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# **The Role of Think Tanks in The Articulation of The European Public Sphere**

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# The Roles of Think Tanks in the Articulation of EPS

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Luca Barani & Giuseppe Sciortino

## 1 Introduction

The paper will start by outline the problematique (1.1) and research questions (1.2) underlying the EUROSPHERE WP 5.1 on Think Tanks and European Public Sphere, before to start the first part of the review of the literature, concerning definition (2.1) and classification (2.2) of think tanks as well as their functions (2.3) and structural linkages (2.4) in relation to the political system. The second part will sketch the chronological evolution of think tanks across the world (3.1), their clustering according to geographical gradients (3.2), in their Anglo-American (3.2.1), Western Europe (3.2.2), Eastern Europe (3.2.3) and Euro Think Tanks (3.2.4) varieties. The next part of the paper will be dedicated to the analysis of answers provided by respondents to research questions on diversity (5.1), management of diversity at the national and European levels (5.2), and emergence of European Public Sphere (5.3) which will be surveyed and analysed.

### 1.1 Problematique

In one of the most basic understanding, a Public Sphere can be conceptualized as an essential dimensions of civil society in its interaction with political institutions, an intermediate space where public debate can flourish and citizens can be socialized both by inclusive and exclusive dynamics (Fraser, 1992). Given the debate on the supposedly glaring ‘democratic deficit’ of the European Union (Moracvisk, 2002; Follesdal & Hix, 2005), the creation of a Public Sphere at the European level or at least the Europeanization of national Public Spheres is often seen as a possible solution (Dacheux, 2003). Propositions about developing a European Public Sphere (EPS) imply to look at groups and organizations, independent by European institutions, able to act as vectors of such a transformation.

The choice of looking at think tanks under the angle of their contribution to the construction of a EPS is justified in view of their potential. Firstly, think tanks have an important function at the current juncture of the European integration, feeding and enriching the political debate at the European level at a moment where the European project of integration is lacking momentum and ideas, by advancing arguments and proposals. Secondly, think tanks constitute policy-oriented spaces where policy-makers and experts can publicly interact, contributing to the public debate through the connection to the media. In fact, think tanks constitute an example of expertise organized structurally at the European level with policy-oriented ambitions, which is increasingly being integrated in the policy-making process.

Nonetheless, there is an inherent tension between this deployment of expertise and their contribution to the mobilisation and participation of the European civil society and conducive to the creation of a European public sphere based on the politicization of European issues (Boucher, 2004: 15), as exemplified by the literature on think tanks at the European level (Ullrich, 2004). This leads to both inclusive and exclusive logics of building a EPS.

On the one hand, think tanks present themselves as channels of information at the disposal of the informed public and arguments about their usefulness as bridges between elites and the

general public, but usually they turn up to be good intentions without sufficient means to be carried out (Boucher, 2004: 32). On terms of their own self-presentation, the credentials of neutrality and independence attached to the activities of think tanks are decisive for their positioning as transnational platforms and bridges between society and power holders (see CEPS or Notre Europe websites).

On the other hand, think tanks focus their activities to attract the attention of political elites. Their neutrality, independence and scientific credentials are used to produce technical expertise, at the address of policy-makers rather than the general public. In other words, they are part of policy networks rather than an interface between elites and citizens. As a consequence, serious doubts persist to their capacities to facilitate the advent of a EPS, as demonstrated by research on their activities (Boucher, 2004: 34). In particular, it is doubtful that think tanks could advance arguments in the public sphere simultaneously acting as an advisers to the decision-maker (Dacheux, 2003: 180), without ending up as mere vehicles of propaganda.

The ambiguity of the think tanks positioning stems from the heterogeneity of their targeted audiences: decision-making elites in the business, bureaucratic and political worlds and conversely the media and the general public. On the one hand, think tanks develop an array of closed activities such as gated seminars or exclusive gatherings, limited by invitation or defined by confidentiality rules to interact with decision makers. On the other hand, think tanks develop communication and open diffusion of their activities, through written publications or on-line support, in order to shape the 'climate' of the opinion (Dehnam & Garnett, 1998). In order to clarify this ambivalence between opposite drives of elitism and publicity in the realm of think tank, it is legitimate to ask questions about the attitudes of think tanks in respect of the EU, EPS and its diversity.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The aim of the task group is to explain why think tanks are open or sceptical to diversity, the European Polity (EP) and the European Public Sphere and in which ways they involve themselves in trans-European collaboration/communication and in European-level public debates. According to this perspective, statements and views expressed by think tank members and their publications, including also the organizational statements of objectives, will be mapped. Their orientation and openness towards **diversity**, the **EP** and the **EPS** will be depicted with a view to assessing how their discourses contribute to the articulation and the shaping of a European public sphere. An additional **key question** to be looked at is which factors make think tanks more or less responsive/open to citizens' concerns when they create research agendas, disseminate or open their results to end-users' exploitation.

According to its White Book on Governance, the EU claims to work according to the principles of good governance, comprising transparency and participation. Nonetheless, the European process of integration still suffers of its neo-functionalist origins. At the EU level, think tanks enjoy legitimacy and influence (both direct and indirect) in respect of the EU decision-making mechanisms almost exclusively because of their expertise (Ullrich, 2004: 66). The analysis in this task group will identify the factors enabling/undermining the pluralism and democratic credentials of think tanks as a channel of communication between citizens and the EU institutions.

## 2.1 Definition

Much of the literature and analysis of the phenomenon of think tanks has an Anglo-American outlook. The term itself originated in the US, as its political environment has proved highly conducive to the growth and diversification of this type of organization. The US political

system, coupled with the availability of generous funding streams through foundations, is generally credited for allowing a wide range of American think tanks to evolve over the last few decades (Abelson, 2002). In the exercise of the definition of think tanks, dominated by a US-centric perspective, one common assumption is that they constitute a distinctive class of organizations that are formally and substantially autonomous from governments, business, media and universities (Weaver, 1989). This is clear in the authoritative definition given by McGann defining think-tanks as “policy research organizations that have significant autonomy from government and from societal interests such as firms, interest groups, and political parties.” (McGann & Weaver, 2000: p. 5). In the same perspective, as civil society organisations, think tanks are actors independent of the state and of private interests and act as “crucial organisations in civil society, existing in the space between the public and private sectors and constituting ‘critical balancing forces’ against state power and agency” (McGann & Weaver, 2000: 7).

Following this lead, other authors often define think tanks as independent actors in the policy process (Denham & Garnett 1998; McGann & Weaver 2000) or as political actors which are “knowledge-based” (Thunert, 2006: 206). Stone speaks somewhat cautiously about independence, defining think-tanks as: « relatively autonomous organizations engaged in the research and analysis of contemporary issues independently of government, political parties, and pressure groups, containing people involved in studying a particular policy area or a broad range of policy issues, actively seeking to educate or advise policy-makers and the public through a number of channels » (Stone, 2001: 15668). In fact, think tank must have some “kind of engagement with government if they are to succeed in influencing policy” (Stone & Ulrich, 2003: 5). More so that think tanks have become a permanent part of the political landscape in many different countries, so much so that they are now an integral part of the policy process. Stone, moreover, prefers to “avoid identifying think tanks as a sub-category of nongovernmental organisation (NGO). Instead, the broader term ‘non-state actor’ has been adopted. In many cases think tanks are quasi-governmental or quasi-academic and lack the independence and connections to civil society usually associated with NGOs.’ (Stone, 2000).

In spite of these precautions, the emphasis on the autonomy of think tank has the merit to set them apart from other kinds of organizations, performing similar tasks such as political clubs or business foresight centres. However, such definition has also several disadvantages. First, it privileges the Anglo-American model to the detriment of other political contexts where think tanks are less likely to assert their independence from the state apparatus, such as in Asia and Europe. Moreover, independence or autonomy as prerequisite for free discourse is a distinctive feature of Western political culture. This was acknowledged by Stone herself: “The Western view that a think-tank requires independence or autonomy from the state, corporate, or other interests in order to be free-thinking does not accord with experiences in other cultures” (Stone, 2001, 15688).

Second, such a definition does not fit with the historical origins of think tanks. Even in America, the first organizations existing under such a banner were not independent from government, parties, businesses and universities. Historically, the first think tank is a post-2<sup>nd</sup> World War World military invention reflecting growing complexity of modern warfare (Day, 1993). As such, the term ‘think tank’ stems from the US-based Rand Corporation, which was established as a joint venture between a federal agency (U.S. Air Force) and a business corporation (Douglas Aircraft Company) and operated as a closed environment for strategic thinking of the US federal government during the early stages of the cold war, producing such concepts as scenario planning and ‘the missile gap’ between the US and Soviet Union (forward studies).

In the case of security matters, the policy field is monopolized by state agencies bound by confidentiality. This restricts the level of independence and autonomy of think-tanks operating within the security community, which has to rely both on information and finance provided by States.

Thirdly, independence as a criterion creates a divide between the scholarly definition and ordinary understanding of the phenomenon of think tank, which results in leaving out important actors of the policy process, regardless of their independence from government or political parties. In the European context, think tanks are usually perceived by media and practitioners as being an organized group of specialists who undertake intensive study of important policy issues.

In order to overcome these difficulties, the most common solution found in the literature is to underline the fuzzy borders of definition and acknowledge that think tanks operate in a variety of institutional forms and legal arrangements, which opens the way to different ways of classification, referring tautologically to think tank as a “slippery term” (Stone, 2004: 4).

## **2.2 Classification**

Given the difficulty of definition, many scholars have instead resigned themselves to identifying categories of think tanks. Following from the historically dominant definition of think tanks, translated by the US-oriented literature, the most frequent typology is based on institutional aspects of independence (legal form and status, principles of funding, organizational affiliation, etc), focusing on the characteristic element of autonomy of think tanks (McGann 2000). Also scholarly independence of the personnel recruited is taken into account (Stone & Ullrich, 2003: 5).

However, other typologies are present in literature. On the one hand, Krastev (2000) is more inclined to classify think tanks on the basis of their targets: executive-oriented, legislation-oriented and media-oriented think-tanks. On the other hand, Struyk (1999) classifies think-tanks according to their organizational origins: private institutions, new institutions created by old fellows, institutions created by public figures, attached to political party, for-profit company, “spin-off” institution. Accordingly, think tanks outside the United States fall into three main categories— university affiliated, government affiliated, and political party affiliated— and tend not to enjoy the same degree of autonomy that their American counterparts do. Taking into consideration the comparative differences in political systems and civil societies, different categories were used to attempt to capture the full range of think tanks found around the world (McGann & Johnson, 2005: 14).

Research Independence ←-----→ Policy Relevance					
Government Affiliated	Quasi-Governmental	Party Affiliated	Quasi-Independent	Autonomous	University-Affiliated
Part of the formal structure of Government	Funded exclusively by government grants and contracts but not a part of the formal structure of government	Controlled by a political party in terms of funding, research agenda and personnel recruitment	Autonomous from government but controlled by an interest group, donor, contracting agency that provides a majority of the funding and has significant influence over its activities	Significant independence from any one interest group or donor and autonomous in its operation and funding from government	Part of the formal structure of University
Congressional Research Service (U.S., 1914) Bureau du Plan (France, 1944)	Woodrow International Center for Scholars (U.S., 1968).	Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Germany, 1964), Jaures Foundation (France, 1990) Progressive Policy Institute (U.S., 1998)	European Trade Union Institute (Belgium, 1978), Center for Defense Information (U.S., 1990).	Brookings Institution (US, 1916)	Carter Center, Emory University (U.S., 1982) Hoover Institution, Stanford University (1918).

In the context of the Eurosphere project, the authoritative typology provided by Weaver (1989) was adopted, on the basis of his study of US think tanks: « University without students », « contract research organization » and « advocacy tanks », supplemented by « party-affiliated tanks » in the European context. « University without students » stress their objectivity and non partisanship and are characterized by “heavy reliance on academics as researchers...and by long-term book-length studies as the primary research output” (Weaver, 1989: 566). « Contract research organizations » are reliant on research commissioned by government departments and hardly determine its own agenda, producing results under form of short reports. They tend to be technocratic in style and non partisan (Weaver, 1989: 564). « Advocacy tanks » combine a strong policy, partisan or ideological bent with “aggressive salesmanship and effort to influence current policy debates”, as their explicit objective is to change policies and to shift the climate of opinion. Output is less academic in style, in order to get better access to policy-makers (Weaver, 1989: 567).

The most important parameter at work in this kind of ranking is the degree of autonomy from other actors which could prevent independent research and advice on the part of think tanks, coupled with the relevance of its policy research. This view stems from the authors’ conception of think tanks as part of civil society as an intermediate space between the state and market, and therefore free from the embraces of interests which prevail in these spheres (McGann & Johnson, 2005: 17). Yet this is an unrealistic description of the nature and

activities of think tanks. Many major think tanks around the world are closely aligned with business interests, while others are dependent on universities, trade unions, donor organisations, states or international organizations. A supplementary typology is provided by McGann, where he makes a distinction between think tanks limiting themselves to fundamental research (« policy research organisation ») and others that produce research and provide recommendations (« think and do tanks ») and finally those that position themselves as practitioners (« do tanks ») (Lahrant & Boucher, 2004). Stone, Maxwell & Keating (2001) elaborate further this typology, defining types of think-tanks based on the kind of researchers they employ: contract researchers, 'in house' researchers (attached to executive), political advisors, civil society researchers (private think-tanks and NGOs) and disinterested research institutions. This typology is mirrored to a certain extent in the classification of experts working around the EU: « specialists » whose legitimacy lies on the deep knowledge of a technical subject; « mediator » whose legitimacy is based on his/her capacity to find compromises between different positions of relevant actors in the EU political system; « wise-men » whose legitimacy remains on his capacity to give meaning to the political construction of the European order (Lequesne & Rivaud, 2001: 874-875).

### 2.3 Functions

In order to overcome these difficulties of definition and classification, it is very common in literature to adopt a functionalist approach, pioneered by William Wallace (1994). This approach states that the function of think tank is more important than their formal definition or practical organization: « It makes little sense to define a « think tank » too precisely. The functions which think tank fulfil – research relevant to public policy, promotion of public debate..., the formulation and dissemination of alternative concepts and policy agendas can be fulfilled in many ways, under different constraints » (Sherrington, 2000: 174).

This is confirmed by other authors analysing the multiple functions of think tanks : “As civil society organizations think tanks play a number of critical roles, including (1) playing mediating function between the government and the public; (2) identifying, articulating, and evaluating current or emerging issues, problems or proposals; (3) transforming ideas and problems into policy issues; (4) serving as an informed and independent voice in policy debates; (5) providing a constructive forum for the exchange of ideas and information between key stakeholders in the policy formulation process.” (McGann & Weaver, 2000: 3). To sum up, irrespective of their structure and organization, think tanks have become a permanent part of the political landscape in many different countries, so much so that they are now an integral part of the policy process. As a result, think tanks of various sorts have performed many different functions including:

- carrying out of research and analysis on policy problems;
- providing advice on immediate policy concerns;
- evaluating government programs;
- facilitating public understanding of and opinion formation on policy initiatives;
- facilitating the construction of “issue networks”, involving a diverse set of policy actors who come together on an *ad hoc* basis around a particular policy issue or problem;
- providing supply of key personnel to government.

The flaw of such an approach is to be ill-equipped to draw distinctions between different kinds of think tanks and to stretch the conceptual definition of think tank to fit the situation, as the list of functions can be expanded at will. For instance, think tanks of various sorts perform

many similar functions. McGann states “it is best to envision think tanks as a continuum of structures and functions rather than any set of rigid categories” (McGann, 2003). Moreover, a major flaw of the functionalist approach is the idea that think tanks play a necessary and desirable function within a broader social structure, producing a normative vision of what should be the proper role of think tanks. In fact, a functionalist approach to think tanks tends to generate different metaphors, in order to emphasize a specific function, more often than not to fit a specific conceptual framework of analysis. For instance, think tanks can be viewed as bridges, recycling bins, or garbage cans (Stone, 2007). Using a passive-active continuum, for instance, it is possible to categorize different visions of think tanks, which are often used in literature.

