

**European Political Communication
Working Paper Series
ISSN 1477-1373**

Issue 9/05

**Becoming European? British Pro-Migrant NGOs and the European
Union**

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May 2005

This working paper draws on a research project on the contentious politics of asylum and immigration in Britain and Europe, funded by the British Economic and Social Research Council (R000239221) and conducted by the Centre for European Political Communications (EurPolCom) at the University of Leeds. We would like to thank all the staff at the EurPolCom Centre for their support, in particular Manlio Cinalli, Vibha Mehta and Emma Dickens for their contribution to the data collection.

The ‘Europeanisation’ of Immigration and Asylum Politics: policy developments and NGO adaptation

Over the last three decades, policy-making over immigration and asylum, previously a sovereign territory preciously guarded by nation-states, has increasingly acquired a European dimension. Initially, developments took the form of ad hoc intergovernmental cooperation which gradually intensified over the 1970s and 1980s, and became formalised in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty which transferred immigration and asylum to the third intergovernmental pillar of the European Community. Under the Amsterdam Treaty, ratified in 1999, immigration and asylum policies were ‘communitarised’ by being transferred to the EU’s Community pillar, the Schengen agreement was incorporated into law, and a limited role was provided for the supranational institutions the European Commission, European Parliament, and European Court of Justice. More recently, this advancing ‘communitarisation’ of policies has been further demonstrated by the European Council’s adoption of the Hague programme in 2004, outlining objectives in justice and home affairs for 2005-2010 which include a common asylum policy, as well as the Constitutional Treaty, which although yet to be ratified, proposes to introduce qualified majority voting as the norm for most asylum and immigration issues.

Existing literature has documented these emergent ‘Europeanisation’ trends in the migration policy field (Koslowski 1998; Geddes 2000; Guild and Harlow 2000; Kostakopoulou 2000; Lavenex 2001). ‘Europeanisation’ itself is seen as a transformation of national member states’ policymaking, marked by an increasing multi-levelling of exchanges, both ‘vertically’ with supranational EU institutions, and ‘horizontally’ with other EU states through transnational co-operations. Questions of how public actors in EU member states are responding to this rapidly changing policymaking context, however, have been much less examined. Our aim here is to demonstrate how institutional changes towards transnational cooperation and increasing EU involvement in policymaking have impacted upon the activities of national campaign and lobby groups in the immigration and asylum policy field. Such groups engage in processes of deliberation over immigration and asylum policies, thereby providing important sources of public accountability and legitimacy to policy decisions in liberal democracies.

To date, academic research into NGO activities in response to processes of globalisation and European integration has focussed largely on the emergence and activities of new transnational and EU-level NGOs, interest groups and social movements (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 1999; Greenwood and Aspinwall 1998; Imig and Tarrow 2001). This is also true with regard to migration specifically, with several studies having documented the emergence and activities of Brussels-based NGOs (Favell and Geddes 2000; Guiraudon 2001). Relatively little attention, however, has been given to how the European transformation of the policy field has shaped the activities and perceptions of lobby and campaign organisations which already had established track records within national policy domains. This omission is surprising, because it is apparent that Europeanisation is not a process where the relationship between state and civil society that developed at the national level will simply be replicated at the supranational European level (Gerhards 1992). This means that it is important to focus on the interactions between national and

supranational levels of politics, as well as interactions between the national politics of different member states, as the new emergent loci of power, deliberation and political engagement.

While the emergence of new transnational campaign and lobby groups is an important development within ongoing processes of Europeanisation, we consider that responses to European developments from civil society organisations active within national policy domains are at least as important, perhaps even more so. We might expect NGOs that have already established themselves within national politics to possess the necessary internal resources for adapting to perceived changes and potential new opportunities that occur within their field of action, especially when compared to EU-level ‘newcomer’ NGOs, which are often largely dependent on top-down EU sponsorship for their existence. In the context of the EU’s ‘democratic deficit’ and the challenges the EU institutions face in communicating effectively with European publics, the activities of national NGOs with regard to Europeanisation become particularly significant, since these organisations are usually linked to public constituencies within the nation-states in which they act, unlike most of their EU-level NGO counterparts.

