in this century's globalised political environment, the European Union has also attracted the attention of lobby and interest groups, both from within its borders and, in recognition of its emerging international role, from across the world. From British bankers to Estonian entrepreneurs, Irish industrialists to Turkish tourism operators and even Maltese medical practitioners, the lobbyists and interest groups seeking the support and funding from the European Union's powerful pocketbook represent the diversity of actors a regional economic, political and internationally influential power in a globalised world would expect to seek sustenance and maintenance required to further their agendas.

Lobby and interest groups, though, face a myriad of difficulties in attracting the attention. On top of the probable difficulties of being heard amongst the crowd of more than fifteen thousand lobbyists and the more than 2600 interest groups that maintain a permanent office in Brussels, groups and associations can handicap their lobbying efforts further through a lack of attention to the elements that define success and failure in lobbying at the European level.³ For lobbyists from the European Union's new member states, the lack of funding and lack of lobbying tradition can further hamper attempts to pursue and protect the interests of their group. Indeed, further complicating the attempts of lobbyists from the post-socialist sphere in achieving their aims is a lack of attention to four key factors that determine in a large part the success or failure of lobby groups at the European level. Consistent failure to address these four factors – a common predicament for the Union's new member states – leads to disappointment as lobbying goals are not realised and the groups' interests not realised in the short or long term.

This paper presents a case study of one such interest group in an attempt to highlight such issues in relation to post-socialist states. First presenting a relevant literature review and an explication of the four relevant factors which suggest success or failure for post-socialist lobby groups, the paper then turns to the case study under consideration: the International Association for Political Science Students based in Ljubljana, Slovenia. A brief history and discussion of the organisational design of this youth Association follows, with particular attention paid to the notion of IAPSS as a European level interest group. The novelty of the paper lies in a third section which outlines how the limiting factors identified in the opening section and suffered by IAPSS as an interest group are not matters of chance but of the institutional design of the Association itself; that is, they are negative influence *chosen* by the Association. After a brief discussion of this reality the paper provides a series of prescriptive measures which would address the challenges raised by the four factors and provide IAPSS with the best chance of achieving lobbying success at the European level. Concluding the paper it will be suggested that if the policy prescriptions are implemented then the future success of IAPSS as a European level interest group in a competitive regional and international political environment can only be more likely.

³ 2003 figures.

The Challenges of Eastern Style EU Lobbying

The breathtaking dynamics of European integration and the transfer of regulatory activity at the European level have propelled the vibrant activity from a multiplicity of interest groups. Private and public interests alike regard EU lobbying as an increasingly necessary activity due to the high stakes at this supranational locus of power. Following the paradigmatic shift entailed by the demise of the communist regime, the newly emerged organized actors from the post-socialist states have also endeavoured to strike a distinct note in this overcrowded arena, in order to reap the benefits of the novel political opportunity structures.⁴ Whether they have actually managed to do so is, however, little explored but undoubtedly a compelling research question.

Despite its utter importance, the capacity of the new member states from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to shape decisions with far reaching impact in the EU polity has been, with a handful of notable exceptions, generally neglected in the literature. A bird's eye view on the existing contributions reveals the fact that academic research pertaining to post-communist interest representation is divided into three differentially developed strands focusing on: the analysis of the revived civil society in CEE, the roles performed by these groups in their respective political systems, and the transnational dimension of these actors.⁵ Within the latter strand a disproportionate attention has been awarded to the impact of the EU accession on the post-socialist repertoires for interest intermediation using the Europeanization 'lens' to the detriment of a more thorough and balanced analysis of these groups' potential to efficiently lobby the European Union.⁶

Nevertheless, the existing empirical and theoretical accounts regarding the impact of post-socialist lobbies at the EU level strongly endorse the hypothesis that these organized interest groups have had difficulties in providing valuable input in the complex European policy process while they have been rarely able to influence its outcome.⁷ Borrigan, for instance, speaks about a peculiar mode of interest representation in the case of post-socialist interest groups, where lobbying actors are principally information gatherers for their membership and 'conveyor belts', as they

⁴ For the purpose of this paper, 'post-socialist states' as well as 'Central and Eastern European states' refer to the new EU member states (apart from the Baltic states, Cyprus and Malta, and including Bulgaria and Romania), the candidate states from Croatia and FYROM and the other countries in the Balkan region.

⁵ See Michael Bernhard. 1993. 'Civil Society and Democratic Transition in East Central Europe.' *Political Science Quarterly* 108(2): 307-327; W. Merkel. 1999. 'Civil Society and democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe.' *Quarterly Journal of the Budapest University of Economic Sciences* 21(3); M.M. Howard. 2002. *The Weakness of Civil Society in Postcommunist Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Stephen Padgett. 2000. *Organizing Democracy in Eastern Germany: Interest Groups in Post-Communist Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. On political systems see David Ost. 2000. 'Illusory Corporatism in Eastern Europe: Neoliberal Tripartism and Postcommunist Class Identities.' *Politics and Society* 28(4): 503-530; Stephen Padgett. 1999. *Tripartism Without Corporatism. Organized Interests, the State and Public Policy in Post Communist Eastern Germany*. Paper presented at the Joint Workshops of the European Consortium of Political Research, Mannheim, Germany; David Marsh. 1993. 'The Policy Network Concept in British Political Science. Its Applicability for Central and Eastern Europe.' *Budapest Papers on Democratic Transition*. Budapest: Hungarian Centre for Democracy Studies.

⁶ See N. Perez-Solorzano Borrigan. 2005. *The Europeanisation of Interest Representation in the New EU Member States from ECE. NGOs and Business Interest Associations in Comparative Perspective*. Paper presented at the 3rd ECPR Conference, Budapest, 8-10 September 2005; N. Perez-Solorzano Borrigan. 2001. 'Organized Interests in Central and Eastern Europe. Towards Gradual Europeanisation?' *Politique Européenne* 3: 61-85; Svetlozar Andreev. 2007. *Europeanization from Below – Civil Society Monitoring the Progress of Bulgaria's Preparedness for Accession in the EU*. Paper prepared for the JHU-SAIS Conference "Becoming Good Europeans: the New Member States in the European Union", Washington D. C., April 12-13, 2007.