ACTIVE <-----> PASSIVE		
Entrepreneur / Actor	Adviser / Catalyst / Factor	Platform / Bridge / Channel

A strand of research focuses on the function that think tanks perform as ‘political entrepreneurs’, in all phases of policy process - from agenda setting, drafting policy proposals, creating implementation plans to assessment of existing policies. They have often been recognized as policy actors and do take part into networks of decision-making and policy implementation, especially within contexts of multi-level governance like the EU. Analysis of the influence of think tanks leads not only to emphasize their policy function but also to stress that their autonomy (Stone 2007). In this view, think tanks position themselves in the policy-making process by performing different task such as problem definition, collection of information, devising options and recommendations, policy evaluation. According to Donald Abelson, the distinctive characteristic of think tanks in the United States is not their size or their considerable funding. According to him, what makes think tanks in the United States, besides their sheer number, is the extent to which they have become involved actively in various stages of the policy-making process » (Abelson, 2000: 213). Thunert presents think tanks as political actors “privatively or publicly funded...whose main function is to provide scientifically founded analysis” (Thunert, 2006: 206).

Another possibility is to see think tanks as «catalysts of thoughts and ideas» or «catalysts for ideas and actions», through creation of multidisciplinary networks of experts and think tanks, contributing to public debate and helping to articulate public interest: “while think tanks are one of the many civil society actors in a country, they often serve as catalysts for political and economic reform” (McGann & Weaver, 2000). Also for Krastev, think tanks can be characterised as “agents of change”, when they promote and advocate reform policies based on shared best practices and know-how. For instance, think tanks in the United States have been actively engaged in exporting their scholars, brands of policy analysis, and organizational structures to other countries, in order to create overseas affiliates. Moreover, think tanks act as transfer agents providing intellectual legitimacy of certain policies and ideas, in a process of « policy transfer » they both import ad export ideas and experiences: “transfer of ideas to another social environment in itself changes their meaning and function” (Krastev, 2000: 276). Advances in information systems and telecommunications have greatly expanded the scope and impact of collaboration between institutions and scholars. Bilateral and multilateral exchanges are taking place every day as technological advances allow think tank staff to communicate and operate more effectively across international borders. Global forums, conferences, and debates now take place regularly on the World Wide Web.

In a different perspective, Gellner (1995) is more interested in studying the role of think tanks as more passive platforms of policy formulation, rather than focusing on their agency. Stone (2002) is also keen to study think tank as parts of broader policy communities, advocacy coalitions and epistemic communities. Epistemic communities are networks of of

experts from different background sharing one world view and the desire to turn this into a policy or regime change; they are communities of shared knowledge” (Haas, 1989: 377). Advocacy coalitions are distinct from epistemic communities by their “emphasis on the belief system rather than knowledge itself” (Stone, Ullrich, 2003: 39). Policy communities include a wide range of policy actors – politicians, civil servants, consultants, activists, researchers - who “interact strategically, while engaging in exchanges involving the sharing of information, expertise and political support” (Stone, 1996: 91).

In these different configurations, think tanks “provide an organizational link and communication bridge between their different audiences” [Stone; 2002], try to link policy and ideas “at the intersection of academia and politics” [Stone; 2000]. This is summarized by the UNDP definition of a think tank: « organizations engaged on a regular basis in research and advocacy on any matter related to public policy. They are the bridge between knowledge and power in modern democracies » (UNDP, 2003: 6). In this last connotations, think tanks function as physical location for “exchanging resources (money, authority, information, expertise) in order to achieve their objectives, to maximise their influence over outcomes, and to avoid becoming dependent on other players in the game” (Rhodes, 1997: xii).

In spite of this plurality of visions and metaphors, however, certain core functions of think tanks, described as policy-related, include most prominently:

- contributing conceptual approaches and frameworks for policy-making;
- information gathering and dissemination;
- monitoring public policy and raising public awareness in the public sphere.

More marginally, think tank can perform functions such as consultancy, fee-based training, non-research projects, and more generally commercial activities.

In a nutshell, think tanks operate in a variety of political systems, engage in a range of policy-related activities, and comprise a diverse set of institutions that have varied organizational forms. Think tanks perform the same basic function — to bring knowledge and expertise to bear on the policy-making process — not all think tanks have the same degree of financial, intellectual and legal independence. In carrying out this function, think tanks are organisations performing at the intersection of political, bureaucratic, mass media, and economic elites and belonging to the realm of the mediation between civil society and state (McGann & Weaver, 2000).

## 2.4 Linkage to Political System

Functions expected to be performed by think tanks are not, however, universal across time and space but related to the cultural context and political structures in place. In fact, think tanks can perform only the tasks compatible with their environment.

Nonetheless, think tanks are linked to the elite configurations and dominating cultures of the political systems in which they are embedded (**Dogan, Higley**). In fact, think tanks’ treatment of ideas, values and knowledge depends on the political system and the characteristics of its policy-making.

Unsurprisingly, in the policy studies literature, the focus on think tanks as well as their ideas and practices is deeply rooted in Anglo-Saxon political tradition and models. However, it is difficult to translate this body of knowledge into political cultures different from the US, which is marked by the adversarial nature of politics, appointment of bureaucratic personnel according to parties in power, lack of party capabilities for policy development and available philanthropic patronage of research activities. For instance, in Spain and Portugal, think tanks developed later than most of their counterparts because of stifled political and economic conditions, which did not change before the 1970s. The underlying assumption at work in the

literature is that development of think tanks show how society and political actors in a given context interpret and respond to policy problems.

Theoretically speaking, there are two logics of policy process: close and open. In a close system, political elites work in a controlled environment and deliberate among themselves, without allowing room for outsiders, except with few exceptions. In an open system, there is a relative openness and transparency of the political process to different elites. Specifically, Western think tanks' activities are dependent on the transparency of the decision-making process as well as on the legitimacy of advice independent from power holders (McGann, Weaver, 2000). Generally speaking, in a close political system defined by overlapping elites, there is no place for any independent intermediary structure. Whereas in a policy process that is open and where elite configurations are more fragmented, think tanks can be autonomous actors both in pursue of particular interests as well as in public interest formulation. In the US case, think tanks became the organizational form of experts' participation in the competitive pluralistic political process, getting the status of independent influential actors. Even in this most favourable case, however, they need to adapt continuously to survive. In this view, think tanks operate in a relational field, circumscribed by interactions with politicians, bureaucrats, socio-economic interest groups, and media outlets (Medvetz, 2008). Opportunities for their influence vary according to the political and institutional environment on which they operate. The different categories of opportunities and constraints for think tanks were summarized by Stone and Ullrich (2003). The uneven spread of think tank development across political systems appears to be a consequence of factors such as the extent of society support, legal structures, the political situation, civil society development, and the tax environment.

- State-Society Relations: opportunities for think tanks are dependent on genuine political liberalisation and democratic political life, leading to pluralistic societies of competitive groups communicating their preferences through fair and free elections, an independent media and political activism. In particular, think tanks are part of the civil society. If boundaries between state, market and civil society did not developed sufficiently, it is difficult for interests to develop autonomously within civil society.
- Institutional Opportunities Structure: centralisation of policy making and political functions is a feature of many governments. Although federal systems do not necessarily provide more opportunities for the establishment of think tanks than the unitary systems, they present more points of access. Also, the differences between presidential and parliamentary regimes appear to present significant diverse degree of opportunities to think tanks in terms of political fragmentation.
- Political Opportunity Structure: the strength of bureaucracies has implications for the structure and operation of think tanks. Bureaucratic structures and styles differ markedly among all countries, but in most countries bureaucracies are very strong and often retain a monopoly on policy advice. On the other hand, political parties and party competition offer opportunities to interact for advocacy-oriented think tanks.
- Legal Opportunity structure: Private think tanks cannot survive on project income alone but require grants and gifts that will help promote the longevity of the organisation. The role of business, community foundations and private benefactors in providing financial and other resources is crucial in many countries, but it also dependent on the legal status available to think tanks. To a certain extent, domestic funding can be replaced by international demand and funding. Bilateral aid agencies (USAID, NORAD), international organisations (World Bank, UNDP) and philanthropic foundations (Ford Foundation, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung), have taken great interest in think tanks over the past decade, funding their activities, as part of growing global links between think tanks.

	<b>State-Society Relations</b>	<b>Institutional Opportunity Structure</b>	<b>Political Opportunity Structure</b>	<b>Legal Opportunity Structure</b>
HIGH RESISTANCE TO CHANGE	Political culture and power configurations	Federal or Unitary state	Rigidity of bureaucratic structures	Status
LOW RESISTANCE TO CHANGE	Historical paths of interest mediation	Parliamentary or Presidential regime	Permeability of political parties to outside advice	Financing

In this perspective, think tanks can be viewed as purposeful opportunists or interstitial hybrid organizations (Medvetz, 2008), in terms of their ability to select among the variety of opportunities the ones which are most likely to advance their influence and to adapt to the horizon of constraints which can stifle their activities, which determine in turn their organizational characteristics.

### 3.1 Historical Chronology

Different theoretical perspectives can be applied to the functions that think tanks fulfil (Stone, 1998). Neo-pluralists researchers assert that think tanks are able to “support and encourage policy pluralism, broad participation and involvement of policy actors, citizen empowerment” (Kenkuyu, 2002: xi). Such an analysis of think tanks emphasise the free and diverse character of democratic societies, where think tank compete with their policy proposals in the marketplace of ideas (McGann, 2001). Neo-Marxian analysis of the role of think tanks sees them as organisations actively involved in maintaining an ideological hegemony. This instrumentalist approach looks at how class and corporate interests influence think tank activities into policy formation (Dye). Elitist researchers argue that think tanks serve the long-term interests of economic and political elites and the agenda-setting power of think tanks is used for strategies of control by cohesive elites. Elitist theories applied in the context of think tanks risk to drift into ‘conspiracy theories’, whereas think tanks are relatively diverse and do not always sympathise with preferences of a particular government.

According to US-oriented mainstream literature on think tanks, influenced by neo-pluralist ideas, the organizational success of think tanks around the world is the result of underlying forces, such as the spread of markets and democracy across the world after the end of the Cold war. The factors behind the proliferation of think tanks are, on the one hand, the growing complexity of societies and, on the other hand, the lack of capacities of governmental structure to cope. In an increasingly complex, interdependent, and information-rich world, governments and individual policy-makers face the common problem of bringing expert knowledge to bear in governmental decision-making. Policy-makers and others interested in the policy-making process require information that is timely, understandable, reliable, accessible, and useful. There are many potential sources for this information, including: government agencies, university-based scholars, research centers, for-profit consulting firms, and international agencies. But in countries around the world, politicians and bureaucrats alike have increasingly turned to a specialized group of institutions to serve their needs. Independent public policy research and analysis organizations, commonly known as “think tanks,” have filled policy-makers’ need for information and systematic analysis that is policy relevant. In turn, this is linked to the soft power of American model to cope with the challenge of growing demands placed on the decision-making process. In a nutshell, development of democratic governance and market liberalism in different parts of the world has led to proliferation of think tanks in several areas of public policy - primarily social,

economic and environmental. «Think tanks are independent, or private, policy research organisations present in increasing numbers around the world. More often than not, think tanks are established as non-profit organisations. When they operate internationally, they are usually categorised as non-state actors in global and regional politics. Within the nation-state, they are often described as third sector organisations emerging from civil society. From both perspectives, these organisations are often viewed as vehicles for material interests and as ideational forces that are skilled in theatres of persuasion, agenda setting, and advocacy.» (Stone, 2000: 153). On the one hand, some scholars tend to view think tanks through the lens of “market of ideas”: “the growth of think-tanks can be explained by market forces that created a demand for different brands of think-tanks that produced new products for new markets” (McGann 2001; p. 7). Therefore, they are responding to an economic rationality and act as intermediaries between demand and supply.

On the other hand, Stone defines several waves of think tank proliferation according to the democratization of policy-making process in different parts of the world (Weaver 1989, Stone & Ulrich 2003). The first wave emerged in the late 19th century in West European industrialized states like Great Britain and Germany mainly. This original model was mainly based on corporate interests and was strongly developed in the USA during the first half of the 20th century. But in Europe the increase of the number of think tanks occurred after World War II during a ‘second wave’, shaped by the example set by American think tanks as the Ford Foundation and based on a university-like model. In the late 1970s a third wave occurred and brought increasing specialization, a more normative agenda and a stronger advocacy function. The emergence of think tanks in Central and Eastern Europe during the 1990s (Quigley 1997, Struyk 1999, Krastev 2000) as well as of European trans-national think tanks (Sherrington 2000, Struyk 2002) are firmly part of the fourth wave, shaped by the twin process of democratization and liberalisation. According to some estimates, the current number of think tanks present in Europe is around 1750, up from 670 in 1998 (McGann, 2010). Therefore, since the 1990s, the small community of European think tanks has grown in numbers and scope. Not only do more institutions now exist than ever before, but many pre-existing think tanks have given greater emphasis to their research programs focusing on European foreign policies and economic systems. In spite of this strong growth, however, European think tanks are much smaller than their American counterparts in both budget and staff. Moreover, because a majority of European states are small in size and/or population, there tends to be a closer working relationship between think tanks and government officials.

### **3.2 Geographical Differentiation**

The profusion of think tanks across Europe can be organized thematically according to different models, in order to make sense of increasing numbers and complexity.

#### **3.2.1 Anglo-American**

Think tanks in the United Kingdom have a much longer tradition than those in continental Europe. They are characterized by their high degree of visibility and activity in comparison to their continental European counterparts, having successfully adapted the US model to their domestic conditions.

On a domestic level, British think tanks constituted themselves as ‘instruments of change’, by being used by political leadership to subvert established consensus and policy wisdom in the political parties. The emergence of these “new right” (Denham, Garnett, 2004: 236) organizations such as the Center for Policy Studies and the Adam Smith Institute was an

important source of support for Thatcherite conservatism during the 1970s. In this respect, the evolution of think tanks in the UK mirrored that of the US: think tanks acted as actors of political reform against the consensus established within and among political parties both in the United States, under the Reagan presidency, and in the United Kingdom, under Prime Minister Thatcher (Hames & Feasey, 1994). Subsequently, when the Labour party experienced a resurgence in British politics during the 1990s, think tanks like the Institute for Public Policy Research and Demos took over the role of majority-party research outfit, aimed to reform the party in power from within (Denham, Garnett, 2004: 238). This historical path explains the feature that all think tanks (to a certain degree) tend to be a part of the UK establishment and must manage the inherent tension between relevance and influence as well as distance and objective analysis.

In addition to being ideologically-affiliated think tanks that position themselves for political influence, dominant British think tanks also share another common feature: a pervasive interdependent relationship with media (Comford, 1990). The British press is constantly publishing the newest report from a think tank. Media appearances are one of many ways that the think tanks in which can maintain a public profile and, therefore, a wider audience and broader influence. For instance, Demos enjoys widespread media coverage due to its sometimes controversial research (Day, 2000: 114).

### **3.2.2 Western Europe (with Scandinavian Sub-Type)**

Think tanks on the European continent are in general characterized by a more academic orientation. Whereas Anglo-American think tanks are more criticism-focused and more engaged in challenging existing policies, policy-research organizations in continental Western Europe tend to be more conservative and focus on academic research rather than policy-oriented research.