Here we present a case study that addresses the important question of how national NGOs have adapted and changed their activities, perceptions and attitudes in relation to this multi-levelled European policy domain. Our aim is to trace the emergent ‘pathways’ and organisational linkages to Europe that NGOs have constructed in response to European institutional developments. We examine their attempts to engage politically with the changing context of the policy domain in which they are active, both at the supranational EU level, and in transnational intergovernmental co-operation between member states. We see ‘Europeanisation’ as a two-way, variable and dynamic process of adaptation and change, where domestic actors, institutions and policy domains undergo transformation in response to changes set in motion by the increasing role of the European Union, and also in turn shape the forms of emergent EU-level and transnational intergovernmental politics through their activities. Our specific focus is to look at how a set of NGOs that have operated within a national ‘multi-organisational field’ (Curtis and Zurcher 1973; Klandermans 1992) perceive the key points of influence and opportunities for bringing about policy change within the new Europeanised political environment, and how they adapt their activities to this changing context.

We study the case of British pro-migrant NGOs. This is an especially interesting case, not least because immigration and asylum is a policy field that was strongly national and has only relatively recently become European and multi-levelled, which allows us to track emergent developments in situ. Topically, we examine the NGO sector which has lobbied and campaigned on behalf of migrants, aliens, refugees and asylum-seekers. Here it needs noting that migrant policies in Britain, unlike in many other European states, are clearly divided into two separate fields which refer to two different migrant constituencies with distinct sets of rights, both for entry and access to welfare and political recognition: integration and ethnic relations policies for British ethnic minorities, i.e. race relations; and immigration and asylum policies for migrants without citizenship. To avoid distorting our findings by conflating these two distinct fields, we restrict ourselves to the consideration of NGOs active in immigration and asylum policies. Such organisations face the difficult task of

advancing the rights and interests of a constituency, i.e. refugees, aliens, and asylum-seekers, who, lacking national citizenship, possess very few resources of political rights or cultural legitimacy of belonging within the national political environment to promote their own cause. In the British context, organisations operating in the immigration and asylum field face a different and harsher political environment than those promoting national ethnic minorities, for whom the state takes on a pro-active sponsorship (Statham 2001). For this reason we opted to focus only on immigration and asylum, as the policy field affecting the access to rights and entry for non-citizens.

Previous research has used network analysis methods to demonstrate that British pro-migrant NGOs cooperate very strongly with one another (Cinalli 2004). However, at the same time they operate within a political field that is elite-dominated, heavily institutionalised, and strongly characterised by a state advancing a policy agenda that is restrictive to migrants' rights of access to the national territory and welfare provision. Furthermore, the NGO sector has been found to have surprisingly few allies within civil society, for example, from British ethnic minorities, churches or trade unions (Statham and Geddes 2005). Overall, our study is a case of an NGO sector that is relatively weak at the national level. This makes our study of their emergent European activities interesting because it allows us to examine to what extent these NGOs have shifted their activities and political understandings beyond a national politics which has offered them only very limited opportunities for influence. It is also therefore important to assess to what extent they see European developments as a potential source of a more expansionist immigration and asylum policy agenda, and as a counterbalance to national restrictionism. Of course, whatever trends we observe are in their genesis. However, if we find evidence of European developments in a weak national NGO sector, this would suggest that more powerful organisational sectors, and ones active in fields where European policy developments have gone further, are likely to have become even more strongly active contributors to the multi-levelling of politics.

Before presenting our case study, which examines the activities of the NGOs linking to EU and transnational politics, their perceptions of influence in the policy domain, and their assessments of changes and the potential of European developments in an open and empirically descriptive way, we give some brief details on our research design.