⁷ Igor Vidacak. 2006. 'Lobbying and Channels of Influence of Croatian Interest Groups in an Enlarged European Union', in Ott, Katarina (ed) *Croatian Accession to the EU. The Challenges of Participation*. Volume 4. Zagreb: The Institute of Public Finance Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, pp.85-113; N. Perez-Solorzano Borrigan. 2004. 'EU Accession and Interest Politics in Central and Eastern Europe.' *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 5(2): 243-272; Zoe Onuțu. 2007. *Romanian Interest Representation in Brussels: an Initial Assessment of Romania's Lobbying Potential in the View of EU Membership*. Iași: Lumen Publishing House.

transfer the good practices and know-how gathered at the European level to their domestic constituencies.⁸ Therefore, the limited impact of their actions endows them with a reactive rather than a proactive role in EU affairs, even though they are very strong supporters of representation in Brussels.⁹ What explains this conspicuous capability-expectations gap?

A recent study concerning Romanian interest groups capacity to effectively lobby the European Union shows that there are four major factors significantly constraining their potential to affect policy outcome in accordance with their members' interests: inexperience among lobbyists caused by the absence of a lobbying tradition; insufficient resources for performing their tasks; a domestic-rather than European-focus, and; an underdeveloped institutional learning capacity to learn from experiences at the European level.¹⁰

From a 'path dependent' approach, the pernicious communist legacies, together with the cumbersome transition process have entailed in Romania an immature interest groups system characterised by a peculiar participatory dynamics. Lobby groups were not able to fully develop neither during the pervasive communist regime that restricted all forms of pluralist participation, nor during the first post-communist decade when the vertically-dominated state system and the unfavourable socio-political culture inhibited their effective participation. Consequently, although they are already EU members, organized groups are still learning how to lobby, both at the domestic and the supranational levels.¹¹

This evident drawback is further complicated by the paucity of both financial and human resources. Although financial resources are a major prerequisite for the survival and maintenance of any organisation within the competitive EU environment, a lack of financial means characterises most Romanian groups. This deficit is not compensated by well-developed human resources either: the lack of specialised personnel and relevant expertise, instability and the large turnover in staff are perhaps the principal cause behind these groups' predominantly reactive stance towards EU affairs.

A further peculiarity of Romanian interest groups, according to the abovementioned study, resides in the disproportionate attention given to domestic matters to the chagrin of European ones. This focus can be explained through their domestic embeddedness and their desire for legitimisation and leverage in the national arena as a result of their activity at the European level. The fact that most of their funding comes from domestic sources and their role generally consists of transferring information and know-how to their national constituencies (that will recognise their maturity and wide expertise) prevents a reorientation of lobbying efforts towards the more challenging supranational setting.¹²

⁸ Borrigan. 2005, p.21.

⁹ According to the consecutive CAPE Surveys conducted between 2001 and 2004. Cape Survey. 2004. *Cape Survey 2004* [15 May 2007] <http://www.sbra.be/cape2004.pdf>.

¹⁰ Onuțu. 2007.

¹¹ Onuțu. 2007, pp.40-44.

¹² Onuțu. 2007, pp.58-60.

The last factor identified to be responsible for the modest capacity to effectively lobby the EU in case of Romanian interest groups represents, in fact, a cumulative effect of the three abovementioned structural weaknesses. The tough competition for funds, the uncertain financial prospects year by year and the modest incentives to invest in learning partly explain the slow socialisation and learning processes. The underdeveloped institutional learning capacity, in spite of the strong institutionalized and non-institutionalized links with other European actors, also derives from poor information management: inefficient dissemination of acquired knowledge throughout the organisation and the lack of clear strategies and objectives that leads to information overload.¹³ Solving this learning capacity problem is undoubtedly essential as it will significantly alleviate the other structural constraints.

Undoubtedly, finding solutions for all of the aforementioned confines is imperative: after all, complexity favours the well prepared, and the sophisticated, multi-layered and continually transforming European lobbying arena is no exception from this rule. There are highly exigent prerequisites for successful EU lobbying, which derive from the specificity of this problematic polity. It is the European Union's multilevel power architecture, the fragmented system of governance, as well as the dual nature of its decision-making (as it incorporates both intergovernmental and supranational elements) that demand a multi-dimensional lobbying strategy and a parallel representation of interests at the regional, national and supranational levels.¹⁴ Furthermore, the complicated policy cycle and the multiplicity of access points require constant lobbying at every phase of the decision-making process and engagement in large coalitions across nationalities, institutions and groups.¹⁵

In addition, the increasing acknowledgement of the pervasive impact of the EU on almost every aspect of its citizens' lives has endowed the EU lobbying system with a vast variety of interest actors, whose impressive number makes staunch competition its most salient trait. Becoming a winner of this extremely competitive lobbying game involves a cumbersome process of preparation and owning an assortment of comparative advantages. According to Bouwen's theory of access, the latter ranges from the organisational form of these groups to their resources.¹⁶ A simple, dynamic decision-making process as well as few layers in the organizational form makes the provision of 'access goods' more flexible. Similarly, consistent financial resources as well as professionalism, expertise, thorough knowledge of the decision-making procedures at the European level, good negotiations skills, and credibility are the keys to success in EU public affairs.

Or, as previously demonstrated, the Romanian interest groups in focus do not yet possess this indispensable 'quality mix', mainly due to the aforementioned constraining factors. However, given the fact that the research discussed in this paper only approached specific types of actors (Romanian businesses and NGOs from various fields), there is a conspicuous need to enlarge the empirical basis in order to avoid rash generalisations. Given the shared communist heritage, the similarities in socio-political cultures and the somewhat similar path to European integration, the validity

¹³ Onuțu. 2007, pp.52-54

¹⁴ Robin Pedler. 2003. (ed.) *EU Lobbying. Changes in the Arena*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

¹⁵ Justin Greenwood. 2003. *Interest Representation in the European Union*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

¹⁶ With his 'theory of access' Bouwen argues the access to the European institutions and the possibility to influence them are conditional on the provision of the so-called 'access goods'. These concern information that is crucial in the EU decision-making process. Thus, there are three main types of information: Expert Knowledge, Information about the European Encompassing Interest, and Information about the Domestic Encompassing Interest. See P Bouwen. 2002. 'Corporate Lobbying in the EU: the logic of access.' *Journal of European Public Policy* 9(3): 365-390.

of the conclusions of this research can and should be tested in the case of other insufficiently explored post-socialist actors as well. In this case, youth lobby groups would constitute a compelling study object, especially due to their distinctive characteristics that distinguish them from other types of lobbyists: they are mostly based on voluntary work, their members and officials have a shorter tenure in office, their desire for participation is mostly based on pragmatic rather than ideological reasons, but they are extremely dynamic and some of them have advanced skills to bring about innovative resolutions to their problems.¹⁷ What is more, in a similar manner with the other CEE lobbyists, organized youth groups in the post-communist countries have faced supplementary challenges propelled by the social and economic reconstruction during the transition period.