Many think tanks are at least in part government funded, which marks a sharp difference from most British organizations. Political party think tanks are also rather prevalent. Unlike American think tanks, very few Western European institutes can be described as ‘single issue’ organizations but, on the other hand, not very many address a large breadth of issues (Day, 2000: 129). Three national cases stand out, because of their specific state-society relations which can be ranked alongside an open-closed logic of the policy process. Germany as a example of a neo-corporatist political regime, France as a closed political system and Italy as more of opened-up political regime. Of course, this categorization is only an heuristic model, which does not cover the internal variability of policy sectors and the on-going fragmentation of bureaucratic machinery in Western Europe (Lascoumes & Le Galés, 2007: 62-63).

In Germany, think tanks have a strong academic orientation, training researchers and aspiring politicians, but also hiring professors often to deliver influential reports. Most fall in the category of “universities without students”, based on academic credentials. Moreover, expert estimates put the proportion of publicly-funded think tanks at over 75% (Thunert, 1998: 71). Generally speaking, there are three categories of non-profit research institutes. The first category includes thirty five research institutes, on a so-called blue list. Heavily supported by government ministries, they mostly work on long term questions and usually do not get involved in current policy debates or the media, although they do publish all of their work. The second category included another 30 to 40 organisations that can be considered more independent, but still are funded by ministries as well. In fact this category is dominated by organizations that are technically independent but are nonetheless often funded by government institutions. Two notable exceptions to this trend are the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) and Bertelsmann Foundation. A third category are policy-research institutes embedded in the neo-corporatist German political system, which are either supported by business and labor organizations or directly linked to major German political

parties. The latter hold a dominant position in the think tank scene and “are in some ways the nearest European equivalents of full-service US think tanks like the Brookings Institution in that they cover a wide policy spectrum and have large financial resources”, though those resources come mostly from state subsidies to the political parties (Day, 2000: 117).

In sum, the political structure in Germany is quite different when compared to the more pluralistic US model. The corporatist organization of politics strongly structures the access to the policy-making universe to a handful of established think tanks. Nonetheless, despite German think tanks working under different conditions than those in the US, think tanks are seen as established political actors who successfully influence necessary reforms, even if in a subordinated position (Sven & Vatter, 2006: 146). However, more emphasis on market deregulation and liberalization to achieve economic stability and growth as well as intensified competition created an opportunity window which strengthened think tanks’ position in the German political system (Sven & Vatter, 2006: 143). Changes in traditional policy making also allowed scientific experts or think tanks to channel new policy ideas in the process of interest mediation. In addition to offering advice under new political circumstances, policy advice by think tanks may help legitimize unpopular decisions.

In France, the characteristics of the political system have precluded independent think tank formation (Williams, 2008). The more successful think tanks are affiliated with political parties and limited in their research agenda by political considerations. On the other hand, major research centers (such as the Centre d’Analyse Stratégique, Centre d’Analyse et de Prévision, Conseil d’Analyse Economique) are incorporated into the government. As a result, French think tanks are also often much more localized than in other countries, almost exclusively in the capital. The rest of French think tanks are mostly university-based and thus tend to have a theoretical orientation that eschews involvement in policy-making. In Western Europe generally, but especially in France, non-academic research is perceived as lower-level research.

In Italy, think tanks are highly differentiated, due to a tumultuous transformation of the political system. They can be either university-based, affiliated to political parties or engaged in contract research. Traditionally, think tanks were characterized by an academic bias, with a large portion of staff consisting of university professors and hosted by university structures. In such a case, funding is provided by the government and by contract research. This situation was transformed, however, by changes on the domestic and international level during the 1990s: the run-up to the Italian adoption of the Euro currency and domestic controversy over election laws during the 1990s (Lucarelli, Radaelli, 2004: 90). After the failure of the traditional system of parties, the consequent phenomenon of the personalization of the politics, and the institutional reforms, there was a big increase in the number of Italian think tanks (Diletti, 2009). Italy engaged in significant experimentation and diversification in how think tanks are organized and operate in the last decade. For instance, new political think tanks connected to a politician (see, for instance, Fondazione Italiani Europei of Massimo D’Alema and Giuliano Amato, Astrid of Franco Bassanini, Fondazione Liberal of Ferdinando Adornato or Fondazione FareFuturo of Gianfranco Fini) were created. They replace partly the traditional party-affiliated “fondazioni di partito”, and can be described as vanity tanks, which exist for the “self-aggrandizement of its members or for the promotion of a political career” (Abelson, 2002: 35).

More recently, there has been the birth of more independent and advocacy-oriented think tanks, see for example the Fondazione per la Sussidiarietà, the Lavoce.info or the Istituto Bruno Leoni (IBL). These are relatively new institutions that are focused on marketing their ideas and using communication technologies such as the web to help convey their policy proposals. They also engage in marketing and networking development. As a result, these think tanks are attracting increasing attention from the media and are having an impact on the

public opinion. In particular, Lavoce.info is a virtual think tanks that operates on line and clearly target medias as a vehicle for its ideas.

Scandinavia, while clearly a part of Western Europe, has its own unique think tank environment. Think tanks are rarely linked to political parties, as independence is very valued. Objectivity and neutrality is emphasized in their activities, regardless of the political coalitions in power, enhancing their credibility and reputation abroad. They seem to be more transparent than average as well, reying on a rather open policy process.

2009	Number of Think Tanks	% in Western Europe
Austria	36	2,8
Belgium	97	7,6
Denmark	32	2,5
Finland	26	2
France	167	13,2
Germany	187	14,8
Italy	88	6,9
Netherlands	55	4,3
Spain	50	3,9
Sweden	68	5,3
Switzerland	72	5,7
United Kingdom	285	22,5
Western Europe <sup>1</sup>	1262	100

### 3.2.3 Eastern Europe

The emergence of think tanks as a policy-related phenomenon is a remarkable feature of the transition process in contemporary Eastern Europe, marked by the twin process of democratization and liberalisation of former communist regimes. As far as think tanks are concerned, there is a discernible amount of controversy about their role in transition, mostly alongside ideological lines. On the one hand, independent think tanks have been credited with keeping reform agendas alive in the region during difficult times, challenging post-communist and new elites, and helping foreign specialists transform doctrinal manifestos into reforms tailored to local conditions (Struyk, 1999). This suggests that the experience of think tanks in the region reveals how a general interest can be defined in a context characterised by political, economical and social changes and at the same time by the adoption of international and European norms. Moreover, a few are presented as courageous whistleblower and watchdogs in fighting corruption, advocating access to public information. For example, even when failing to instigate policy change, they kept issues on the public agenda, such as budget monitoring, procurement and other policy subjects (Kovats, 2006). On the other hand, many of these think tanks were criticized as highly personalized. In relying on their founders' personal charisma and skilful networking, some of these centres never developed adequate organizational structures or sufficiently broadened their audience. Moreover, detractors of these organizations tend to portray think tanks as 'Western institutes' in the past and 'EU-driven researchers' at present. First-generation think tanks were portrayed as 'fifth columns', implementing donors' agendas and providing support structures for foreign experts. Built on foreign models and relying on external support, think tanks are perceived as appliers and adapters of external paradigms. Because CEE think tanks deliberately follow western

<sup>1</sup> Sources: *The Global "Go-To Think Tanks"* (2008) & *Global Trends and Transitions Survey of Think Tanks* (2007)

practices and are often very dependent on foreign financial funding and expertise, their work is also often marked by a 'copy-paste' approach (Krastev, 2000).

According to McGann, Eastern Europe experienced the most drastic increase in think tanks across the world, between 1991 and 2000, with approximately 25 new think tanks per year, representing around 20% of all newly established total worldwide. From 2001 to 2008, the rate decreased to 7.43 from 2001 to 2007 (McGann, 2008). Because of this explosive growth, however, the roots of CEEs' think tanks are fragile. Of the 101 think tanks surveyed by Freedom House in 1999, only 68 had annual budgets higher than 50,000 USD, less than 50 could hire more than 5 in-house researchers and less than a third could dedicate more than 50% of their activities to research (Ebélé & Boucher, 2006: 18).

Finding a common denominator for think tanks in transition is a demanding task: from one country to another, or across various policy areas, it is hard to separate the accomplishments of think tanks from those of their environment (Ebélé & Boucher, 2006). The transition process has seen different outcomes in terms of success, failure and irrelevance on the part of emergent think tanks in different countries. According to their national context, they were either more marked by successful resistance from old elites whereas disenchanted liberals looking for a way to influence the policy process were more influential in other countries. Moreover, there were differences in competition in the field of policy research as well as in access to information. Whereas thriving think tank communities were created in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, other CEEs hosted fewer organizations of this kind as in Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia. Likewise, some of these organizations significantly contributed to state-building, democratization and market reforms like in Poland and Hungary, while in countries like the Czech Republic and Slovenia reforms were implemented with little input from such organizations. However, according to Krastev (2000), post-communist experiences are an illustration of the potential link between democracy and think tank development. Generally speaking, although local think tanks did not play a significant role during the initial wave of reforms, they made their impact during the later part of transition once the democratic structures and procedures were better established.

In spite of significant differences between Countries of Eastern Europe (CEEs), which evolved differently under different national configurations in which local think tanks emerged and influenced policy processes, several common conditions shaped the emergence of think tanks prior to their EU accession. First, many think tanks were created in the mid-1990s in reaction to reform processes that were blocked either by the winners that emerged during transition, reformed communist parties, or both. Second, these organizations were platforms for disappointed liberal elites following electoral reversals and the general transition crisis in the CEEs. Government instability or populism dissuaded many policy experts from assuming governmental roles and investing themselves in the private market of policy advice. In fact, a small army of self-styled individual experts and consultancy firms created a more lucrative assistance sector. Moreover, these organizations did not only focus on policy research but also developed coordination with NGOs, to support public reforms and mobilize civil societies. As a result, post-communist think tanks do not focus consistently on long-term research and their studies are neglected in academic circles (Krastev, 2000).

Third, many think tanks discovered the benefits of interaction with international organizations and Western foundations promoting the creation of a 'civil society'. Partially as a result of this dynamics, CEEs' think tanks maintained their focus on international trends and often advocated unpopular policies. In the first decade after independence, abundant funding was provided by foreign donors, favoring think tanks as suitable independent agents of change against stalled state reform processes. Private donors such as the Open Society Institute, Ford and Mott Foundations along with UNDP, German Marshall Fund, and Freedom House were at the forefront of this supply. In fact, the idea and practice of policy

research (evolving from the Anglo-American political tradition) took root in Central Europe in the 1990s. A recipe for success was the absence or little competition from other research outlets operating under the auspices of governments, universities, political parties or business. Nonetheless, think tanks are yet to rely on domestic markets for policy advice and thus securing their sustainability beyond foreign funds (Stone, 1995: 10). This is most evident in the importance of EU as a magnet for the think tanks in the region. Among the think tanks that follow EU matters more or less closely, more than a third was established between 1995 and 1998, just as the accession process started (Freedom House, 2006).

In the beginning of the 1990s, as the tumultuous transition period were ending, think tanks become increasingly engaged in cooperation with or lobbying of supranational or international organizations. At the ending of the transition period, CEEs' think tanks suffered from a lack of money, since they received funding neither from the international donors nor from individual contributions. By the end of the 1990s, EU-related project and activities begun to play an increasingly important role in the budgets of think tanks, and significantly contributed to the organizational transformation of many of them. Moreover, national think tanks were able to develop their European expertise in order to increase their legitimacy in their own field of action (Devaux, 2006).

Requirements attached to EU funding led to the professionalization and formalization of almost all the recipient organizations, and financially helped to consolidate a number of newly established organizations. Beyond CEEs, however, EU enlargement and related institutional reforms in the 1990s have affected the landscape of think tanks in Brussels.

### 3.2.4 Euro Think Tanks

An underlying concern of this enquiry across different kinds of think tanks, in respect of a creation of an European Public Sphere, is especially focused on a subset of European think tanks, which are able to position themselves at the EU level and to manage multi-level governance, searching and utilizing 'access points' at the EU level as well as at the national level. According to Philippa Sherrington, there are four specific kinds of think tanks linked to the EU, whose activities have their main focus on the European Commission: «The most clearly defined EU think tank is the research body within the European Commission itself : the Forward Studies Unit...Second, are those independent research bodies operating within the supranational policy-making, that are either focused upon EU affairs or embrace a broader European remit...Third level is a broader category as it involves the plethora of national think tanks that either examine EU issues, or those that absorb European issues into a wider policy discourse...Finally there are European interest groups, organised at the transnational level and often referred to as Euro-Groups, that have developed think tank characteristics » (Sherrington, 2000: 174). This scheme was adapted recently (Ullrich, 2004) to comprise also university-based think tanks<sup>2</sup>.

According to these studies, whereas the vast majority of European think tanks is embedded in their national context and usually focusing on their domestic political system, there is a growing minority of think tanks which are either Euro-conscious or EU-oriented. One organisation representative of the category of national Think Tank with an interest on the regional level, *Notre Europe*, elaborated on the definition of think tank. The specificity of this contribution to the literature on think tanks, it lies in the fact that *Notre Europe* is part of the universe which is analysed, which is raising the issue of self-serving definition of the phenomenon because of a vested interest in the results. However, this contribution is too important simply to ignore as it is constitute the most recent survey of European think tanks defined as "as a permanent organization specialised in producing public policy solutions by

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<sup>2</sup> Source : *Journal of Common Market Studies* 47(4): 831-862.

dedicated research staff, a think tank provides original thinking, analysis and advice destined to be communicated to decision-makers and public opinion. As an organization, it is not performing government tasks, is not linked to private interests and is not principally involved in training or degree-seeking activities. Generally speaking, think tank activities have the ambition, implicit or explicit, to articulate a public interest vision and work in order to maintain its intellectual autonomy”<sup>3</sup>.

#### 4 Survey Results

Europe displays a wide variety of ethno-cultural and linguistic affiliations and identities. As a consequence, the EU, since its 2004 enlargement, it has arguably entered a phase of ‘deep diversity’ (Fossum, 2004), which is defined by the multi-layered landscape of European societies. First, the EU is composed by an increasing number of States, each linked to a specific historical process of nation-building correlated to treatment of collective identities. These historical processes have, to a certain extent, many points in common but they have also generated specific national differences, in terms of official language, political system, legal culture and so on. The process of EU enlargement has increased its inter-state degree of diversity. Second, in a number of European societies, sub-national political mobilisation has promoted ethno-national identities as territorially-based groups claimed recognition of their status as national minorities or ethnic communities. In all these cases, claims are put forward for the recognition and protection of distinctive cultures and identities based either on linguistic and cultural traits or specific histories. Third, Europe has increasingly become a region of immigration. Migrants are settling and adapting to their local environment while simultaneously maintaining transnational links and activities. As a result, new ways of life and cultures are constantly being introduced and integrated in the European social framework. Fourth, issues of indigenous minorities and immigrant communities are much less relevant at the European level than at the national level but still present. While the policies on inclusion by member states are geared toward national minorities or immigrants, depending on the historical context of the country, the EU *per se* does not have competence on dealing with protection of minorities, except for its policy of enlargement in which guarantee for protection of minorities features as one of the criteria for accession. Nonetheless, the issue of Roma minority is certainly becoming more salient at the European level, as they are a transnational community present in many EU states, suffering a high level of discrimination and racism. Their position is specific in the sense that they are often forgotten both in migration-related and ethno-linguistic debates at the national level but they are more and more present at the European one (Hagen Schulz-Forberg, 2010). Conversely, the EU has its own competence to deal with other sources of diversity in European societies, such as gender equality and immigration-related diversity.