Research Design

To define our sample of pro-migrant NGOs, we examined secondary material, in addition to our own original newspaper analyses and exploratory interviews, to build up a list of the most important NGOs who had been active in lobbying and campaigning in the field of policy affecting the access to rights and entry for non-national citizens.¹ Although our case study is part of a larger study, which also included other organisations from broader civil society, such as trade unions and

¹ We undertook 12 detailed exploratory interviews with NGOs, who were later interviewed again once we had developed our semi-structured interview schedule. We were also able to draw from our own database on 15 years of newspaper coverage of immigration and asylum politics which codes each organisation mentioned (generated for the project 'The Contentious Politics of Immigration and Asylum in Britain and Europe, ESRC Award number R000239221).

churches, we took the decision to limit our focus to NGOs, since otherwise it would have been difficult to control for organisational dynamics which could potentially have affected levels of European activity, but which had explanations that were extraneous to our field of inquiry. A decision was also taken to exclude anti-migrant NGOs, since these are few in number and play virtually no direct role in the policy domain, and because previous experience showed that such actors were unwilling to respond to an interview schedule of the proposed type.

Interviews were undertaken using a systematically structured questionnaire, combining both closed and open-ended questions, which enabled strictly comparative analysis of organisations' responses. Our sample of 19 British-based pro-migrant NGOs was selected first, using the list we had developed of national NGOs were influential in the policy field, and secondly, using a snowball technique of interviewing further NGOs on the basis of responses from those already interviewed, who were each asked to name any further organisations with influence in the national policy domain that had not been included in our sample. For each organisation, we selected the director or member of staff with primary responsibility for activities relating to policy, since we required someone who could speak on the organisation's behalf to give a broad and well-informed 'insider's' overview of its activities and perceptions. Interviews were undertaken in 2003 and early 2004, lasted approximately an hour, and were recorded onto minidisc and then coded along with key qualitative quotes into a database, which was used for analysis.

Case Study

Here we analyse the ways in which the pro-migrant NGO sector, relatively weak at national level in Britain, is undergoing organisational adaptation in response to the partial Europeanisation of the immigration and asylum policy field. Four types of British-based NGO are distinguished that are likely to adapt in varying ways to European-level developments, given their different funding bases and organisational scope. These are 1) national NGOs which receive some state funding, such as the Refugee Council, 2) national NGOs which remain financially independent of the state, such as the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, 3) the British branches of transnational NGOs, such as Amnesty UK, all of which are in receipt of some state funding, and 4) NGOs with a European scope which are based in Britain and receive some funding from one or more EU governments, such as the European Council on Refugees and Exiles. Table 1, overleaf, shows the 19 most important of these NGOs in British asylum politics, their acronyms, and whether they campaign specifically over immigration and asylum issues, or are general solidarity, rights, welfare or charity organisations that take up asylum as one campaign issue.

Table 1 Pro-migrant NGOs in Britain

Name	Acronym	Type of NGO (General or Issue-specific)
Type 1 - National NGOs, recipients of state funding		
Migrant Helpline	MH	Issue-specific
Refugee Action	RA	Issue-specific
Refugee Council	RC	Issue-specific
Children's Society	CS	General
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux	NACAB	General
Shelter	Sh	General
Type 2 - National NGOs, independent (not recipients of state funding)		
Asylum Aid	AA	Issue-specific
Campaign to Close Campsfield	CCC	Issue-specific
Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers	CDAS	Issue-specific
Immigration Law Practitioners' Association	ILPA	Issue-specific
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants	JCWI	Issue-specific
Medical Foundation	MF	Issue-specific
National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns	NCADC	Issue-specific
National Assembly Against Racism	NAAR	General
Type 3 - Transnational NGOs, recipients of state funding		
Jesuit Refugee Service	JRS	Issue-specific
Amnesty UK	AIUK	General
Oxfam GB	Oxfam	General
Save the Children UK	SCUK	General
Type 4 - European-level NGOs, recipients of state funding		
European Council on Refugees and Exiles	ECRE	Issue-specific

Those NGOs that receive state funding (Type 1) are to some extent institutionally co-opted, many acting as service providers in addition to undertaking campaigning activities, while the campaign organisations that are financially independent of the state (Type 2) may be seen as the more ideologically motivated core of the pro-migrant movement, since they have to generate their own income streams. Of the NGOs in receipt of state funding, the most prominent and influential is the Refugee Council, which both attempts to influence policy and assists refugees at the grassroots, followed by Refugee Action and Migrant Helpline, which also provide services to refugees. These groups undertake the majority of state-supported pro-migrant activity, although other state-sponsored NGOs with wider remits such as children's rights and welfare (The Children's Society), citizenship rights (NACAB) and homelessness (Shelter) also run campaigns on asylum. These latter organisations form an important source of solidarity and resources for the pro-migrant campaign by linking the issue into broader networks and related campaigns.