Within this context, the International Association for Political Science Students (IAPSS) represents a most relevant and interesting empirical base from which fresh evidence regarding the structural challenges faced by post-socialist youth lobby groups can be drawn. It is not only a sizeable and reputable youth organization, but it is based in Slovenia, a CEE state renowned for its active lobby groups at the European level.¹⁸ Is this group confronted with the same difficulties as its other post-socialist counterparts when attempting to lobby the European Union? The following subsections will offer a competent answer to this research question.

IAPSS: History and Organisation

IAPSS was founded in 1998 in Leiden, The Netherlands where twelve member associations elected Fagutvalget of the Department of Political Science at the University of Oslo as the first Executive Committee. Growing quickly in its first year, by the time of the second annual General Assembly IAPSS boasted a membership of twenty associations in Europe and South Africa.¹⁹ While IAPSS was registered in Leiden and operating under Dutch law, in the years that followed the seat of the Executive Committee moved between Debrecen, Rome and Bucharest.²⁰ In 2003 – and building on the work of the Executive Committee of Slovenia's Polituss – the now widespread network of student political science groups moved to institutionalise the association through the establishment of a permanent seat in Ljubljana.²¹ By 2004 the first transnational Executive Committee was resident in Ljubljana and, in the mandates that followed, Ljubljana cemented its place as the centre of an expanding Association. In 2007 IAPSS claims forty-nine member associations in Europe, Africa, North and South America and the Middle East representing some 10,000 students worldwide making it the largest international representative group for students in the discipline of political science.²²

The institutional goals of IAPSS are expressed in what are known as the Vision, Values, Mission and Pillars of IAPSS.²³ According to the 'IAPSS Vision', the Association:

¹⁷ United Nations. 2003. *Youth Participation in Decision-Making*. [5 May 2007] <http://tinyurl.com/2eapfg>.

¹⁸ Boris Cizelj. 2000. 'Paper Candidate Country Interest Representation in Brussels.' in *Candidate Country Interest Representation in Brussels Conference Proceedings*. Brussels: SBRA.

¹⁹ Fagutvalget. 1999. *Provisional Annual Report for IAPSS 1999*. [24 April 2007] <http://tinyurl.com/yojqcg>.

²⁰ Eveline Hügli and Matija Kovač. 2005. *IAPSS Information Catalogue 2005/2006*. Ljubljana: IAPSS, pp.8-10.

²¹ Hügli and Kovač. 2005, p.10.

²² IAPSS. 2006a. *IAPSS Member Associations*. [24 April 2007] <http://tinyurl.com/2dc2pm>.

²³ IAPSS. 2007a. *IAPSS Vision, Values, Mission and the 5 Pillars*. [24 April 2007] <http://tinyurl.com/2ckxax>.

...aims to achieve cooperation through an international communication network. It generates and promotes opportunities for active engagement of political science students through activities on the local, regional and international levels.²⁴

Combined with the 'IAPSS Values' of political interdependence, professionalism, respecting diversity, knowledge and transparency, the Association expresses an official 'IAPSS Mission' of:

Expand[ing] and diversify[ing] its existing network with the aim [of] enhance[ing] communication, cooperation and implementation of activities on [a] wider international scale so [as] to create conditions for active engagement of political science students.²⁵

The Association strives to achieve this mission via its stated 'IAPSS Pillars' of, firstly, a network; secondly, intercultural exchange; thirdly, academic development; fourthly, professional career development; and fifthly, active citizenship.²⁶ While the IAPSS Statute provides that all members have the duty to "act in accordance with the Association's vision, values and goals", in practice the responsibility for the implementation and furthering of the vision and mission of IAPSS falls to the committees that make up the secretariat of the Association.²⁷

Organisationally, IAPSS is composed of members associations who elect management committees through the annual General Assembly (see Figure One, below).²⁸ The central committee – and the only one that needs to be resident in Ljubljana – is the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is advised by a three-person Supervisory Committee and regulated by a three-person Disciplinary Committee.²⁹ As well, the General Assembly elects an Editorial Board for the Association's journal, *Politikon*, and approves changes to the strategic documents of IAPSS, including the Statute.³⁰ In 2007 the diversity of the now ten-year-old Association is evident in the composition of the committees where some fifteen elected officials representing nine different nationalities in Europe, South America and Australia.³¹

IAPSS is funded primarily through regional and project specific grants, annual fees from member associations and in-kind contributions (office space, telephone line, computing facilities etc) from the University of Ljubljana. The vast majority of the funding, however, is obtained by the Executive Committee from the European Union which via various programs – European Commission, European Youth Program and European Volunteer Service among them – supports the activities of the Executive Committee, selected support and administrative assistants and selected projects that

²⁴ IAPSS. 2007a.

²⁵ IAPSS. 2007a.

²⁶ IAPSS. 2007a.

²⁷ IAPSS. 2005a. *IAPSS Statute*. [24 April 2007] <http://tinyurl.com/ypw5cy>, p.7.

²⁸ While individual students can be members of IAPSS and candidate for elected office within the Association, individual members have no voting rights at the General Assembly. See IAPSS. 2005a, p.7.

²⁹ The Supervisory Committee's advice is not binding and the Disciplinary Committee only has a mandate to act upon a written complaint from either a member of the Association or one of the other committees. Thus, the Executive Committee has effective control over the direction and activities of IAPSS for the duration of the October-September mandate. See IAPSS. 2005a, pp.5-6.