For instance, between 2000 and 2004, the EU adopted several directives in the perspective of a common integration policy advocated by the 1999 European Council in Tampere. The directives 2000/43/CE and 2000/78/CE aim at combating and preventing discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, ethnicity/race, religion/belief and sexual orientation. Moreover, the directive 2003/9/CE on asylum policy defined common criteria for dealing with refugees. All directives were transposed into national law in all EU member states. This legal framework applicable to all residents, regardless of their nationality, was supplemented in 2004 by the Common Basic Principles (CBP) to immigrant integration as well as the Framework Decision 2008/913/JAI of the Council against racism

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<sup>3</sup> Own translation

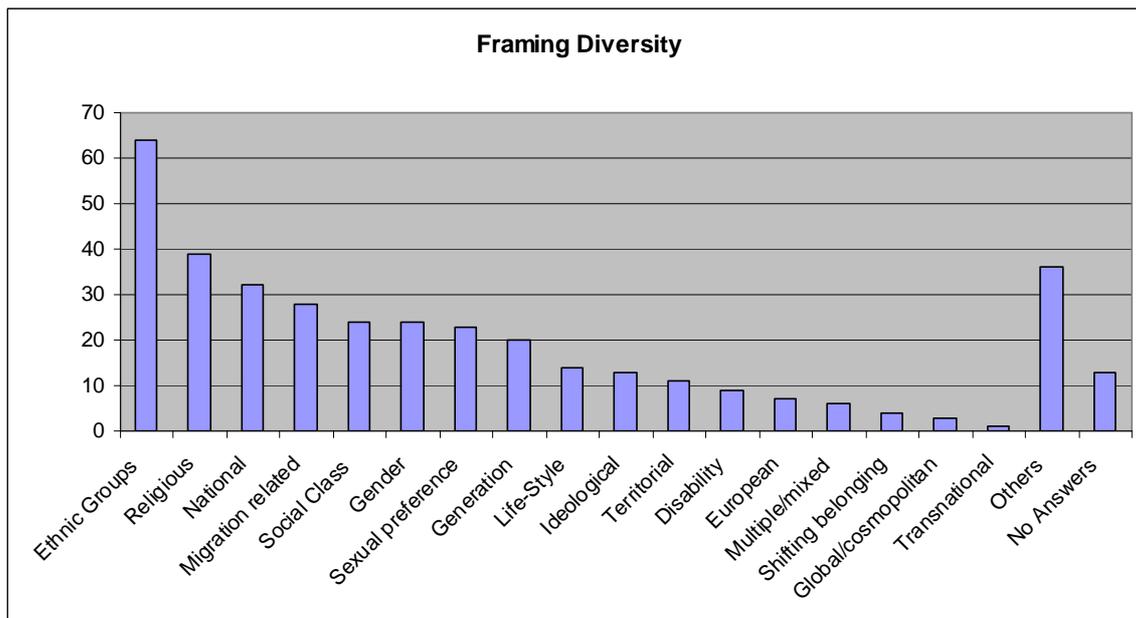
and xenophobia. However, despite these efforts, concrete progress in the development of a EU approach to immigrant integration remains a complex matter.

In order to assess processes of inclusion and exclusion at work in such a complex environment and whereas they are fostering the emergence of a European Public Sphere distinct from national ones, this survey aims at framing conceptions of diversity related to the EU and EPS among think tanks for the first time on a pan-European level, based on a sample of national think tanks, which consists of interview data collected in 14 EU member states and 2 non-EU countries (Turkey and Norway). Respondents have all been interviewed according to the same structured questionnaire, whose answers' dataset has been analysed systematically in order to investigate the key research questions of the project. Moreover, for each type of organization, institutional data were gathered independently by analysing institutional homepages and publications. Based on interviews and institutional data gathering, respondents' attitudes on diversity, EU polity and conceptions of European public sphere have subsequently been coded into a project-dedicated database, in order to compile a dataset of answers concerning diversity, European polity and European Public Sphere. Key answers were selected on the basis of their statistical significance for a quantitative analysis.

The end result is a comprehensive understanding of notions of diversity (5.1) across European think tanks, including different philosophies of management of diversity (5.2), both at the national and European level, and perceptions about an emerging European Public Sphere (5.3). Analysis is conducted at the level of individual respondents rather than at the organizational level, given that statistical tests did not prove the significance of organizational setting for answer patterns. The disparity of views on most topics within single think tanks, is probably due to inability or unwillingness of think tanks to enforce internal homogeneity of individual views. The only exception to such a trend are advocacy think tanks, which have a tendency to control for homogeneity of views both at the recruitment stage and at the moment of producing output, at the price of stifling original and innovative thinking. Moreover, at the national level, it is not uncommon for career mobility between different think tanks of individual researchers, which constitute an additional homogenizing factor.

#### **4.1 Framing Diversity**

The first key question concerning framing of the notion of diversity is the following: "Which group are relevant today for defining a diverse society?". Such a question was the very first of the questionnaire and followed after the interviewer had presented the project, including the project's own definition of 'diversity', which is as follows: "Issues of diversity have recently gained additional momentum in European politics. Different groups based on national, ethnic, religious, territorial belongings as well as cultural, class, gender, sexual, disability, generational, ideological and migrant identities, are making different rights-claims in our societies. To these we can also add the new groups claiming to have global, European, transnational, mixed and shifting identities and belongings. In public debates, we observe that politicians and intellectuals prefer to define societal diversity in different ways." Respondents were then asked to reflect upon which groups they themselves would include in such a definition. Overall, the respondents operating within European think-thanks expressed a clear-cut and restricted notion of 'diversity', largely confined to traditional issues of descent-related diversity, in opposition to ascriptive characteristics of individuals and groups.



The analysis of the answers to the question defining the relevant groups for contemporary diverse societies shows that, although the interviewees could choose among an amazingly rich panel of alternatives, 13 have refused to answer, 34 have chosen only the category ‘other’ and only 20% have selected 4 or more categories from the list.

Exactly half of the answers are clustered in 4 categories, semantically very close: ethnic, religious, nationhood and migration-related diversity. Related issues are also dominant in the ‘other’ section, where a large number of statements pertain to ascriptively-perceived cultural differences.

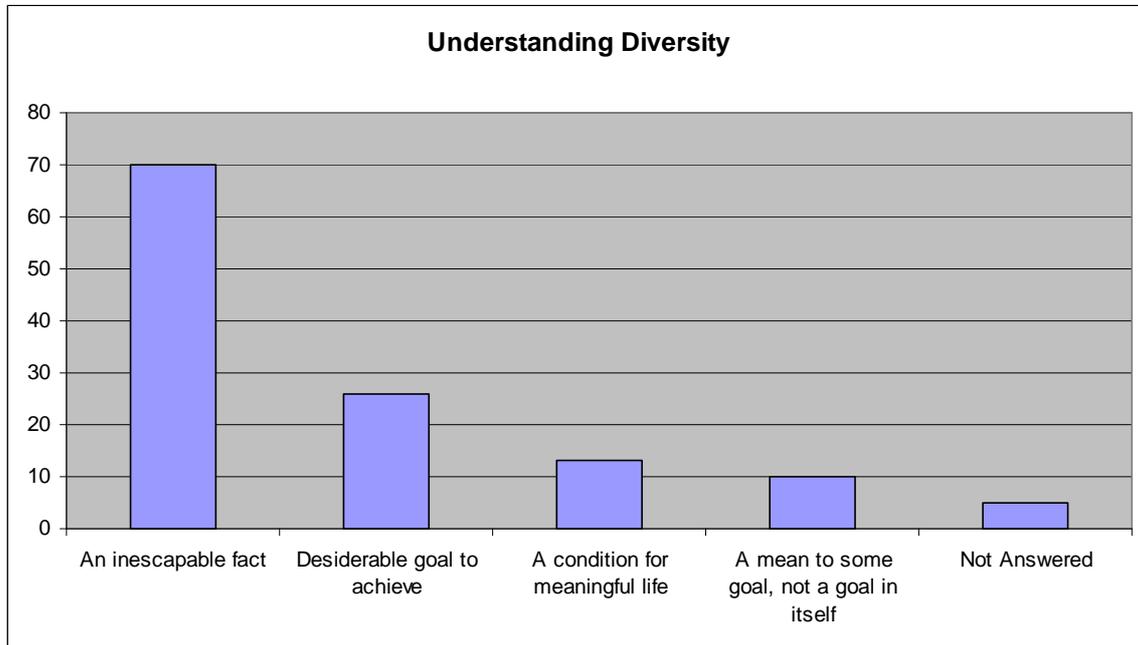
Those who choose one of the previous categories as a ground for diversity tend to choose other categories in the same cluster while they seldom choose other grounds outside. Only one third of the interviewees that have selected one of the four ascription-related definitions of diversity have selected also one or more categories outside that cluster; 40% of the interviewees that have selected one category within the cluster have also selected one or more of the other categories within the cluster.

Less than 10% of interviewees include social class among grounds for diversity. This should not be taken to reveal a ‘post-modern’ outlook: gender is chosen by an identical number of interviewees, and sexual preference and generational belonging receive only a slightly lower number of choices. In short, the interviewees do not deny the importance of social inequality, but they do not seem willing to include them in a diversity perspective.

Interestingly, matters of identifications are very rarely perceived as having to do with ‘diversity’. As a matter of fact, no freely chosen identification is selected by more than 5% of interviewees, and most of them are actually selected by less than 7 out of 371 valid answers.

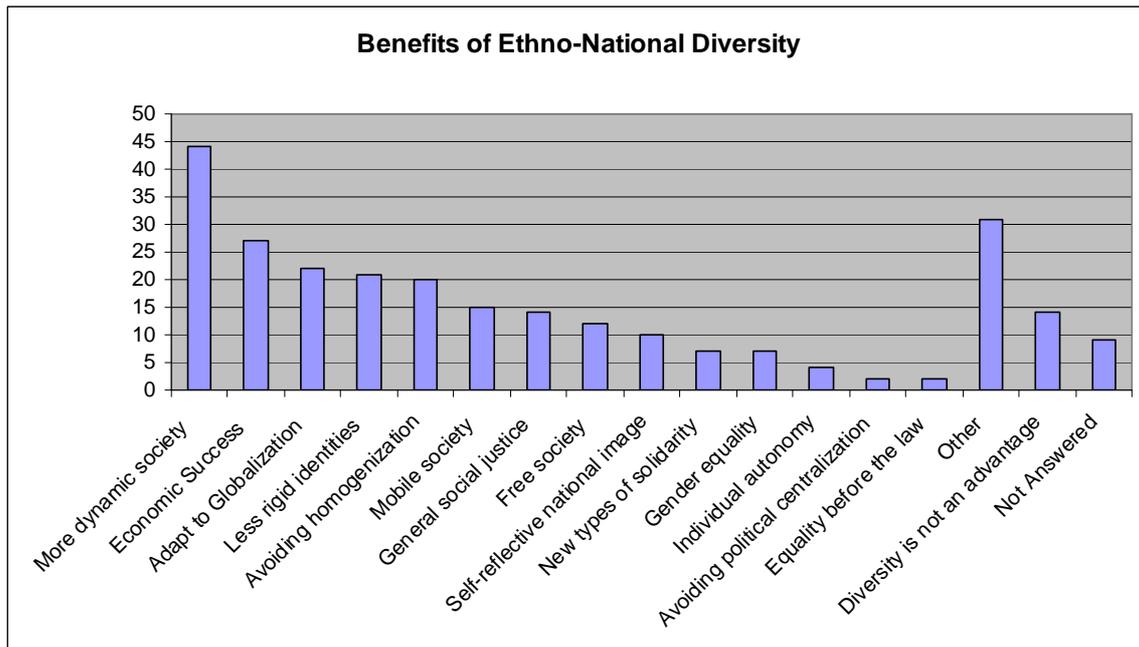
Such a selective understanding of diversity was expressed by respondents before that the interviewer moved to the first block of questions on attitudes concerning more generally ethno-national diversity, defined in a brief text given in writing to the interviewee: “Many states and societies seem to give more importance to ethno-national diversity than other types of diversity in the ways they organize their political institutions and policymaking...we define ethno-national diversity as the living together of different ethnic groups and/or nations within one political system. This includes both the native ethno-national minorities in this country (i.e. groups who differ by language, ethnic origin and/or cultural traditions from the majority population) and immigrants from all around the world who reside legally in Europe”.

Another key question, concerning the basic understanding of diversity among the respondents, was about respondents' categorization of diverse society as a ontological, desirable or instrumental fact.



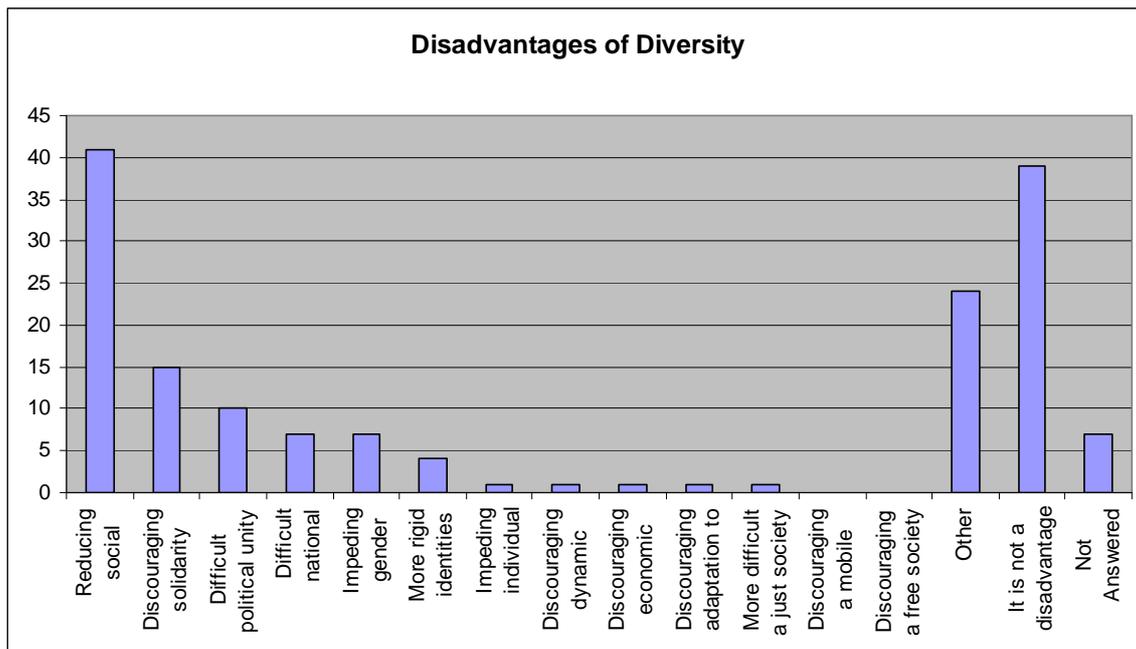
In the interviews to members of think tanks, a vast majority does not see ethno-national 'diversity' as a goal or a value, but rather as an inescapable fact of life, that has to be acknowledged and managed. Only one third of interviewees address diversity as a worthy and meaningful condition to be cherished. For a vast majority, it is just a condition of certain societies (59%) or a mean that can be used to achieve some other political ends. The pragmatic view is slightly more shared by those who interpret 'diversity' nearly exclusively in ethno-national terms - exemplified by the statement: "if we focus only on issues of ethno-national diversity...I think that diversity is in this context reality" - but the difference is far from significant.

This matter-of-fact case for diversity was further developed in answer to the following item of the questionnaire: "Is ethno-national diversity an advantage (disadvantage) for society?". By taking a comprehensive approach to this question and looking also to quotes and summaries of respondents answers, multiple pragmatic arguments unfold. The first table includes risks and costs that are likely to occur as a result of diversity. The second table considers the advantages of diversity for European societies.