With the exception of the anti-racist coalition NAAR, all the state-independent NGOs (Type 2) campaign exclusively on asylum issues. The most prominent and longstanding campaign organisation is the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, other independent NGOs including the newer organisation Asylum Aid and the Medical Foundation, which campaigns on the specific issue of care for torture victims. A further three state-independent NGOs are small and employ more radical grass-roots protest tactics: one initially a local protest against detention centres

(Campaign to Close Campsfield), one opposed to deportations (the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns), and one generally pro-migrant organisation (the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers). Another prominent independent organisation is the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association. While ILPA is a professional organisation of a sector working in immigration, unlike the other independent NGOs, it nonetheless merits inclusion in the campaign sector as the organisation lobbies government and responds to policy developments very much in the style of a campaigning NGO, frequently becoming involved in coalitions with other organisations.

The UK branches of transnational NGOs (Type 3) possess internal resources for engaging in pro-migrant activism beyond the nation-state that national NGOs do not, since they have pre-existing transnational structures. All the transnational NGOs in our sample were in receipt of state funding, whether they campaigned on the specific issue of asylum - such as the Jesuit Refugee Service, which draws from state and church resources to undertake service provision to refugees - or had broader remits on issues such as justice and human rights (Amnesty), welfare and development (Oxfam) or children's welfare and rights (Save the Children). Finally, a fourth type of NGO is European in scope but has an organisational base in Britain. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles [ECRE] is an umbrella organisation for refugee-assisting NGOs across Europe, which receives funding from a number of state sources (although not the UK Home Office), as well as from non-state sources such as philanthropic foundations and member agencies' subscriptions. While ECRE's secretariat is based in London, the organisation also maintains a small Brussels office of two full-time staff plus interns. As an umbrella organisation, ECRE potentially forms an important intermediary channel for member agencies' European activity.

Different Pathways to Europe

We now examine the extent to which the emergence of immigration politics at the European level has presented opportunities for the relatively weak British NGO sector to draw on the resources of a political environment external to the nation-state. A first way of looking at the perceived importance of the European Union is to examine the different levels of political decision-making which organisations have attempted to influence. Interviewees were asked, 'Which levels of political decision making has your organisation tried to influence on the issue of asylum?', and given the option of five different levels: European, other countries, national, regional and local. The findings are presented in Table 2, below.

Table 2 Levels of political decision-making which NGOs had tried to influence on the asylum issue

	European	Other countries	National	Regional	Local
Type 1 - National NGOs, recipients of state funding					
Migrant Helpline			✓	✓	✓
Refugee Action			✓	✓	
Refugee Council	✓		✓	✓	✓
Children's Society			✓	✓	✓
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux			✓		
Shelter			✓	✓	✓
Type 2 - National NGOs, independent					
Asylum Aid			✓		
Campaign to Close Campsfield			✓		✓
Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers			✓		✓
Immigration Law Practitioners Association	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants	✓		✓		
Medical Foundation	✓		✓	✓	
National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns		✓	✓	✓	✓
National Assembly Against Racism			✓		
Type 3 - Transnational NGOs, recipients of state funding					
Jesuit Refugee Service	✓		✓		
Amnesty UK	✓		✓	✓	✓
Oxfam GB	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Save The Children UK	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Type 4 - European-level NGOs, recipients of state funding					
European Council on Refugees and Exiles	✓	✓			
% of NGOs that tried to influence this level	47.4	26.3	94.7	57.9	47.4
N	19	19	19	19	19

It is striking that nine of our nineteen NGOs had attempted to influence the EU level of politics, and that five had also attempted to influence other European countries, constituting a significant amount of activity at political levels beyond the nation state. Examining which organisations engage at the European level, the importance of pre-existing transnational networks and of professional and institutional ties is clear. The four transnational NGOs - Amnesty, the Jesuit Refugee Service, Oxfam and Save the Children - were all able to draw on their existing transnational networks in their attempts to influence European politics. The organisational structures via which these transnational NGOs lobbied and campaigned at European level varied: for example, Amnesty's campaign work with the EU institutions is done by the organisation's