³⁰ IAPSS. 2005a, pp.6-7. Disclosure: The authors are currently serving as elected members of the Editorial Board of *Politikon*.

³¹ IAPSS. 2007b. *IAPSS Contact Staff*. [24 April 2007] <http://tinyurl.com/295v4p>.

IAPSS organises each year.³² As well, IAPSS maintains membership on the Council of Europe’s Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (CoE CINGOs) and – through a representative appointed directly by the Executive Committee – attends meetings and lobbies in Strasbourg at the regular CoE CINGOs meetings.³³ Though it must be noted that much of the lobbying undertaken by IAPSS is via grant applications and extensive budgeting/reporting processes, the physical presence of IAPSS at Council of Europe is testament to the emerging IAPSS tactic of pursuing close relationships and ongoing partnerships with the European-level institutions. Indeed, the continued existence of the Association is reliant on the continued success of IAPSS lobbying efforts at the European level.

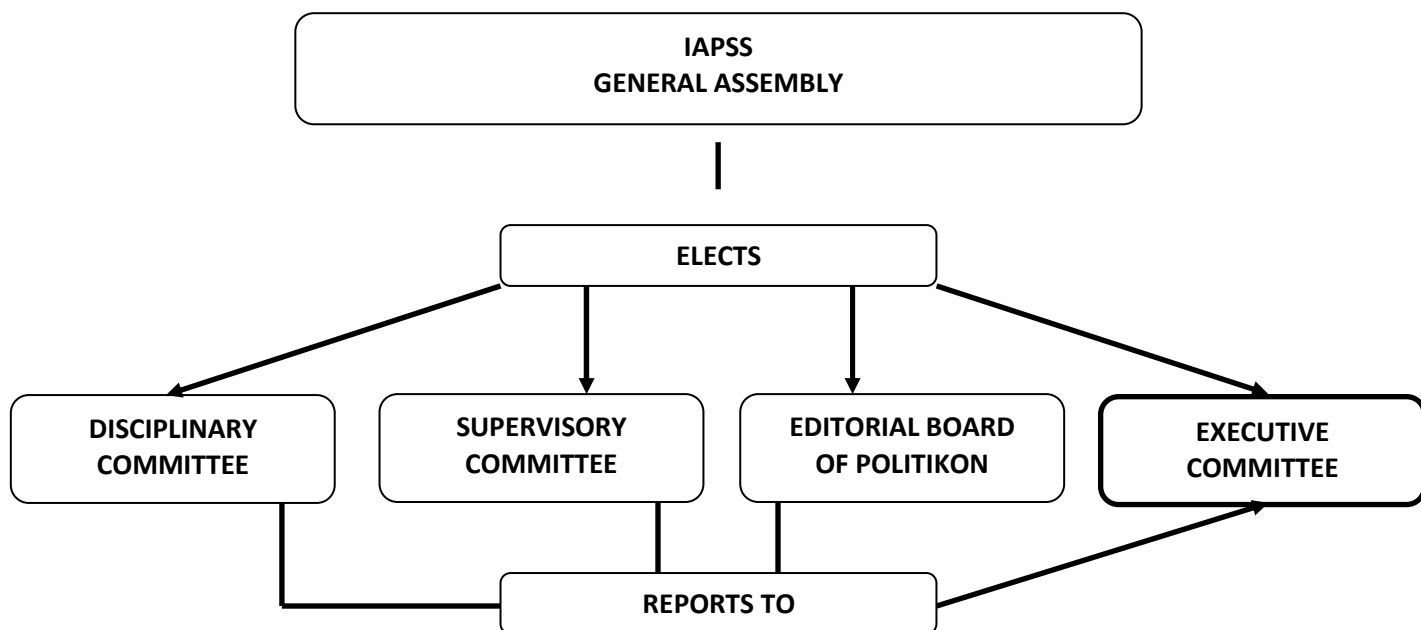


Figure One: Simplified Institutional Framework of IAPSS³⁴

There is nothing in the history or basic organisation of the elected committees, though, which should make this lobbying effort at the European Union level difficult for IAPSS. Yet within the internal institutional design of the organisation reside significant impediments to lobbying success that – if not addressed – could prove increasingly problematic for the young and European Union-reliant Association and lobby group. As outlined in the opening section of this paper, there are four elements that research has identified as provoking difficulties for lobby groups at European Union level from post-socialist states. These problems are not of the creation of the lobby groups the research assessed; indeed, aware of these potential problems, lobby groups usually attempt to address them. However, as the following section of this paper will demonstrate, not only is IAPSS not addressing these problems but the institutional design of the Association itself serves to institutionalise the problems. Thus, IAPSS deliberately places itself in a position that – in a competitive lobbying marketplace such as the European Union and reliant, as it is, on European Union funding to survive – it should avoid.

³² For example, in 2007 the European Union has allocated an administrative grant for IAPSS, funded the day-to-day costs of the Coordinator for Membership & Development in Ljubljana and provided extensive funding for the conference, ‘Youth Bridging the Gap: Reaching Out to the Roma’.

³³ The current representative to the CoE CINGOs – Stephan Schatzmann of Zurich, Switzerland – was appointed in 2006.

³⁴ This depiction of the institutional framework of IAPSS is simplified to only include the essential and most significant elements of the Association. More complex frameworks (including role descriptions and program responsibilities) can be found in Hügli and Kovač. 2005, p.6; IAPSS. 2007c. *IAPSS Structure*. [24 April 2007] <http://tinyurl.com/29ztyh>.

IAPSS the Institution: Designed for Difficulty

Addressing the four elements identified earlier in relation to the institutional design of IAPSS, it becomes clear that the design of the Association is far from optimal for achieving success in its lobbying efforts at the European level. Considering each of the four in turn and with reference to the key strategic documents defining the institutional design of IAPSS, this section of the paper will demonstrate that the issues that are usually outside of the control of lobby groups are part of the construct of this Association.