The pragmatic view of ethno-national diversity is further confirmed by the fact that the interviewees do not take for granted that ‘diversity’ as such is a normative advantage for society. Slightly more than 10% of interviewees do not consider diversity beneficial at all. 40% of the answers, moreover, see diversity as an advantage only in functional terms, as a condition that may help dynamism, economic competitiveness and adjustment to globalization. None of the arguments justifying ethno-national diversity on normative terms reach anything above 10% of the answers (for instance in terms of the quality of public life it may make possible: “crossing of differences can make life hard but there are enormous concrete advantages and interculture is a motivating force”) and most of them are below 5%. As there was no limit in the number of possibilities that could be chosen, the finding seems to confirm a consistent instrumental view of diversity.

This is further confirmed by the results of the question on diversity as a disadvantage for society. The number of answers to this question is sensibly lower than in the previous, positive, one. This signals a minor concern with the disadvantages of ethno-national diversity.



Only 30% of interviewees see diversity as not being a disadvantage under any condition for society. Twice as many interviewees see ethno-national diversity as undermining social cohesion than, in the previous question, protecting from its excesses. If 7 interviewees had stressed previously that ethno-national diversity may help fostering new types of social solidarities, 15 interviewees rather think that it may make more difficult the production of social solidarity.

It is possible to draw at least two tentative conclusion on the basis of the aforementioned results. Firstly, ethno-national diversity is overwhelmingly considered to be a problem for society, which needs to be managed pragmatically. This first result is hardly surprising, given the nature of organizations under review. The respondents work in organizations catering to the needs of policy-makers, solving practical problems on the basis of their expertise, which elicit a matter-of-fact answers to questions put to their attention. Think tanks occupy a particular niche within civil society at the crossroad of academic and political worlds, catering to the needs of different levels of policy-making. Whereas interest groups and advocacy groups use more confrontational strategies to obtain change via pressure and by highlighting problems, think tanks aim to build working relationship with policy makers in order to develop solutions to existing problems. Secondly, although not wanting to draw any definitive conclusions on the basis of discourse analysis performed on replies to the questionnaire, it seems that respondents from think tanks tend to expose either one or the other of two doctrines when defining their attitudes to ethno/national diversity (Putnam, 2007). On the one hand, the “contact” theory declares that by living together different communities enrich each other by increasing their mutual understanding and that this eventually leads to greater harmony between the respective groups. On the other hand, the “conflict theory” predicts quite the opposite: distrust between ethnic groups will rise with diversity. Moreover, low trust with high diversity not only affects local communities, but is also associated with greater inter-community tensions. These two theories obviously have opposite implications when it comes to immigration. The first promote multicultural policies and the use of all appropriate means to integrate immigrants and minorities while respecting their cultural identities. The second advocates more assimilationist policies and crucially to limit immigration as much as possible, supporting flow regulation in order to attract highly-qualified migrants and cultural tests in order to prevent unfit immigrants to enter. It goes almost without saying that

mainstream opinion in the universe of think tanks, reflecting political correctness, leans toward the former doctrine, while the latter reflects the widely despised anti-diversity view of fringe groups. Nonetheless, this view was also articulated by interviewees, even if its proponents prefer not to be cited, except for one respondent which answered: « The negative aspect of greater diversity, is that you have a higher degree of conflicts. To me it seems almost impossible to avoid conflicts, or you could talk about in more abstract terms as increased transaction costs between cultures ». These different positions correlate to assimilationist and multiculturalist models of citizenship dealing with diversity which will be analysed further in the second strand of analysis on ways to manage diversity.

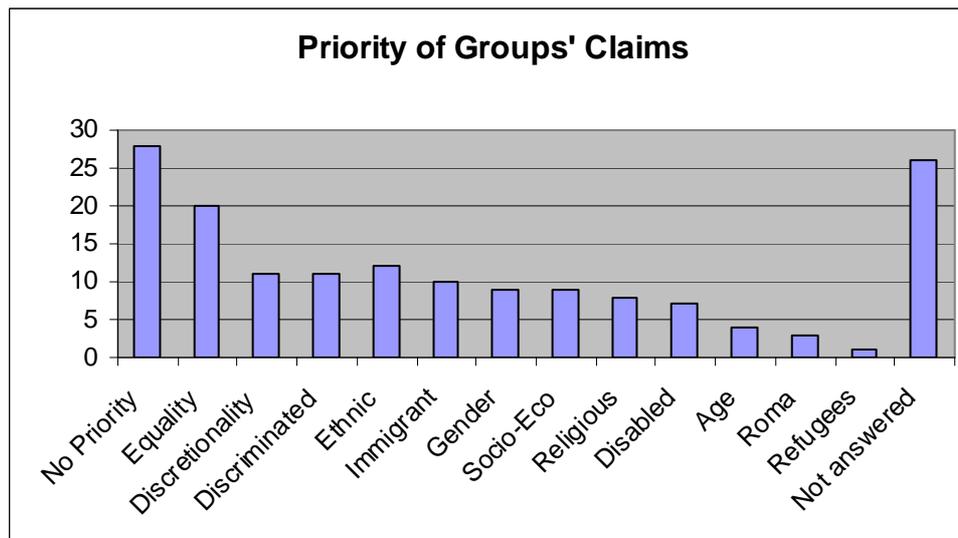
## **4.2 Managing Diversity**

Methodologically speaking, from this point of the survey onwards, the answers extracted by the dataset have only indicative value as the number of cases in each category are often too low for systematic analysis (there is a large number of 'others' often too generic to be codified safely and a ever growing number of respondents who did not answer at all). Consequently, the analysis is largely impressionistic but it is worthy to have in order to provide some elements of answer to the research questions pursued in this project. Despite aforementioned reservations about the dataset, some results are forthcoming at three levels: general policy-making (5.2.1), national state responsibility (5.2.2) and the EU potential role (5.2.3).

### **4.2.1 General Principles of Policy-Making**

The general picture of managing diversity according to respondents is provided by the answers to the second item of the questionnaire: "Which groups are more important than others? Why should policymaking give priority to the claims of these groups?".

Notwithstanding the level of policy-making considered, 20% of valid answers rejected a group-oriented approach. In addition, 15% of respondents who did not answer this question also did not reply to the previous question about the most important groups constituting a diverse society, even if they completed the questionnaire by answering to subsequent questions. This indicates that at least a third of respondents working in think tanks have reservations or objections to a group-oriented approach to diversity. Another striking feature is that the groups ranked as the most important to define a diverse society are not equally prominent when priority of collective claims for policy-making are considered.



Summing up on answers to the question of which group deserves priority in policy-making processes, among respondents in favor of such an approach, the main conclusion is that the overwhelming majority of respondents either reject a hierarchy of discrimination grounds or advocate the view that policy-making should be discretionary and take notice of all grounds for inequality on a case-by-case approach.

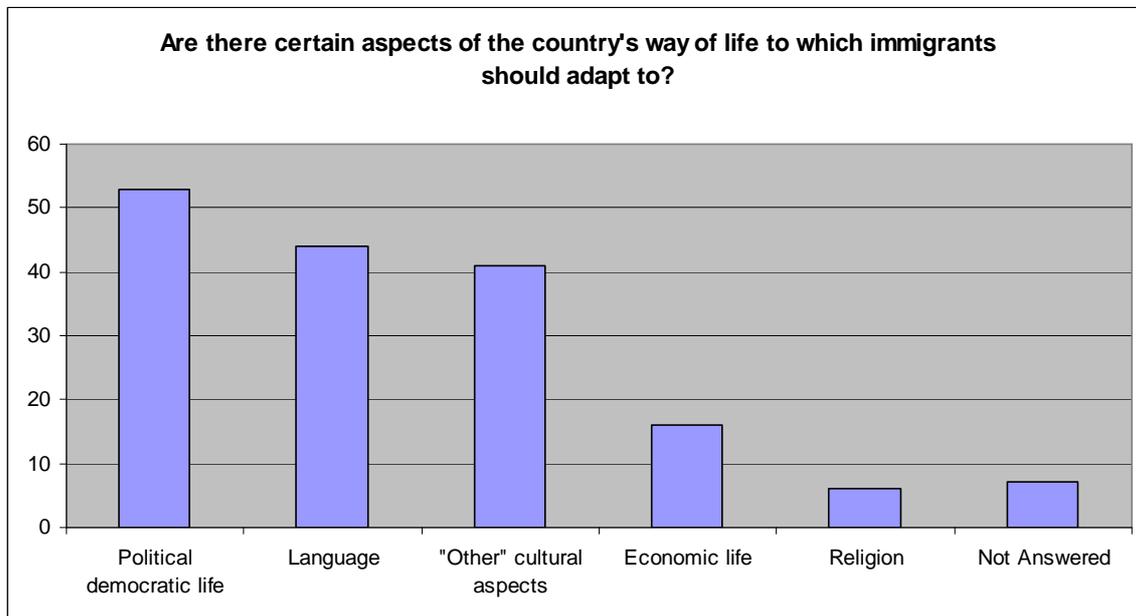
Slightly more than one third of the respondents believe that policy-making should not establish a-priori criteria to deal with group-based diversity, with two thirds of them in favor of equality of standing and against any hierarchization of groups in need of protection: “We would all be better off if treated equally” is a typical answer of this category. Concerning respondents in favor of group hierarchization, one fifth usually stress that priority should be a matter of *ad-hoc* assessment of the policy context, protecting the discretionary powers of policy-makers (“it always depends on the situation”) whereas the same number of respondents prefer to define priority on the basis of discrimination practices: “if we assume, that everybody should have the same possibilities, then we would have to give priority to the claims of certain groups, in order to create a common initial position. So for example ethnic groups, which are discriminated, religious groups, which are discriminated, or persons generally, which are discriminated due to certain characteristics.”

Only a minority of respondents (40%) is willing to prioritize explicitly certain groups. As mentioned before, the ranking of the most important groups for a diverse society does not translate well into the ranking of the most important groups for policy-making, mostly due to reservations and objections to a group-based approach to politics. Ethnic and religious groups are mentioned with same level of references as gender and socio-economic unprivileged groups. Following to a distance, there is a bulk of respondents which either prioritize age-defined groups (4 replies) or people with disabilities (3 replies) as deserving attention from policy makers as not being able to organize themselves properly in the policy-making process. In addition, some respondents name together different types of groups too disparate to constitute a homogenous category, as in this instance: “in case of the Roma and the mothers with young children but also in case of homosexuals, it is a matter of civilization”.

#### 4.2.2 Management of Diversity at the National Level

Concerning the set of answers concerning the duty of the states towards ethno-national minorities, on the whole, there seems to be a somewhat larger willingness to accept the diversity claims of national autochthonous minorities in comparison to immigration-related

groups, and a strong opposition to any form of group-level political and constitutional rights. At the same time, it should be noted that a majority of interviewees agrees with granting at least some political rights also to non-citizens.

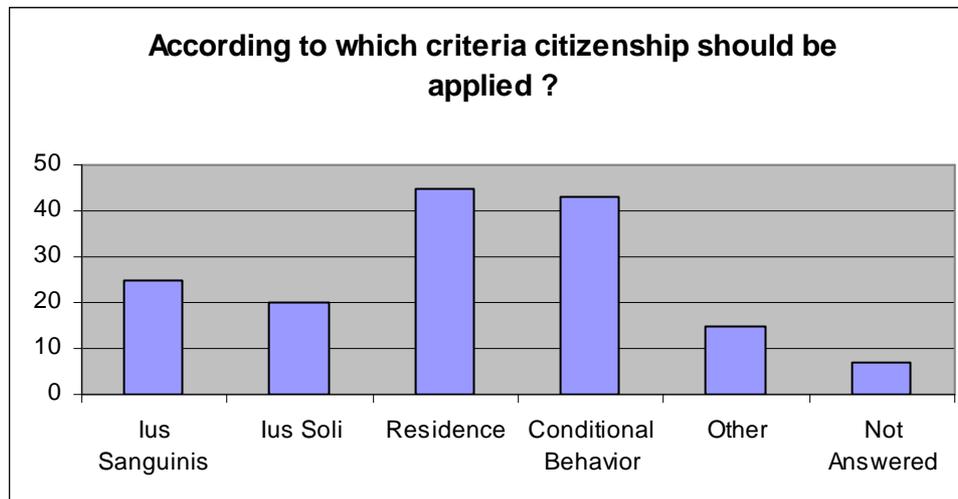


Overall, there is a broad consensus among the interviewees on the fact that immigrants should adapt to certain features of the dominant way of life in the receiving country. At first glance these expectations seem to follow a traditional liberal model, as exemplified by this respondent: “The State must treat citizens equally in front of the law. If there are important problems of diversity between specific groups and ethnic groups, the state should intervene to ensure a certain equality (the same rules of the game for everybody)...the State must try to regulate as much as possible on the basis of equality and neutrality”. Overall, there is an emphasis on sharing democratic values and active pursuit of language acquisition, while religious conformity is requested by a very limited number of interviewees. A closer look, however, reveals that there is a strong undercurrent of assimilationist thinking, with more than 25% of the interviewees requesting more specific conformities to detailed forms of ‘national’ character and ‘civility’, exemplified by the answer: “Every nation has some peculiar traits characteristic only of them”.

This finding is confirmed by the dataset of answers provided by respondents concerning questions on dual citizenship and criteria for extension of citizenship. Firstly, an overwhelming majority of valid answers are in favour of dual citizenship, with an important minority of views open to conditional relaxation of national bonds. A strong majority of respondents is in favour of the relaxation of the bonds of national citizenship. Secondly, exactly half of valid answers are in favour of retaining the national level as the most appropriate level of decision-making in attributing nationality and citizenship in Europe, positioning themselves against any transfer of discretionary power concerning European citizenship to the EU, which does not gather more than 20% of favourable views.

The homogeneity of views on this topic, however, has to be put into perspective in view of the variety of national models of citizenship and integration thereof present within the EU. Recent studies (Koopmans, 2010 & Howard, 2009) point to the existence of divergent citizenship model at the national level between an assimilationist pole based on *ius sanguinis* and cultural integration (Austria, Germany and Switzerland) and a multicultural one based on *ius soli* and cultural group rights (Britain and the Netherlands). In-between remains the

French model having a civic-territorial conception of citizenship but requiring a high degree of assimilation. These studies point also to the relevance of these models for integration of immigrants and their high path-dependency over time. Although institutional regimes of citizenship change over time, they evolve relatively gradually and have an influence on the way attitudes are framed at large. This was reflected partially during interviews, from answers to the question asked on criteria for concession of citizenship.



Looking at the dispersal of answers, the traditional poles of citizenship models, *ius soli* and *ius sanguinis*, gather 30% of valid answers. However, attitudes of respondents moved to more shifting grounds. On the one hand, mostly unconditional residence as opposed to good behaviour subject to conditions, on the other hand, which seem to replace old grounds of debate at least in the world of think tanks. Nonetheless, the range of criteria covered by respondents confirms the heterogeneity of views on this topic, corresponding to a lack of convergence on national models of citizenship.

The heterogeneity of views concerning national situations was further explored by the following question: “What do you think of international migration? Which benefits and problems for the receiving and sending countries do you recognize?”. By focusing on arguments developed by respondents and looking also to quotes and summaries of respondents answers, multiple positions appear about risks and costs that are likely to occur as a result of immigration as well as advantages for European societies.

Within this context, replies provided by respondents are very disparate and difficult to categorize, but they seem to display an East-West divide. Respondents working in organisations located in Eastern member countries stress the disadvantages for sending countries, chiefly brain drain, whereas respondents from Western ones tend to underline costs for receiving country, particularly in terms of integration problems and secondarily of unsustainable pressure on welfare systems, especially in most advanced welfare states such as Denmark.