European office based in Brussels, while Save the Children works at the European level via the Save the Children Europe group, a network of 12 national Save the Children organisations including the UK. Large state-supported NGO the Refugee Council was also able to target Europe, as were the two state-independent organisations with personnel from the legal (ILPA) and medical professions (MF). In spite of its lack of state funding, the main independent national campaign organisation JCWI had also found sufficient resources to be active in European politics. Lastly, the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns actively cooperated with campaigns in other countries to a small extent, although not targeting the EU level, which gives some limited evidence for the presence of ‘bottom-up’ transnational campaign activity.

Nationally based NGOs were much less likely to undertake European-level activities than transnational NGOs were, with a majority of national NGOs (5 out of 6 state-supported NGOs, and 5 of 8 independent groups) not engaging in asylum politics at the EU level. For these NGOs, the decision to confine their activities to national politics related to internal organisational factors, primarily the limited availability of resources. This comment by Refugee Action’s Communications Manager was typical:

‘I think number one is resources, it’s a simple matter of that. We’re a UK agency, most of our funding comes from the Home Office, and it’s to do a specific job...which is to assist asylum seekers here in a very practical way. ... just trying to position ourselves in a very minimal way in the UK is already a challenge in terms of the resources we have.’ Communications Manager, Refugee Action, London, 11 Mar 2003.

Furthermore, the activities of organisations with a general welfare and rights coverage were often limited to national politics because considerable efforts were needed to cover several different issues at that level. NACAB’s Policy Officer explained the organisation’s lack of European-level activity thus:

‘Because of resources and because we are an organisation with a very wide brief on social policy issues. Immigration is only one of a huge range of issues, and... the proportion of all casework that is immigration-related is a very small area of our work in total, about 80 thousand out of 6 million.’ Policy Officer, National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, London, 9 Feb 2004.

From Table 2 it is clear that certain NGOs within the sector act as important nodes of activity that link national and subnational politics to the trans- and supranational European levels. In addition, we asked organisations about the type and intensity of their lobbying and campaigning activities, comparing those at national and EU levels for both institutional strategies (such as lobbying) and public strategies (such as media-related activity and protest). Overall the intensity of NGO activities was considerably lower at the EU level than the national level, and this held for both institutional and public strategies. Furthermore, we found that those which employed campaign tactics most frequently at the national level were different than those active at the EU-level, which points to European campaigning being a specialist activity. Prominent among those most frequently lobbying Europe were JCWI, Refugee Council, ILPA, Medical Foundation, Oxfam and JRS.

In order to uncover the often complex pathways by which British-based NGOs access European-level asylum politics, we now examine the activities of four key organisations in relation to Europe in more detail. The JCWI is selected as an

important independent NGO, the Refugee Council as a central state-supported NGO, Amnesty as an example of a transnational NGO, and ECRE as an NGO with a European scope.

The independent Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, which focuses on three areas of activity - policy development and campaigning, providing legal advice and representation for refugees and asylum seekers, and legal training - has opted to engage with the European dimension of migration policy. This engagement with European politics has been driven by the perception of those working for the organisation that European-level developments are having a substantial impact on migration. For example, JCWI's Chief Executive commented that 'we have had to...work with European organisations a bit more now' and that the organisation has moved from being 'national to a little bit supranational'² in response to developments such as the Dublin Convention, the legal framework of the European Convention on Human Rights, and the Tampere conclusions. For reasons of limited resources, the JCWI works at the European level within networks of pro-migrant groups, collaborating with organisations with a European scope such as the Brussels-based Migration Policy Group and European Network Against Racism [ENAR], as well as London-based ECRE. As a JCWI representative pointed out, the organisation is 'too small' to work alone at the EU level, and would not be able to maintain 'what's necessary in order to have someone going over to Brussels on a regular basis'³.