Inexperience among lobbyists and the absence of a lobbying tradition

As previously noted, the key group that lobbies at the European Union level in IAPSS is the Executive Committee, composed of those IAPSS members elected by the General Assembly each year. However, as the candidates for the Executive Committee must be members of IAPSS (or an IAPSS Member Association) the pool from which candidates can be drawn is necessarily limited to students of political science from the start.³⁵ Further limiting the potential pool of lobbyists is the demand in the Statute that the Executive Committee take up residence in Ljubljana, Slovenia for the length of their mandate.³⁶ Therefore, only political science students with the access to funding or the possibility of a university exchange with the University of Ljubljana can realistically consider nominating for a position on the Executive Committee. Furthermore, with membership limited to students of political science alone, the level of experience in lobbying for funding has usually – at best – been centred on local events and local or domestic sources of funding. Thus, by centralising the lobbying efforts on the Executive Committee, limiting the pool of potential lobbyists to IAPSS members with, generally, no experience in European Union level lobbying and then further limiting it to those students that can make the financial commitment to live in Ljubljana for one year, the IAPSS Statute effectively ensures an executive committee without regional level lobbying experience.

The Statute also makes it difficult for Executive Committee members to serve a second mandate and establish a lobbying tradition of their own at the European Union level. At Article 11(5) of the Statute it is stated:

The Ex[ecutive] Com[mittee] is not to be formed by the same Members for consecutive years, unless the GA decides otherwise by 2/3 majority of votes cast.³⁷

While ensuring that a wider group of students benefit from time spent leading an international association, this clause also ensures that students who have been elected and developed skills in lobbying for European Union funding are effectively denied ongoing tenure on the Executive Committee.³⁸ The higher standard for the re-election of Executive Committee members as opposed to the election of new, less-experienced candidates means that IAPSS relies significantly on 'knowledge transfers' between departing and arriving Executive Committees to maintain their lobbying tradition. Unfortunately, however, it has proved difficult to ensure that this knowledge transfer takes place successfully if at all as the arriving Executive Committee members face practical problems arriving in Ljubljana just as the outgoing Executive Committee is preparing to leave. The mismanagement of the knowledge transfer – as occurred

³⁵ IAPSS. 2005a, pp.3-4.

³⁶ IAPSS. 2005a, p.4.

³⁷ IAPSS. 2005a, p.3.

³⁸ IAPSS. 2005a, p.3.

in 2006, for example – effectively returns the incoming Committee to a situation where the only experience they hold is what they personally bring to IAPSS which, as noted, is likely to be nothing more than domestic or national lobbying at best.³⁹ Once again, this stems directly from the restrictions placed upon the Executive Committee by the institutional design of the Association.

Insufficient resources for lobbying at European Union level

If the ideal situation for European Level lobbying resources includes the financial, human and geographic capacity to lobby for the interests of the group then IAPSS is constrained by its institutional design in each of these three areas.⁴⁰ Financially, the Association had access to only €35 522 for the 2005/06.⁴¹ Of this figure, a little more than 50% was spent on IAPSS conferences and events leaving just €17 611 to fund everything from subsidising the living costs of a Committee of up to ten persons to legal advice and telecommunications, printing and stationary costs incurred by the Executive Committee office.⁴² As well, while IAPSS claims a membership of 10,000 students and around 50 association worldwide, few pay the annual fee which is only required if the association wishes to vote at the General Assembly. Indeed, membership fees paid to the Executive Committee (as per Article 32 (1a) of the Statute) amounted to only €2033 in 2005/06.⁴³ Thus, from a financial perspective, IAPSS is hampered in its lobbying efforts having little money to spare to pay for a concerted and concentrated lobbying effort at the European Union level.

In terms of human resources, IAPSS is also hampered by the Statute. As members of the Executive Committee remain students throughout the course of their mandate in Ljubljana, they necessarily cannot devote all of their time to furthering the interests of IAPSS. As well, recent Executive Committees have proved very unstable in relation to human resources with every Executive Committee since 2003 suffering from the resignations of one, two or – in some cases – many members of the Executive Committee during the course of the mandate. This leaves the Executive Committee under resourced to successfully lobby at the European Union level and, in 2006/07, sometimes unable to function in any way at all.⁴⁴

Finally, in terms of the geographic location of the Executive Committee, the choice of Ljubljana, Slovenia as the headquarters of the IAPSS lobbying effort at European Level places it far from the centres of European funding it attempts to lobby for. A relatively small Central European capital with few direct transport or historical links to the major European centres in Brussels and Strasbourg, Ljubljana is perhaps one of the worst places from which to lobby at a European level in the west or central EU. Unlike other youth associations – the Association des Etats Généraux des

³⁹ For a variety of reasons the knowledge transfer period in Ljubljana in September/October 2006 was poorly managed and effectively non-existent in practical terms. Lack of communication, in particular, between the outgoing and incoming Executive Committees meant that whatever lobbying tradition the 2005/06 Executive Committee had built faced great challenges in being transferred to the 2006/07 Executive Committee.

⁴⁰ Geographic capacity in this context refers to being present or close to the European Union bodies that are approached in furthering the interests of IAPSS. For most lobby and interest groups this requires a headquarters or branch office in Brussels, Belgium.

⁴¹ IAPSS. 2007d. *IAPSS Annual Report 2005/06*. [28 April 2007] <http://tinyurl.com/yufo6w>, pp.19-20.

⁴² IAPSS. 2007d, pp.19-20.

⁴³ IAPSS. 2007d, p.19.

⁴⁴ The resignation of more than half of the Executive Committee elected at the 2006 General Assembly in Amsterdam only weeks into the 2006/07 mandate forced the Executive Committee to hold an Extraordinary General Assembly to elect a new Executive Committee. Though there had been volatility within the Association at this high level before this was the first time that the Extraordinary General Assembly mechanism (Article 10 in the Statute) has been exercised.

Etudiants de l'Europe (AEGEE) or the National Union of Students in Europe (ESIB), for example – IAPSS has settled far from the epicentre of European power in Brussels and relied on lobbying by mail or electronic means. This negatively impacts on the ability of the Executive Committee to successfully lobby at the European Union level and, again, stems entirely from the IAPSS Statute where Article 4 and Article 11(6) demand the Executive Committee remain resident in Slovenia.⁴⁵

A domestic – rather than European – focus

IAPSS choice to maintain a permanent seat in Ljubljana has meant that the Executive Committee has turned to searching for domestic sources of funding (that is, within Slovenia) than at the European level. Consider, for example, that in 2006/07 – outside of European Union funds – every other funding source for IAPSS was either Slovenian or funding for an event (a NATO exercise) in Slovenia.⁴⁶ Indeed, Slovenian domestic funding and funding for the NATO event formed a greater share of IAPSS revenues in 2006/07 than European Union revenues, indicating that the focus of the Executive Committee remains significantly domestically focussed.⁴⁷ The focus on local sources is understandable to some extent as the Association must maintain offices and provide some of the costs associated with the resident Executive Committee members in Ljubljana. However, it does detract from the Association's efforts to lobby for funding at a European Union level when time must be given over to searching for funds for day-to-day costs associated with living in Ljubljana.