Otherwise, by looking at the aggregate level to replies on advantages and disadvantages of immigration, there are arguments developed by respondents that can lead to believe that certain homogenising factors are at work affecting the attitudes to the topic of immigration. There is a predominant view on immigration as an economic phenomenon, dependant on market forces and the need for high and/or low skilled immigrants. Nonetheless, a small minority of respondents, however, merge the issue of economic migrants with asylum seekers, as it is confirmed on another item of the questionnaire about asylum seekers, where again in a small number of cases there is talk of economic refugees.

Apart from this example of diverging perspectives, however, there are clues of a predominant discourse on immigration among respondents. Respondents from think tanks selectively acknowledge the demographic and economic challenges faced by the countries of the EU (population ageing, labour needs, transformation of migration flows, global competition) and the necessity to design new policy mix to manage migration-related diversity. Some respondents stress that Europe is already suffering from labour shortages unlikely to be filled because of insufficient human resources. European trend of ageing population is being accentuated by low birth rates that promise even fewer native Europeans, with an increasingly large share of over-65. The problem is due to get even worse putting at stake economic growth and is likely to be solved not only by using at most human resources but also by welcoming a more important migrant workforce. Quite homogeneously, respondents identify 'economics' to be one of the causes for injection of migration-related diversity. On the whole, economic and societal trends are acknowledged as promoting increasing diversity and transforming European societies into multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious ones.

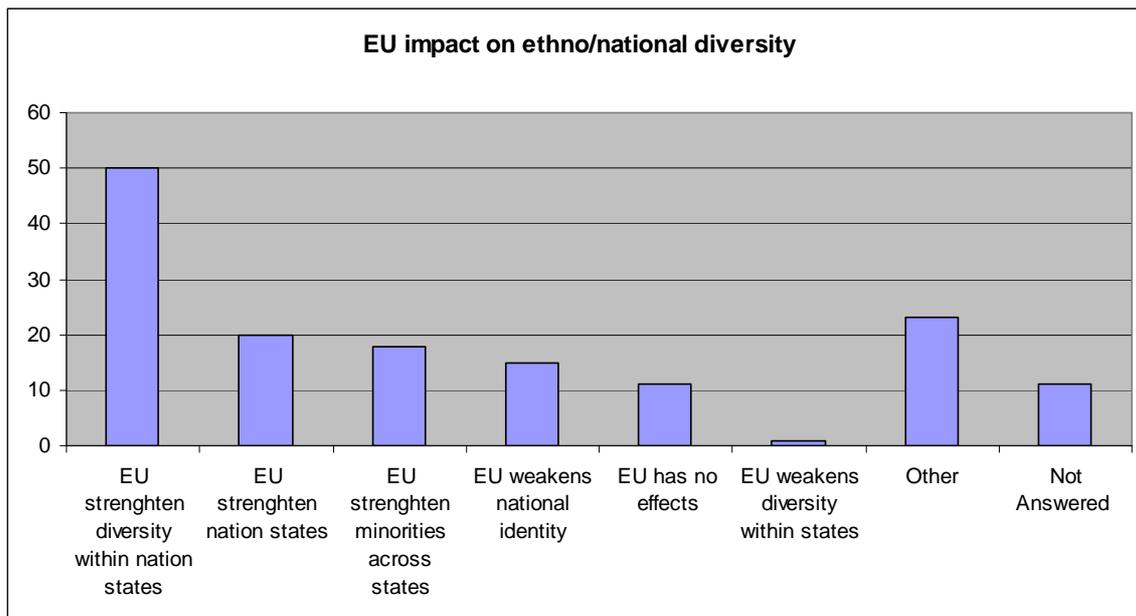
A tentative explanation of this underlying homogeneity of views could be accounted either because of horizontal direct interaction with other think tanks as a result of trans-national deliberations and percolation of a European viewpoint at the national level by the action of the EU to which we turn now. This is the case, for instance, of the European Ideas Network, financed by the EPP Group in the European Parliament, which organized a series of seminars among its member think tanks to discuss general topics such as European values and identity, European competitiveness or European demographics and immigration challenges (<http://www.europeanideasnetwork.com/think-tanks>).

#### **4.2.3 Management of Diversity at the European Level**

As one of the main objectives of the Eurosphere project is to trace the development of a common European public sphere in respect of activities of the EU, the questionnaire also included a series of questions on the relationship between the European integration process and ethno-national diversity as well as on the future of the EU and European policy developments regarding societal forms of diversity. The answers – due to above mentioned reservations – need to be taken cautiously.

##### **4.2.3.1 Relationship Between European Integration And Diversity**

On the first point, the following question was asked: "What further positive or negative developments do you expect with regards to the impact of European integration on diversity?". As answers proposed were not mutually exclusive, the table presents a rich array of the views of the respondents. The most striking result is that only one respondent believes that European integration weakens diversity within member states. As a consequence, the integration process is far from being considered to be an homogenizing force among respondents.



Within this context, European integration is seen largely as a process promoting diversity, although there is some disagreement among which kind of diversity is exactly promoted. The large majority of interviewees see the EU having effect in the promotion both of diversity recognition within each member states as well as among member states. In addition of assigning the answers of respondents to pre-established categories in the database, coders were instructed to include quotes and summaries of the answers, which means that it is possible to give a few illustrative examples of what answers contain more precisely.

Starting with examples of the most prevalent category of answers, namely that European integration will be strengthening diversity within member States, this is the position best illustrated by the statement that: “Europe is based on diversity and the fact that this diversity is recognised at the European level facilitates its recognition at the national level”. According to most respondents, European integration will certainly have an effect on ethno-national diversity, and most thought that is going to strenghten diversity within member States. There is a number of respondents indicating that European integration will strengthen transnational minorities, as in the case of Roma<sup>4</sup>.

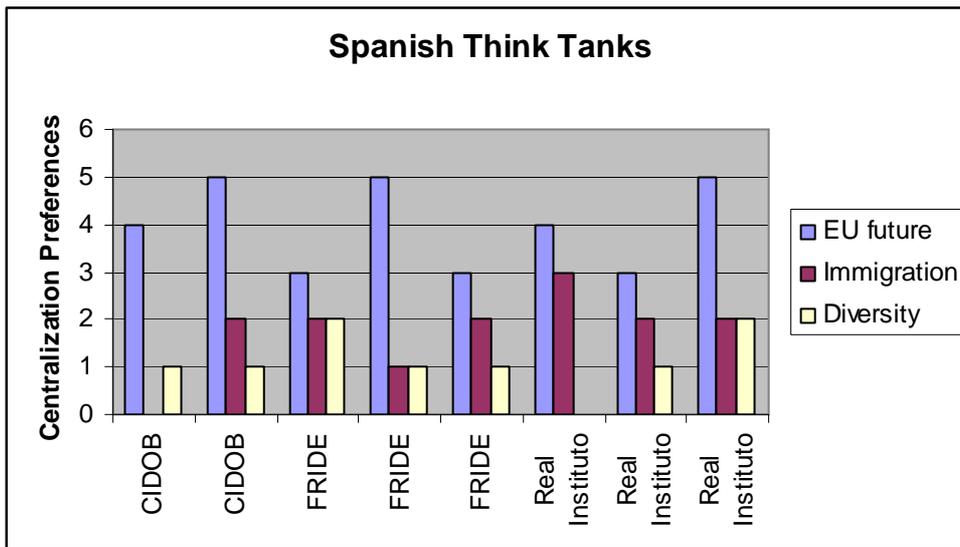
The respondents are more ambivalent if and whether European integration strenghtens or weakens national cultures, especially taking into account answers categorized as ‘other’. Given the fact that the question is rather complex, answers were exceedingly difficult to categorize, accounting for the high number of answers categorized as ‘other’. Reading through quotes and summaries of the answers labelled as ‘other’, they contain indeed a number of very diverse considerations, which cannot be categorized neatly in previously defined elements. For instance, some respondents argue that admission of Eastern European countries poses a specific challenge for the protection of minority rights where others are concerned about increasing contrasts between EU and non-EU citizens in terms of protection and duties. The unclusiveness of dataset is confirmed also by the answers categorized as ‘other’ concerning the necessity for EU intervention in ethno-national matters, gender

<sup>4</sup> Integration of Roma has become an europeanised issue at the initiative of the European Commission, in 2008, which launched a Roma Summit and Integrated Plateform on Roma Inclusion, providing a rallying point for Roma NGOs. Although the EU had no explicit competence to deal with minorities and minority rights internally, it did not completely remove the Roma from its agenda when dealing with the enlargement to Romania and Bulgaria. Since its enlargement in 2007, however, the EU action is limited to non-binding resolutions as opposed to the Council of Europe and its convention on minority protection.

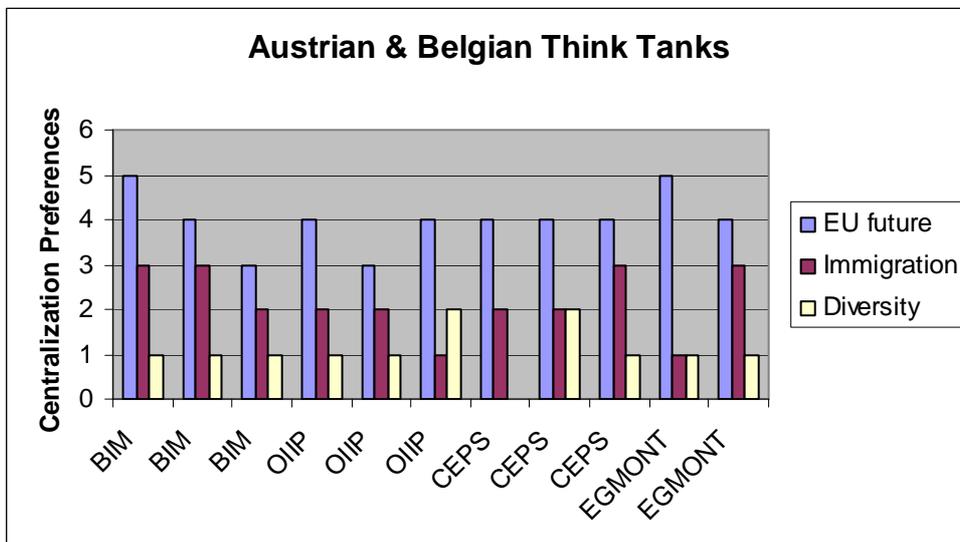
equality and other societal forms of diversity. The latter does not reflect closely the position of respondents on the future of the European polity.

**4.2.3.2 Future of EU and Policy Developments**

Regarding the set of questions on the future and present direction of the European integration process as it concern ethno-national diversity, there are considerable cleavages within and across think tanks concerning which fields the EU should be more concerned with and whether the EU should become a more centralized political system rather than an association of nation states, even in supposedly homogenous pro-integration Member states. Individual respondents take divergent views on each issue.



Moreover, by contrasting attitudes to future evolution of the European polity (more or less centralized), regulation of immigration matters (from local to european level), and opportunity of EU structures and measures on issues of diversity (ethno-national/gender/societal forms), it is possible to map a decreasing willingness to argue for the necessity of EU intervention, even in the case of the respondents more favourable to stronger powers for the European level of policy-making.



As a preliminary finding concerning the possible role of the EU on managing diversity, it is possible to ascertain that respondents have focused essentially on the legal instruments at disposal of the EU rather than on other types of integration measures, such as financial incentives or diffusion of best practices and benchmarks. On the whole, however, respondents do not necessarily support the idea that the EU should in fact legislate within the field of ethno-national minorities. The majority of respondents either believe that this is a too delicate matter for national sensitivities to allow the European level to intervene (as it was articulated by one respondent: “it seems useful to me to have rules at the European level, but one should not go towards a generalised harmonisation. I think that each state should have room for manoeuvring in the management of diversity”) or they are opposed to the EU promoting a group-based approach to the management of diversity, as part of a more general philosophical approach.

Despite the paucity of the dataset of valid answers for these selected questions, it is possible to identify a coincidence between economic and minimalist understandings of the European integration process as opposed to a social and expanding one. The more the European integration is seen purely as a market-building process, the less the European Union is seen as needing an expansion of its competences in the realm of management of ethno-national and other societal diversity, as expressed by one respondent: “These topics of societal diversity are not in the direct focus of the EU, but indirectly EU integration might have positive effect on them. If the EU develops economically well, it must keep 'unity in diversity'”. On the other hand, regulation of immigration, interpreted mainly as an economic phenomenon, is seen as more closely linked to the foreseeable development of the EU competences, as implicit in the following argument: “It doesn't seem to me that EU show signs of willingness to manage diversity, it's more a social and cultural topic and EU is more keen on economy”. However, these attitudes are unevenly present across and within organizations.

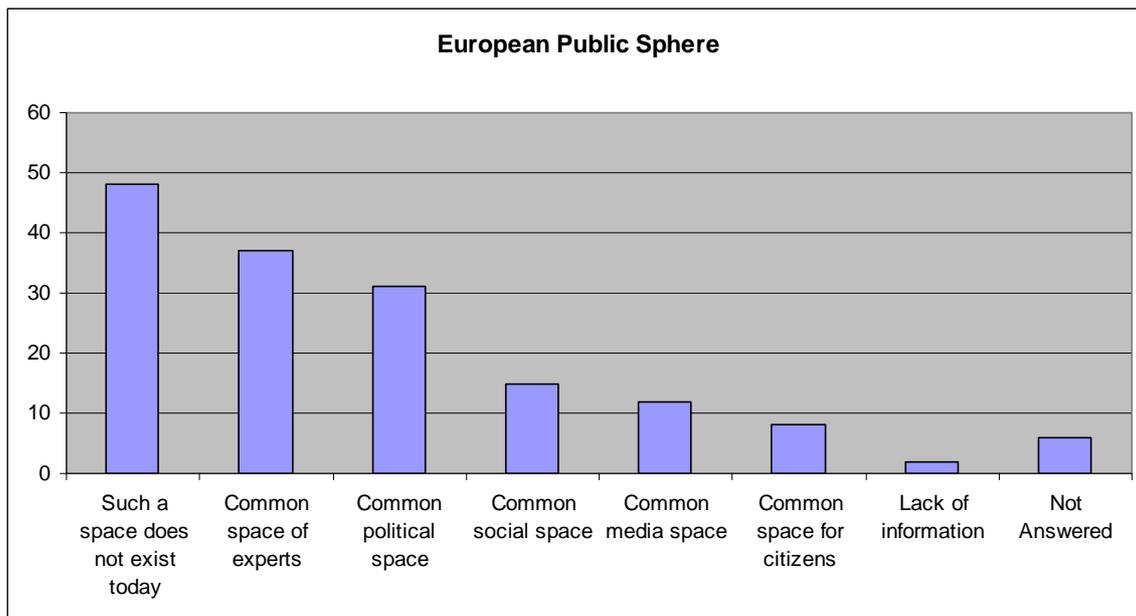
In conclusion, while there are certainly interesting statements to be found among the answers to these questions, the great disparity and paucity of answers disallows any conclusive statement on which direction of the European integration process survey's respondents point to, except for the belief that European integration is promoting diversity, which is not mirrored in the kind of emerging European Public Sphere as perceived by surveyed respondents.

### **4.3 European Public Sphere**

In this block of the questionnaire, three questions will be tackled: Is there a European Public Sphere (5.3.1)? If yes, which kind of European Public Sphere is emerging and are think tanks part of it (5.3.2)? What is the European Public Sphere for (5.3.3)? After having tentatively answered these questions on the basis of data collected among respondents working in think tanks, a brief overview of other questions, to which collected data are not sufficient to answer comprehensively, will be reviewed (5.3.4).

#### **4.3.1 Existence of European Public Sphere**

The central feature of the survey concerning the emergence of a European Public Sphere is the perception of the interviewees on the existence today of any kind of ‘common’ European communication space, whatever its organisation.