State-sponsored NGO the Refugee Council also undertakes activity at the European level in the main through umbrella organisations such as ECRE, although its greater resource-base means that it has also been able to make some attempts to influence the European level directly. The Refugee Council is the largest refugee-assisting agency in Britain, providing direct support to refugees as well as carrying out policy and advocacy work, fundraising, community development and information provision. The organisation has a small international section, which consists of 3 full-time staff members dedicated to European and international work. One staff member works on the European Integration Project [EIP], which aims to develop policy on the reception and integration of refugees across Europe, focusing on employment issues. This work has been undertaken in partnership with ECRE and was funded from 2000-2002 by the European Refugee Fund. While ECRE has been 'the main focus for our European work'⁴, the Refugee Council also periodically tries to influence policy decisions at European level by direct lobbying, targeted either at officials in the European institutions, or at British officials attending European summits and meetings.

Amnesty International illustrates the possible route to European politics for a transnational pro-migrant NGO, undertaking work on European asylum issues both alone and in coalition with other pro-migrant organisations. Due to the greater resources they devote to transnational organising and campaigning and their already existing international orientation, transnational NGOs have a head start over national NGOs in addressing the European level. Amnesty has its own European office in Brussels, which responds to new EU regulations, directives and decisions and represents the organisation in its lobbying and consultation work with the EU institutions. National sections of Amnesty meet together with the European office at

² Interview with Chief Executive, JCWI, London, 9 Oct 2003.

³ Interview with Policy and Projects Officer, JCWI, London, 13 Dec 2001.

⁴ Interview with Head of Policy, Refugee Council, 13 Dec 2001.

least twice a year to discuss EU policy, as an established EU refugee working group⁵. The British branch of Amnesty works on European issues by taking part in the Asylum Rights Campaign EU subgroup, which lobbies UK members of the European Parliament and UK officials attending Council of Ministers meetings, and also through its association with umbrella organisation ECRE. Overall, the European dimension of policy is engaged with at a number of different points within Amnesty's internal organisational structure. Furthermore, the organisation's activities in relation to Europe are addressed both at national and at European policymakers and officials, which is facilitated by being able to draw on a pre-existing multi-levelled organisational structure.

Finally, we examine the ways in which European-level NGO the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) has attempted to influence the EU level of asylum politics. Umbrella organisation ECRE has 76 member organisations in 30 different countries, principally in Western and Central Europe, but also extending to Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Membership is broad and encompasses both state-sponsored NGOs (such as the British, Danish and Dutch Refugee Councils) and many independent NGOs, as well as ranging from organisations with a general solidarity focus to those focusing on asylum or on a specific asylum sub-issue such as refugees' health. Intermediary EU-specialist organisations such as ECRE represent another important way in which national NGOs can access EU politics, in addition to their own autonomous pathways to Europe. Five of the eight NGOs in our sample which made their own attempts to influence European politics also participated in lobbying the EU through their membership of ECRE: Amnesty International UK, ILPA, Oxfam UK, the Refugee Council and Save the Children. Furthermore, national state-supported NGO Refugee Action is also active through ECRE though it does not campaign autonomously at the EU level. ECRE has therefore become an important intermediary node for linking the national organisational field of the pro-migrant sector 'vertically' to the European level, as well as for developing 'horizontal' transnational links between that sector and pro-migrant organisations in other European countries.

In developing its policy responses to European-level developments, ECRE does not take autonomous positions in its own right, but consults with its member agencies to determine policy positions that represent a consensus among its members. Biennial meetings are held in Geneva, attended by ECRE and representatives of its member agencies, where these collective positions are agreed. ECRE specialises in policy and advocacy work at the EU level, undertaking no service provision or assistance for refugees. Other than addressing whichever state holds the rotating EU Presidency, ECRE focuses on the EU level and does not attempt to engage directly in the national politics of member states. However, ECRE members are encouraged to introduce the European-wide perspectives on asylum policy issues that are developed in the forum of ECRE meetings into their national activities, as a representative made clear: 'we rely heavily on our member agencies at the national level to try to put forward European NGO positions as well as their own position when they're meeting with

⁵ A measure of the relative importance of the European and international levels for Amnesty can be gained by noting that the organisation meets at least twice a year to discuss European refugee issues, but its meeting in 2003 was the first for five or six years to discuss international asylum questions, although the organisation formerly met regularly on international refugee issues.

relevant government officials'⁶. As well as providing a channel for national NGOs to address the policies put forward by the EU institutions, membership of ECRE also provides an opportunity for a Europeanisation of national pro-migrant organisations' understandings of issues and policies, which can then also impact on the sector's national activities. This latter form is an 'indirect' means of Europeanisation, involving a European dimension becoming internalised within national NGOs' understanding of policy issues. Such indirect Europeanisation may at present be in its infancy, but has nonetheless begun as a process, presenting a pathway that may allow further Europeanisation in the future.