An underdeveloped institutional capacity to learn from experiences at the European level

As with previous elements, the institutional design of IAPSS prevents the maximisation of the Association's capacity to learn from its lobbying experiences at the European Union level. Previously articulated effective limits on Executive Committee members serving a second term is a part of the problem, of course, however IAPSS' proven inability to maintain links with previously successful lobbyists within the Association suggests the problem is greater still. It is one thing to not re-elect an experienced Executive Committee team but another still to allow for experienced Executive Committee members to – upon concluding their service – be lost to the Association entirely. One need only consider the example of the Executive Committee from Marburg, Germany which was elected for the 2004 mandate and today is no longer involved at all in IAPSS projects. While it would be unfair to place all blame for this actuality on the IAPSS Statute, it is clear that the Statute does not encourage long term (that is, more than one mandate) service on the Executive Committee and that, in turn, the Association does not work hard enough to maintain contact with experienced Executive Committee members of the past.

The short mandates demanded by the Statute also mean that for the institutional lobbying capacity to grow and effective knowledge transfer system must be in place. This places personal demand on the outgoing and incoming Executive Committees which must synchronise schedules at a time when they all – as students – are preparing to leave or arrive in Ljubljana and begin a new university semester. Thus the chance exists that in such a busy period little to no knowledge transfer emerges and the incoming team effectively starts anew. This stymies the chance for the following year's knowledge transfer – if it goes ahead without problems – to effectively pass on the accumulated knowledge

⁴⁵ IAPSS. 2005a, p.1; p.4.

⁴⁶ IAPSS. 2007d, pp.19-20. The "funding for events in Slovenia" was specific to a NATO-IAPSS co-event in 2007.

⁴⁷ In 2006/07 the funding was 44% European Union, 50% Slovenian and 6% membership fees and bank interest.

about European Union level lobbying that the Association had developed. In short, the timing of the move to Ljubljana and the short mandates demanded by the Statute work to make it more difficult for IAPSS as an institution to learn from experiences at the European Union level of lobbying.

Discussion and Recommendations

All four limiting factors for lobby groups seeking success at the European level have been identified as existent – to some extent – within the youth interest group IAPSS. What is notable, though, is that the four factors are neither matters of chance nor a temporary problem to be overcome in time. Instead, the problems IAPSS faces in achieving lobbying success at the European level are structurally determined, relating to the organisational design of the Association as expressed in the group's founding document, the IAPSS Statute. As a result, the success of IAPSS's lobbying efforts is behind before it even begins, the Statute so determining the composition of the chief lobbyists on the Executive Committee, their location and the likely pool of talent that IAPSS can draw upon. In short, IAPSS is bound to be less successful than it might otherwise be and faces difficulties overcoming the limitations and restrictions it imposes on itself through its own design of its own organisation.

It stands to reason, then, that what IAPSS has designed IAPSS can *redesign*. More specifically, with acquired knowledge of the factors that negate the effectiveness of European-level interest group representations and with regards to the design of the organisation as expressed in the IAPSS Statute, the Association can effect directed amendments to its organisational design in order to achieve best results in lobbying at the European Union level. The following are the recommended changes to address the problems faced by IAPSS in achieving lobbying success: the relocation of the permanent seat of IAPSS from Ljubljana to Brussels; streamlining the composition of the Executive Committee; enabling serving Executive Committee members to sit another mandate; the meaningful engagement of the Alumni members in the activity of the association, and; ensuring a more efficient management of IAPSS' financial resources through a careful external monitoring of its financial activities.

Considering the previously discussed structural constraints, shifting the location of the IAPSS permanent seat to Brussels is perhaps the most conspicuous solution to enhance this youth Association's lobbying capacity at the EU level. By operating amendments to Articles 4 and 13(4) of the IAPSS Statute, the Executive Committee will be able to take up residence in Brussels and conduct the Association's activities from the so called 'capital of Europe'.⁴⁸ Thus, similarly to other international youth lobby groups (such as AEGEE or ESIB) IAPSS will have its permanent secretariat in an office situated in the vicinity of the European institutions.

Although not a cost-effective solution at first sight, the relocation of the IAPSS' main office in Brussels would be extremely beneficial for its so far unsuccessful lobbying efforts, and it would also represent a logical next step in the development of this youth association. Firstly, being situated in the epicentre of the European 'lobbyocracy' ensures much better access to information regarding EU funds and projects, but also to decision-makers in the field of youth policies. Actively participating and having a say in the drafting process of policies that directly affect them is equivalent with taking part in making the rules of a game which they are later going to play. Improved

⁴⁸ See IAPSS. 2005a, p.1; p.4.

access to European funding together with a pro-active input in youth policies will surely help IAPSS secure the much needed EU financial support. Secondly, their physical presence in Brussels will also make the Executive Committee more aware of the staunch competition in the European lobbying arena, which will inevitably force them to address their problems of lack of consistency, coordination and closeness to other EU stakeholders. Thirdly, Brussels' renown for its rich multiculturalism, wide communication networks, and quality academic life will attract much more highly motivated and well-prepared IAPSS members to become part of the Executive Committee. Last but not least, a permanent office in the European capital would not only enhance the Association's visibility and European profile, but it would also constitute a location worthy of a youth lobby group with a marked international (or better yet global) outlook.