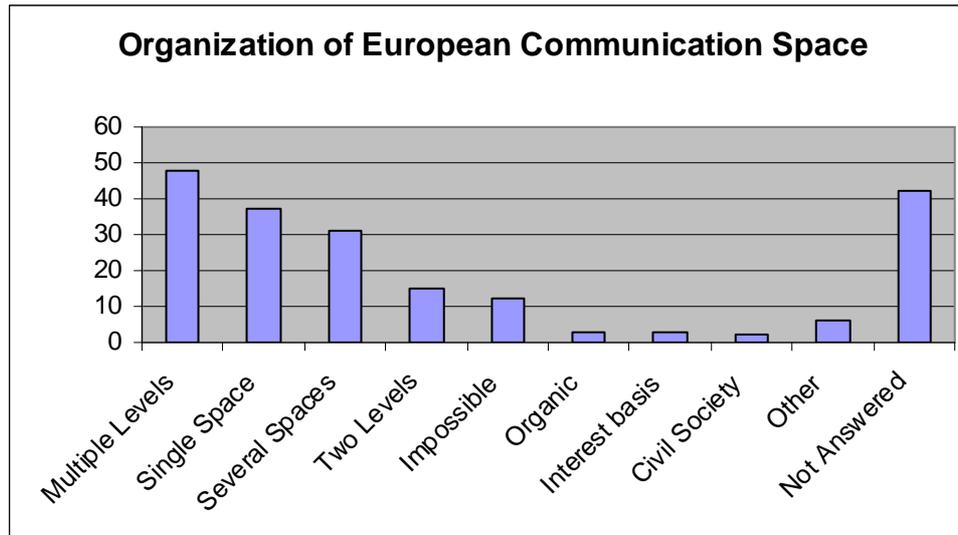
The assessment by the interviewees seems to be fairly cautious: one third denies the existence of such a space, and one quarter restricts its existence to experts and researchers (that is, to the interviewees themselves). Although a certain number of interviewees are willing to acknowledge some emerging communication space including political organizations, a very tiny minority identify as existing a space where citizens and residents interact at the micro level. The number of replies provided by the respondents is remarkably lower on this regard.

#### 4.3.2 Which Kind of European Public Sphere?

Concerning the question “If there is a European communication space, do you think that it excludes important possible participants?”, the single most important result is the almost near consensus of respondents about the elitist nature of the European public sphere, apart from interviewees that claim it does not exist or do not have sufficient information on the subject. This perceived European Public Sphere, centered around the EU, is presented as an elitist playground, structured according to either professional or economic logics. As one of the respondents put it, it is even the most important dimension of diversity in the European Union: “one significant case of diversity in Europe is the distinction between the elite and the mass of the public opinion”. This finding has to be put into combination with a previous item of the questionnaire, asking for respondents’ self-assessment concerning their distance from average public opinion in their country. More than two thirds of the respondents feel that their views do not correspond at all or just partly with the general public view on diversity. Looking at the answers more in detail, it is possible to establish that their group of reference concerning these matters are either national public elites or trans-national policy experts. Respondents operating within think tanks identify themselves on a cognitive basis with these groups either at the national or European level. As such, this explains the fact that a minority of respondents believe to be part of an emerging European Public Sphere, which is excluding a large part of the European population. The most common criteria to qualify the exclusionary nature of the European integration process are gender, socio-economic and educational characteristics of political and economic elites in respect of ordinary Europeans. According to respondents, age, technology and linguistic knowledge are additional factors, which discriminate against elderly, unskilled and low-educated citizens’ participation to a European communication space.

### 4.3.3 What is the European Public Sphere For?

Although the opinions on how such a common sphere should be organized vary across the interviewees (see table), it is interesting to note that the rationale for such proposals is more often functional, and linked to European institution building, rather than having a bottom-up logic, centered around an European civil society or emerging ‘organically’. Moreover, only a fraction of respondents declares that the task of organizing this communication space is impossible. This is compatible with the view held by personnel operating within think tanks that their activities have pragmatic objectives, in respect of needs of policy makers.



According to respondents, the European public sphere can be defined as a communication space in which only elite publics meet among themselves on different levels (two or more) around European topics. Respondents diverge on the desirability of a single or differentiated space of communication at the European level.

In answer to the question: “Why should the trans-European communication be organized in the way you mentioned?”, a few respondents argue that the emergence of a European Public Sphere correlates to the development of a more ambitious process of integration, especially in the direction of a federal structure encompassing the EU. On the one hand, an European Public Sphere is necessary as for the constitution of a European civil society and achievement of the potential of the EU citizenship (Victor Perez-Diaz, 1994). On the other hand, some respondents identify European Public Sphere as a necessary feature for the emergency of a political identity of Europe and/or a political community at the European level (Arnaud Mercier, 2003).

In view of the elitist characteristics of the current European Public Sphere, according to respondents, top-down initiatives for trans-European communication are counterproductive. The same point of view is relayed by different respondents concerning EU initiatives about the creation of a European public sphere. As a consequence, for many of respondents trans-border communication and exchanges among ordinary European citizens are necessary to develop an ‘organic’ logic of the Public Sphere, as a few respondents characterize it. Such logic, however, is severely hampered by linguistic and logistical constraints, mentioned by an overwhelming majority of respondents as structural barriers to engagement in transnational interaction and debate. In such a perspective, Internet is usually presented as a technological solution to such shortcomings, even if it excludes certain segments of the society and consequently requires infrastructural measures and training schemes against digital gap in

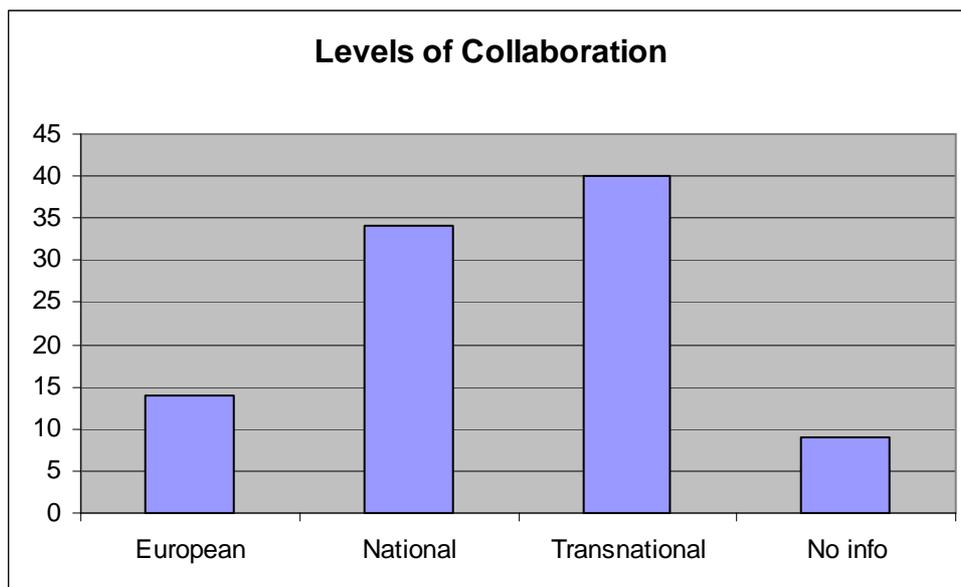
European societies. It is to be noted that data saturation for these questions is not overall satisfactory, due to a relatively high number of respondents not having answered. This problem is confirmed for the remainder of the questionnaire. Consequently, for reasons of incomplete dataset, the analysis for other items of the questionnaire will focus on quotes of replies given to the questions without looking for systematic survey of all replies.

#### **4.3.4 Other Questions**

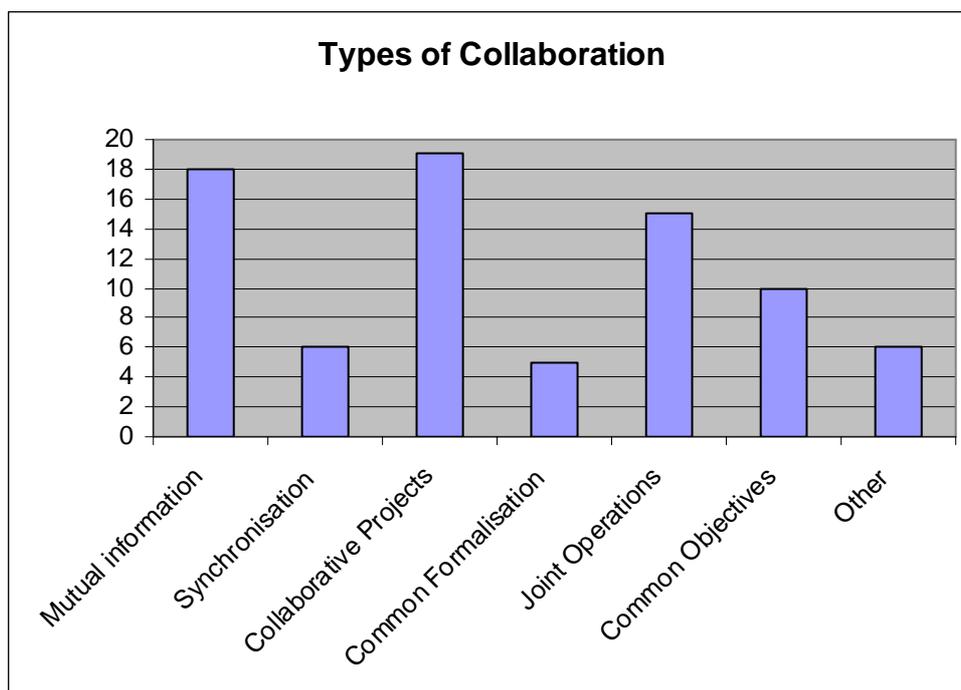
From this point onward, answers provided to the remaining items of the questionnaire are either too vague or incomplete, and with an important number of respondents not having answered, to allow any meaningful systematic analysis. To overcome these gaps of the dataset, the analysis is going to complement the answers of the questionnaire with institutional data gathered independently from interviews. These data are based mainly on information collected by institutional websites and publications, produced by think tanks themselves and concern mainly their activities with a relevance for the emergence for an European Public Sphere.

**« Is your organization member of one or more trans-European and/or transnational networks ? Which other organizations does your organization collaborate the most with, and on which issues ?»**

A minority of think tanks are members of some kind of transnational network, either pan-European or more global in nature. It is possible to identify a core of national think tanks which are actively involved in EU-oriented or pan-European activities. By crossing membership of different networks, it seems apparent that more active think tanks are simultaneously members of at least 2 or 3 networks, of which the most prominent are TEPSA, EPIN and TEAG, on one side for EU institutional matters, and FEPS, ENOP, EIN on the side of the left-right ideological spectrum. Even if there are ideological (federalist against souveranist) and functions (geared towards the European parliament against providing services to rotating presidencies of the Council of Ministers) differences among these networks, it seems that their primary value for think tanks is to establish information links and working relationship among themselves. Presence in these networks is valuable as it serves socialization purposes and membership constitutes an added value as external legitimization of the expertise of concerned think tanks. Some of the think tanks investigated by the project are part of this restricted community but they constitute only a small part of think tanks under scrutiny.



Regardless of formal membership, the level of actual collaboration registered among European think tanks under scrutiny are *ad-hoc* and rather infrequent. A vast majority of think tanks provide evidence (either in interviews and/or institutional homepages) of awareness of other organizations on the issue of European thematic, mutual information with and punctual cooperative projects, but comparately few examples of deeper collaboration.

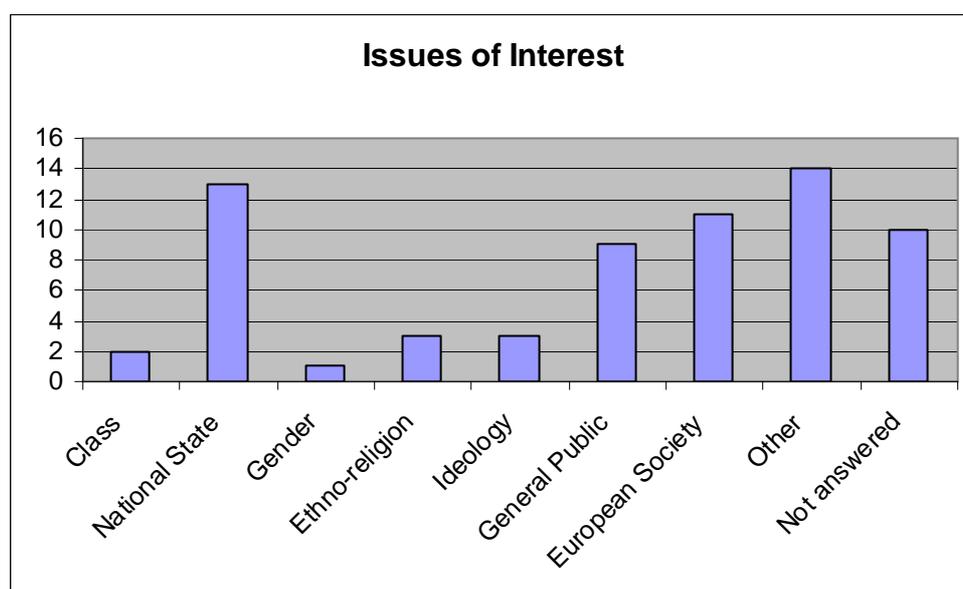


By looking at collaboration in pan-European networks of exchange and information, it seems apparent that Eastern European think tanks are comparatively more active both in trans-European and trans-national networks than their Western counterparts. This tendency has been favoured by the emergence in Eastern Europe of numerous non-governmental research institutes, often financed by Western foundations, with the self-appointed mission of contributing to the evolution of civil society and consolidation of democracy. On a trans-European basis, the German foundations were very active in the early days of transition

and they have remained so ever after. In particular, the Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung and Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung have supported and financed the launch and development of public research institutes, accounting for bilateral links of collaboration. On a trans-national basis, an important and influential role was played by the Soros Foundation in supporting the early development of think tanks and networks of them. A key pillar of this efforts at creating transnational tendencies and federating national think tanks was the concept of ‘Open Society’ where a transparent and accountable policial system plays a central role. The impact of Soros’ programme (OSI agenda) in the region can be traced in the 1990s to the activities of the Open Society Institute and the network of national think tanks financed by Soros Foundation, for instance in Romania and Bulgaria. In addition, th Soros Foundation also created the Local Government and Public Service Initiative (LGI), which targeted research and training at the local government level, as well as PASOS (Policy Association for an Open Society), linking think tanks throughout the region. Surveying these efforts in international support and funding, it it easier to understand the connections built to western concepts and practices among think tanks across the region but also the tendency to mechanical application of western recipes to the complex realities in the regions’s post-communist countries. In fact, these netwoks were important for think tanks of the region in promoting external legitimay and much-needed funds. As a result, Central and Eastern European think tanks tend cooperate more with Western counterparts rather than with organizations within the same region.

The EU has played an additional role in this trend, as a result of the demands placed by the integration process during and after the course of the accession process. On the one hand, the accession negotiation stretched the internal resources of bureaucracies and party expertise, opening the way for involvement and contribution of local think tanks. The result was the opening of several access points into the political system through which think tanks have managed to enter the policy process. The membership of the EU has also brought new opportunities for Eastern think tanks to enter into the European policy process, as a pan-European basis of partnership and networks is necessary to apply for funding to and participation to EU projects. This came to the advantage of think tanks located in East Europe as they were recruited by previously established Western network.