In addition to the pan-European forum ECRE, NGOs have also established a national forum for the discussion of European policy developments on immigration and asylum, the EU Subgroup of the Asylum Rights Campaign, which meets monthly. Seven of the nine British-based NGOs which engage with European-level asylum developments participate regularly in the EU Subgroup, with the exception of Save the Children UK, which leaves such activities to its own transnational Save the Children Europe Group, and ECRE, which as a European forum itself does not take part in national-level discussion groups. In addition to these seven NGOs, other British organisations active in the group are legal and rights groups the Refugee Legal Centre and JUSTICE, as well as the supranational bodies UNHCR and the United Nations Association UK. It should be pointed out that the NGOs seldom unite as a coalition through the EU subgroup of the Asylum Rights Campaign when they wish to lobby Europe, but are more likely to do so through ECRE or by directly addressing EU officials directly. Therefore, the EU Subgroup principally contributes to the Europeanisation of the pro-migrant NGO sector in Britain by acting as a forum for exchange of information, perceptions of problems and understandings of policies.

Although the activities and understandings of a key set of national pro-migrant organisations are adapting to EU-level involvement in asylum policies, it is important not to overstate the extent to which such perspectives have 'filtered down' to staff within organisations. At present Europe remains an important but specialist field within NGOs. This is illustrated by the point made by an interviewee from Oxfam, who commented that while many refugee-assisting NGOs had responded to the increasing Europeanisation of the policy field by employing staff to work on European issues, the increasing European dimension to policy was far from recognised by many staff and activists in the organisation:

'Organisations are getting Europeanised in terms of putting resources into having people that follow European dimensions, and to some extent, try to integrate those into their overall positions, but I don't think they're Europeanised in terms of everybody within the organisations by any means understanding or feeling the extent of the impact of Europe.' Oxfam GB representative, Oxford, 10 Mar 2003.

Nonetheless, our study shows that a core set of British-based NGOs have started to build the networks of communication and cooperation that allow them to develop transnational European perspectives, to address EU-level policies, and to give an EU dimension to national campaigns. The extent to which national organisations pursue these pathways of Europeanisation, or alternatively continue to act exclusively within national politics, is likely to be dependent in part on those organisations' perceptions

⁶ Interview with Head of Policy and Advocacy, ECRE, London, 18 Jan 2002.

of which political levels are invested with significant power and influence to make and change policy. We now explore those perceptions.

Perceptions of Influence and Future Opportunities

Organisations are likely to shift their campaign activities towards Europe according to the extent to which they perceive European institutions to be powerful actors in asylum policy. In order to gain an understanding of the organisations' perceptions of the influence of European level politics relative to national and local, and of different types of actors and institutions relative to one another, we showed the NGOs a list, asking each interviewee: 'Could you name all organizations on this list, which, from your point of view, have been particularly influential in immigration policy over the past few years?' Table 3a shows the proportion of NGOs which perceived each state, legislative and judicial actor to be influential, ranking the actors in order of perceived influence, while Table 3b shows the same information for NGO actors.