The effectiveness of this first solution partly depends, however, on adopting the second one envisaged by this paper: reshaping the composition of the Executive Committee by reducing the number of IAPSS members that are part of this structure. Formally speaking, this implies adjusting Article 11 (2) to allow for the formation of a strong core composed of five people responsible for steering the Association from Brussels.⁴⁹ Therefore, the Executive Committee should be composed of two Vice-chairpersons instead of three, while the positions of Executive Committee members should no longer exist. To be more specific, the IAPSS Executive Committee would be formed by the Chairperson, two Vice-Chairpersons and a Secretary-General living in Brussels, but also by the Premium member who would reside in his/her home country.⁵⁰ In the case of the two Vice-chairpersons, they would each coordinate the academic and the external relations departments, and would also share responsibilities in other areas (such as Human Resources or Public Relations) with the Chairperson and other IAPSS volunteers or interns activating within the permanent seat in Brussels. Since the Executive Committee members have generally had project-based tasks which were mainly conducted at the local level by one or several member associations, their role can be very well performed by the IAPSS contact persons in each association.⁵¹

Streamlining the configuration of the Executive Committee would firstly address the issue of insufficient organizational resources. From the point of view of financial capabilities, reducing the number of Executive Committee members will mean less spending on the day-to-day costs associated with living in the city of the Permanent Seat which, as mentioned before, constitutes a large share of the Association's yearly expenditure⁵². While residing in Brussels would undoubtedly be more costly for the Association, this new composition of the IAPSS executive body, together with the significantly increased access to EU funds would secure sufficient

⁴⁹ IAPSS. 2005a, p. 3. Other secondary articles that should be amended in order for this change to be fully applied are Articles 11(3), 11(6), 17. See IAPSS. 2005a, pp.3-5.

⁵⁰ According to the IAPSS institutional design, the Premium Member is the representative of the member association responsible with organizing the IAPSS General Assembly and Annual Conference each year.

⁵¹ All IAPSS member organizations have an 'IAPSS Contact Person', who deals with the communication with the Association and also coordinates IAPSS-related projects at the local level. Some member organizations have an IAPSS Committee as well, composed of individuals interested to participate in IAPSS activities and lead by the IAPSS contact person. This is the case, for instance, with SSE Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

⁵² Even though the Executive Committee members (the ones that do not have a specific position within IAPSS management) are not obliged by the Statute to reside where the permanent seat is, funds are allocated for their participation in miscellaneous IAPSS events.

financial means for IAPSS to pursue its activities. This change would also allow the Association to dedicate more time and effort to lobby the EU, rather than continuously search for funds to ensure its very existence. Furthermore, creating a strong core of individuals residing in the same location would mean better team-work, improved communication, coherence and efficiency, as the Executive Committee would not be split between the permanent secretariat and other members dispersed in various locations in the world. This reconfiguration would also alleviate the underdeveloped capacity to learn from experiences at the European level, since a stronger, more efficient team will be better prepared to adapt to the rules of the EU lobbying game, thus having more chances to accomplish its goals.

In direct relation to the novel configuration of the Executive Committee, another change should be effected with regards to enabling the serving Executive Committee members to run for another mandate. This modification should be performed bearing in mind the need to ensure equal opportunities for all IAPSS members wanting to become part of the Executive Committee, irrespective of the fact whether or not they have previously served on this executive body. In this respect, Article 11(5) of the IAPSS Statute should be amended to reflect that, in the case where both serving and prospective Executive Committee members stand for election, the former need not derive a larger mandate, as they are currently obliged to.⁵³

This amendment is instrumental in helping the Association overcome the problematic inexperience of its student lobbyists, the superficial knowledge transfer from one Executive Committee team to another, and also the incipient institutional capacity to lobby efficiently at the supranational level. The facilitation of their ongoing tenure on the Executive Committee, together with the relocation of the permanent seat to the epicentre of European affairs would encourage more experienced IAPSS members to use their acquired expertise, connections and skills to further the goals of the Association in a more professional manner. Once a clear-cut, specific lobbying strategy and style are established, the knowledge transfer is much easier to accomplish, than in the case of an ill-defined set of 'common experiences' passed on from one Executive Committee to the other. What is more, the risk of one Executive Committee to have a monopoly on the management of the Association for several years in a row is practically eliminated due to mainly two reasons: firstly, they have to stand in democratic elections where they will be judged according to their efficiency and, secondly, the Executive members have to be students who are usually able to reside in the city of the permanent seat as a result of an inter-university exchange.

Another solution that could respond to the poor management of the knowledge transfer and the currently low institutional learning capacity would be to meaningfully engage the Alumni members in the activities of the Association. Although the need to create a better communication network with the IAPSS Alumni members has been perceived by all the Executive Committees in recent years, little has been done in this direction. Created in 2004, the IAPSS Alumni Club (IAC) has not been officially launched yet and, as a result, it remains inactive at the

⁵³ According to Article 11(6), it is only after obtaining 2/3 of the votes cast by the IAPSS general Assembly that the serving members of the Executive Committee can sit another mandate. See IAPSS. 2005a, p.3.

moment.⁵⁴ While acknowledging that the Alumni members can provide an active input in IAPSS through IAC and other activities organized by the Executive Committee, we firstly suggest including IAC in the IAPSS Statute and thus officially establish its structure, its attributes and competencies. These clarifying provisions can be incorporated into Article 27, which refers to Alumni Membership⁵⁵, and will serve to formalize this body and consolidate its position within the IAPSS institutional design, but also to endow it with more visibility and credibility in front of all IAPSS members, since it will be part of the fundamental document of the Association. Given the fact that the relations between IAPSS and its former members are not currently among the priorities of the Association, another way to determine the Executive Committee to make avail of this valuable organizational resource would be to include the obligation to stimulate and maintain regular contact with Alumni members among its principal tasks and duties⁵⁶. As a result, the Executive Committee might award more importance to organizing various events and activities in which to involve former members of the Association.

Needless to say, the benefits of enhancing the participation of Alumni members in the IAPSS projects, activities, and even strategy building are indeed numerous. The Alumni can provide valuable expertise and know-how not only as a result of their former activity within IAPSS, but also due to the experience acquired in the professional fields they are currently immersed in. Former members of the Association can be consulted on issues ranging from designing an efficient lobbying strategy to finding solutions when organizational pitfalls of any kind occur. This implies, however, that IAPSS through its Executive Committee provides the adequate forum for such consultations and knowledge transfer to take place. Or, the aforementioned Statute amendments aim precisely at facilitating this dialogue and collaboration between current and former members. What is more, the IAPSS Alumni can also help with promoting the Association within and beyond their professional circles: after all, a sound reputation and a high level of credibility are essential assets for any lobby group activating in the EU lobbying arena.