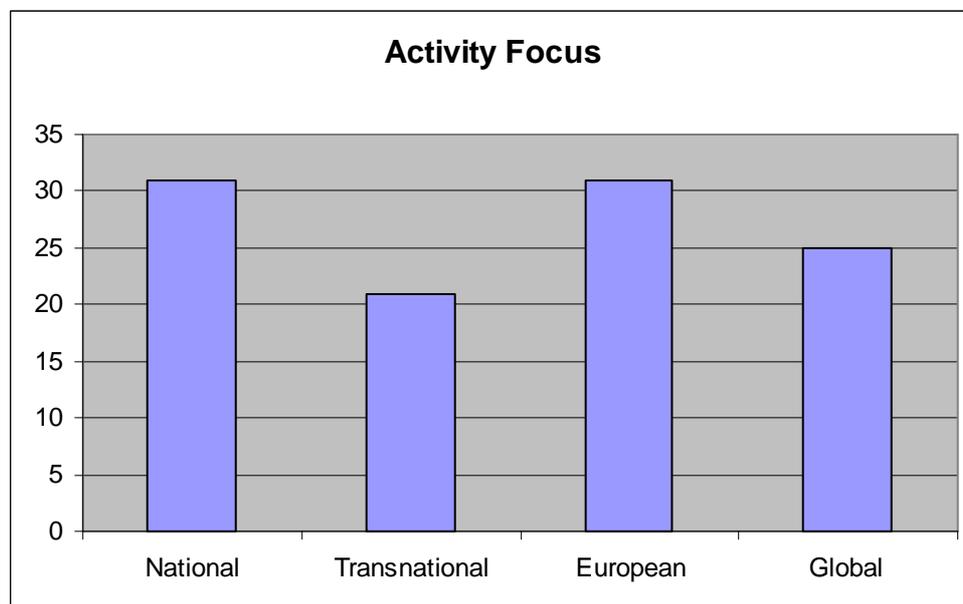
Whenever an organization declares its awareness and interest in the activities its counterparts in another European country, this is associated with a declared focus on European issues.



Nonetheless, there is no connection between an European focus and interest on European society. Actually, the societal developments of European integration are somewhat marginalized from the focus of institutional activities of think tanks, in spite of the efforts deployed by the Commission under the form of the PROGRESS programme. Moreover, this is not congruent with the answers of individual respondents in interviews, which stressed the importance of bottom-up mobilisation of European civil society in order to promote the emergence of a truly autonomous European Public Sphere.

« Which actors on all levels do you want to address with your activities) ? »

According to the survey data, both through interview and website data collection, there is a combination of national think tanks' focus on national and European levels, almost on equal footing. There is correlation between levels of attention dedicated to national and European levels which is not the case for linkages between transnational and global ones, but from data available it is not possible to say in which hierarchy they are.



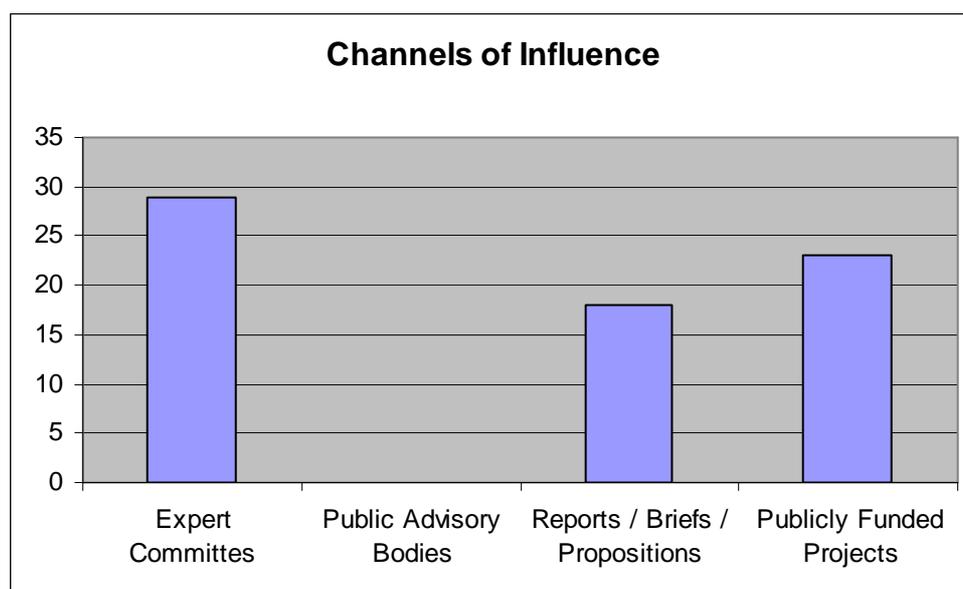
Concerning their specific targeted actors, think tanks perform their activities with a twin objective: shaping public opinion and influencing public policy through access to decision-makers. However, according to this survey, they assign different priorities to these tasks. The latter can be measured by the degree of openness of their seminars and conferences. In a great number of cases, national think tanks are organizing only small-group seminars and focusing on informal contacts. Although almost all of them have tools and systems for external dissemination of the results of their research (institutional publications, electronic newsletters, websites, etc...), the bulk of their activities is oriented to national and European decision-makers or policy experts.

The main focus for influencing the general public is placed upon on-line media, such as institutional websites which were built specially for this function. Uses of institutional publications to this effect, such as newsletter or annual reports, are less frequently mentioned. Public relations work is less common than networking activities catering to expert publics, which is consistent with the issue of influence of think tanks.

**« How do you assess the influence of your organization on public opinion, public debates, and the relevant institutionalized actors on the European, the national or the regional level? »**

Methodologically speaking, there is controversy in the literature concerning the issue of measuring the influence of think tanks on policy process. Think tanks tend to operate by proposing policy change based on research and gaining an insider view of policy developments. As a consequence, think tanks often try to work collaboratively with policy makers to feed through new policy ideas, which makes difficult to trace their effective input. Working through interviews, respondents tend to overestimate their influence, either consciously to overstate the importance of their organization or unconsciously as a result of their professional focus in chasing influence. This bias is not without prejudice to the problem of measuring influence of think tanks over the policy-making process, which affects this survey.

The only alternative is measuring the relative visibility and policy relevance of a sizeable cross-section of think tanks in Europe through their public contributions to the policy process. Of course, this approach does not take into account more informal ways of collaboration between think tanks and policy makers, which are not In this regard, the survey hints that not only do think tanks wield different types of policy influences but they are also more or less visible in the public debate surrounding policies, having a differential impact on the dynamics of national public spheres.



Unfortunately, it is not possible to establish with available data if policy institutes that enjoy public visibility (high media exposure, for instance) also engage actively in policy relevant activities (report and committee witness). A tentative conclusion would be that there is no correlation between public visibility and policy relevance.

**« Which resources do you have access to in order to influence public opinion, public debates and the relevant institutionalised actors on the European, the national or the regional level ? »**

In line of principle, the contribution of think tanks to the emergence and maintenance of an European public sphere is linked to their publicness: visibility in the media and public access

to their intellectual production. However, dissemination of results and visibility can enter in conflict with independence as it implies resources and technical capabilities which are expensive to acquire and maintain.

On this point, there is clearly a lack of information available, as respondents did not disclose precise information and their institutional websites and publications are rather shy on precise details of their budgets and means. In general, think tanks do not publish their sources of funding and the details of their contributors. This can be an issue in the building of trust in their relationship with policy makers and general public, undermining in turn the credibility of their contribution to the policy process. The latter depends not only on sound research and evidence, but also on the disclosure of contributions and financial arrangements behind their activities. In particular, the role of corporate sponsors and their presence at the events organised by think tanks is important to the extent that they influence or shape their activities. Deficiency of alternative resources can induce think tanks to present viewpoints influenced by the wishes of their backers. Moreover, a number of think tanks promote their corporate membership by offering their members with the opportunity for high-level networking and direct communication to policy-makers. Transparency on this respect, judged according to the disclosure of information on their institutional websites but also during interviews conducted for the survey, is low.

**« Which additional resources do you need in order to create your desired level of influence on public opinion, public debates and the relevant institutionalised actors on the European, the national or the regional level ? »**

Notwithstanding their position in the organization or geographical localisation in Europe, a overwhelming majority of respondents have uniformly attested to a lack of human and financial resources of their organisation as constraining factors for their activities. In particular, engagement at the European level (apart from Brussels-based and/or EU-funded organizations) is highly dependent on resources and constraints provided by the national context on which most of think tanks under scrutiny operate.

This is confirmed by relevant literature on think tanks, in which they are portrayed as organisations deeply embedded in national policy-making process as their principal theater of operations.

## **5 Conclusion**

By way of conclusion, there are summary points on the key research questions. One of the most striking findings from the survey is the incommensurability between attitudes regarding European integration and those concerning European Public Sphere. Comparing replies to the question about the expected impacts of European integration on diversity with answers to the question on the existence of a European public sphere, no clear alignments can be found. In short, it is not possible to say if a certain understanding of diversity corresponds to a specific conceptualization of the European Union and European Public Sphere.

A majority of think tanks do articulate viewpoints (in institutional websites, documents and interviews) signalling attitudes which takes into account diversity and European integration. Comparatively speaking, however, there is less of an indication of ethno-national diversity concerns within the institutional homepages, documents and interviews and more on inter-state diversity within the European Union. On average, diversity is not one prominent issues, apart from organizations with a specific focus on immigration or human rights, and it does not connect frequently with other issues, either at the European or national level.

Regarding attitudes about the European integration process, there is no clear East-West split even if there are clear patterns of convergence between think tanks as a result of organizational interaction exercised through networks. Researchers active in the trans-national network of think tanks belonging to TEPSA seem to display more euro-centralizing tendencies than their national counterparts, which seem to indicate a transnational interaction based on a more ideological commitment to European integration.

Concerning specific attitudes towards the European Public Sphere, think tanks share an instrumental understanding of public space and deploy strategies and activities consistent with their organizational interests. In spite of divergent attitudes and focus of activities, think tanks seem to have an instrumental commitment to the principles of open political process and publicity of public affairs. This is understandable in view of the fact that their activities are, to different degrees, dependent on access to information and possibility of criticism concerning existing policies. On such a basis, there is widespread support for the idea of an European Public Sphere and generally its development is seen with favour.

In this perspective, think tanks have the potential for promoting the Europeanization of national public spheres, in which they are embedded, and for contributing to structuring the European Public Sphere, especially through their trans-national activities. Two caveats need to be added. On the one hand, they can contribute to the Europeanization of common issues only in a limited way, which is commensurate to their marginal role at the national level, in terms of policy formulation and public debate promotion. The visibility of think tanks; work depends strongly on the development of a media strategy at the national level to ensure a wider communication and recognition. Influence on the political process also relies strongly on a focus on the national publics, policy makers and civil societies. Nonetheless, their input is increasingly sought after both in terms of analysis and knowledge of the implementing processes of European integration, as one respondent noted: "In application there are problems; not only in Belgium, it's a common problem in every member state. The rules exist but the reality is always different. At European level, what it can be done is to ensure each country has implemented its Directives somehow in their national law...then if somebody has a complaint they have to use all the measures at their disposal at national level". They are not recognised in many European countries as legitimate policy actors and, with a few exceptions, are small and marginal structures. In fact, lack of financial sustainability induces many think tanks to look for institutional backers such as political parties or business groups. On the other hand, emergence of an autonomous European public sphere due to trans-nationalization of activities of think tanks is still embryonic. More generally, think tanks suffer from a lack of resources and personnel to act as leading actors in such a task. In particular, deficiency of suitable independent resources is a backdrop on which many national think tanks have to operate. A think tank rarely has the financial independence that would enable it to carry the weight and the influence at the European level. At this level, however, their *modus operandi* is especially suited to the functioning of the EU political system, but yet their role is still marginal in respect of the monopoly of legislative initiative of the Commission under collective impulsion of national governments gathered in the Council. Short of a complete remoulding of the European political system, towards a more neo-corporatist or neo-pluralist model, their input is likely to remain at the margins.

The Commission is trying to employ national think tanks to act as a diplomatic tool of the EU, by having a direct impact and influence on the perception in their countries of reference. A case in point is the conditionality of EU funding, which induces think tank to form trans-national networks to function as providers of ideas and values for the process of European integration but also to act as transmission belts towards the general public (Open Europe,

2008).<sup>5</sup> In general, the Commission has a preference for EU-oriented organizations to work within dedicated umbrella organizations, funding the activities of such fora<sup>6</sup>. From the perspective of individual think tanks, there is ambivalence to such a development as it risks putting in danger think tanks independence and creativity, by obliging them to collaborate and share their expertise instead of building their own reputation. Moreover, according to interviews, most productive contacts of think tanks are not always institutionalized or formalized in the form of a membership of an international network. Some Eastern European think tanks also experienced “cooperation” with international organizations different from the EU, such as UNDP and World Bank, supporting civil society consolidation. However, these contacts were instrumentally one-sided, with think tanks playing a rather passive role of support receivers.

In conclusion, think tanks cannot be considered to be a ‘silver bullet’ to solve the ‘public sphere deficit’ problem of the EU. At the organizational level, think tanks’ activities are firmly rooted in the horizon of networking with national political elites, with networked transnational linkages to cater to the needs of expert policy networks. As such, think tanks constitute an interesting infrastructure in order to contribute to the emerging of a European public sphere. However, their activities are clearly detached by the most immediate concerns of the general public and more attuned to political elites’ needs, which is their single most important structural shortcoming. In this sense, think tanks do not represent voices of diversity within the European Union but they rather participate to the elite/mass divide which characterize the European integration process, as readily admitted by respondents themselves. At the individual level of researchers, there is quite a coherent and structured systems of beliefs ad attitudes which emerges in the answer to the questionnaire: committed to a liberal understanding on most issues of ethno-national and immigration-related diversity, concerned about the elitist nature of the EU political system, favourable to the development of an European society.

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<sup>5</sup> In 2004, the Commission budgetary line for supporting think tanks was of 3.5 million EUR, out of a total of almost 20 millions earmarked for « dialogue with the citizens ». In 2006, this provision was replaced by a measure of structural support for European public policy research organisation, managed by the EACEA, under the form of both multi-annual and annual operating grants. Together, these two forms of support appear to have benefited an handful of organizations: Centre for European Policy Studies, Fondation Robert Schuman, Friends of Europe; Institute of Public Affairs, Institute of International and European Affairs, European Policy Centre, Notre Europe, Lisbon Council, Trans-European Policy Studies Association, Confrontations Europe. In most recent years, net beneficiaries of this structural action are Notre Europe, the Lisbon Council and Friends of Europe, with close to 200000 EUR in multi-annual grants each and TEPSA for which this support constitutes more than 50% of its budget. [www://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/funding/2009/selection.index](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/funding/2009/selection.index)

<sup>6</sup> The European Commission will in 2010 pay €6.7 million in subsidies to a group of think tanks and NGOs. The grants cover 58 organisations , ranging from European Policy Centre (EPC) to Café Babel. The top 10 recipients are: the Platform of European Social NGOs on €700,000; Notre Europe €605,000; the European Council on Refugees and Exiles €500,000; the European Movement International €430,000; Association Jean Monnet €250,000; the Council of European Municipalities and Regions €240,000; the Association of Local Democracy Agencies €209,000; the Lisbon Council €200,000; theFundacion Academia Europea de Yuste €195,000 and Friends of Europe €192,000. The money is part of alarger €30 million a year pot in the commission's education and culture department, which pays for a scheme to promote "common values" and to get ordinary people interested in politics. Several of the beneficiaries, such as the European Movement International, Friends of Europe and the Union of European Federalists, have an openly pro-integration position. EU support is potentially damaging for EU-oriented think tanks, such as the EPC, the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) or Notre Europe, whose reputation for objectivity is central to their work. The Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA) obtains 58 percent of its annual budget from the Commission. *Notre Europe* gets 54 percent.

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