The final recommendation advanced by this paper comes to ensure that all the other solutions proposed will proceed beyond the 'paper' stage to the one of actual implementation. Most evidently, it refers to achieving a skilful management of the financial capabilities of IAPSS. This desideration could be ideally fulfilled by making the financial allocation of the Association's funds more transparent or by matching spending to the specific objectives of IAPSS, but it can be practically achieved through the yearly auditing of the financial details of the Association by an external, qualified person⁵⁷. By amending Article 32 in the Statute to allow for external monitoring of IAPSS

⁵⁴ IAPSS. 2007e. *The Monitoring Report for the Executive Committee's Activity for the period 15.01.2007-15.04. 2007*. [10th May 2007] <http://tinyurl.com/28oj9k>, pp.6-7. The IAPSS Alumni Club is also mentioned in various resolutions (6/2003 and 4/2004), operational plans (for instance, the one from 2005/2006), and the 2004-2008 Strategic Plan. See IAPSS. 2004a. *IAPSS Alumni Club, Internal Regulations and Rules of Procedure*. [10th May 2007] <http://tinyurl.com/ys8kcd>, pp.1-4; IAPSS. 2005b. *Operational Plan 2005-2006*. [10th May 2007] <http://tinyurl.com/25p3zt>, p.4; IAPSS. 2004b. *IAPSS Strategic Plan 2004-2008*. [accessed 10th May 2007] <http://tinyurl.com/2zbt2k>, p.5.

⁵⁵ IAPSS. 2005a, p. 8.

⁵⁶ This can be accomplished by adjusting Article 12 of the Statute to include provisions regarding the relations between IAPSS, its members and its Alumni members. See IAPSS.2005a, p. 4.

⁵⁷ Two resolutions pertaining to the transparency of IAPSS finances were passed at the General Assembly in 2006 (Resolutions 1/2006 and 4/2006), but neither was endorsed. For this reason, the authors believe that a more pragmatic and quantifiable, even though indirect adjustment is in place. See IAPSS.2006b. *Resolutions 2006*. [10th May 2007] <http://tinyurl.com/yv68u6>, pp.1-2.

expenditure, the allocation of resources would become more accountable, trustworthy and the risk of having a faulty financial management due to the inexperience of members is practically avoided.⁵⁸ As a result, this change would also oblige the Executive Committee to constantly update the financial situation, but also to ensure the transparency of the manner in which funds are spent. The external auditor can either work on a voluntary or a paid basis. In conjunction with the relocation of the permanent seat to Brussels and the increased access to European funds, using the services of a neutral and qualified financial auditor is surely a worthwhile investment. Most of the time, financial problems in the case of youth organizations do not derive from the paucity of resources, but rather from the faulty manner in which these are deployed.

Undoubtedly, the list of recommendations regarding IAPSS' organizational architecture remains open. The discussion has so far evidenced that a confining structural design can be effectively transformed into an institutional arrangement that would favour an efficient and professional lobby activity at the competitive European level, provided that appropriate adjustments are performed. The several solutions proposed earlier are not just possible remedies for the four constraining factors discussed in the first part of this paper, but represent a viable mode of breaking a vicious circle peculiar to post-communist youth lobby groups, and in this particular case, to IAPSS. Applied together under the form of a coherent strategy, these structural amendments can lead to an increased access to EU funds, a professionalised human resource, a superior capacity to obtain and transfer knowledge and expertise at the pan-European level and, very importantly, a better way to manage all these newly-acquired resources.

Conclusions

All lobby and interest groups at the European level face potential problems in their efforts to seek representation and, in many cases, funding from European institutions. Fundamental research examining Romanian interest groups conducted in 2006 concluded that there were four key factors that determined the relative success or failure of an interest group at the European level: inexperience among lobbyists and the absence of a lobbying tradition; insufficient resources for lobbying at European Union level; a domestic – rather than European – focus, and; an underdeveloped institutional capacity to learn from experiences at the European level. Common to Romanian lobby groups representing Romanian interests in Brussels, this paper suggested that these same four factors are evident in other lobby and interest groups from post-socialist states and, further, that these factors clearly contributed to the lack of successful interest representation at the European level by youth lobby groups. Considering the factors in relation to the case study of the Slovenian-based International Association for Political Science Students (IAPSS), however, suggested that far from being solely obstacles faced by post-socialist interest groups, these were obstacles that were embedded within the institutional design of the interest group itself.

This paper identified within the IAPSS Statute – the strategic document by which the Association is described and designed – internal rules which all but guarantee that IAPSS will face difficulties in lobbying and representing member interests efficiently and effectively at the European level. Whether by placing the core lobbying elements of the

⁵⁸ IAPSS.2005a, pp.8-9.

Association far from Europe's political centre, making it difficult for experienced lobbyists to pass on their knowledge to those that would follow them or by the necessary but debilitating focus on local rather than European-level matters, IAPSS is designed in such a way that its lobbyists are significantly handicapped when promoting the interests of IAPSS within the wider European Union. In short, as the title of this paper alludes, IAPSS is an interest group designed for difficulties in a competitive lobbying environment.

Addressing these failures in organisational design, though, is a task that could be easily undertaken and one to which the final section of this paper has turned. With reference to the specific elements within the IAPSS Statute which – if amended – would see many of the problems outlined previously disappear and the representations of IAPSS at the European Union level met with greater success. While this paper has suggested changes both small (changing the requirements for re-election to IAPSS' Executive Committee) and large (relocating the Permanent Seat to Brussels), all are manageable for the Association and will address the institutional design issues that presently see IAPSS facing consistent difficulties in achieving success at the European Union level. IAPSS is presented with an opportunity to avoid the fate of other interest and lobby groups from post-socialist states by embracing the amendments to its institutional design described herein. While no list of internal rules or statute of association can ensure success for lobby groups in Europe, both can make the work of a lobbyist more difficult and reduce the likelihood of successful representation. IAPSS should be aware of its fundamental structural problems and address them with haste, lest what is a unique European and global youth interest group actor be consigned to the ever-growing list of lobbying also-rans.

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