Table 3a Perceived influence of institutional actors in immigration and asylum policy, as assessed by NGOs

Actor	Scope of actor	% of NGOs judging actor as influential	Rank	N
UK Home Office	National	100.0	1	18
High Court	National	88.9	2	18
National Asylum Support Service	National	83.3	3=	18
UK Parliament	National	83.3	3=	18
Governments of other EU countries	Foreign national (European)	77.8	5	18
European Commission	European	55.6	6=	18
UNHCR	Supranational (non-EU)	55.6	6=	18
Local Authorities	Local	50.0	8	18
Immigration Appellate Authority	National	44.4	9=	18
European Council of Ministers	European	44.4	9=	18
European Security Institutions (Europol, Eurodac)	European	33.3	11	18
Police and border control agencies in other EU countries	Foreign national (European)	27.8	12=	18
UK Police	National	27.8	12=	18
Commission for Racial Equality	National	27.8	12=	18
European Court of Justice	European	22.2	15=	18
European Parliament	European	22.2	15=	18
Governments of immigrants' countries of origin	Foreign national (non-European)	16.7	17	18
Local Government Association	Local	11.1	18=	18
Crown Courts	National	11.1	18=	18

Table 3b Perceived influence of selected NGO actors in immigration and asylum policy, assessed by NGOs

Actor	Scope of actor	% of NGOs judging actor as influential	Rank	N
ILPA	National	61.1	1	18
Refugee Council	National	55.6	2	18
Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers	National	27.8	3=	18
European Council on Refugees and Exiles	European	27.8	3=	18
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants	National	27.8	3=	18
National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns	National	27.8	3=	18
Refugee Action	National	27.8	3=	18
Oxfam	Transnational	22.2	8	18
Save the Children	Transnational	16.7	9	18
Amnesty International	Transnational	11.1	10=	18
Asylum Aid	National	11.1	10=	18

Our findings from Table 3a underline the continuing influence of national institutional actors over policy, and that NGOs perceived most power at the European level to be held by the intergovernmental rather than the supranational institutions. The most influential actors, with more than three quarters of NGOs citing them, were from the British national state, judiciary, and legislature, but notably, these were followed by national governments from other EU countries. That British NGOs see other EU national governments as more influential than EU supranational institutions and organisations indicates that they view power to reside within intergovernmental more than within supranational European politics. Of the European institutions, the Commission was perceived as influential by just over half the NGOs (55.6%), followed by the Council of Ministers by just under a half (44.4%) and the Security institutions by a third (35.3%); only a fifth of organisations (22.2%) considered the Court of Justice and Parliament influential. On this evidence, one would expect NGOs to target their advocacy activities at the supra-national level at the Commission and Council of Ministers, rather than directing their efforts at the Parliament or pursuing legal actions through the Courts. Even the Commission and the Council of Ministers are only viewed as being as influential as local authorities (50.0) and the UNHCR (55.6), which indicates both that Europe is viewed as an opportunity on a par with local politics, and that the EU is not the only supranational addressee which NGOs perceive as wielding some influence.

Table 3b allows us to consider the influence of the NGOs themselves, since selected NGO actors were named in the list of actors shown to our interviewees. The Refugee Council and ILPA were considered by far the most influential NGO actors, with more than half of the organisations citing them as influential (55.6% and 61.1% respectively). While a quarter of NGOs considered that independent issue-specific campaign organisations the JCWI and the more grass-roots and radical CDAS and

NCADC had been influential, the transnationally structured NGOs Oxfam, Save the Children, and Amnesty were considered less influential. Relating these perceptions of influence to our previous findings about which British-based NGOs undertook activities at the European level, this shows that the national NGOs which engaged with the European level and focus exclusively on asylum issues - ILPA, RC, and to a lesser extent the JCWI - are widely seen as more effective players in the asylum and immigration field than the transnational organisations which also engage with the European level, but have a more general focus – Oxfam, STC and Amnesty. However, it is noteworthy that the European-level NGO in our sample, ECRE, is rated by fellow NGOs as the third most influential NGO in the field (29.4%), which shows that it is perceived as a relatively important advocate in terms of policy efficacy.

Since our findings from Table 3a have demonstrated that British NGOs perceived some degree of policy influence to be held at the EU level, both intergovernmentally and supranationally, we now examine the directions in which they perceived European asylum and immigration policies to be evolving as a result of the EU's contribution, and whether they perceived the EU as likely to become a more important target of their campaign activities in the future. We put the question to interviewees: 'Is your organisation generally in favour of an increase in European influence in immigration and asylum policy, or is it against it?', and asked them to elaborate on their answers in order to place their positions in context. More than half of the NGOs (10 out of 19) expressed ambivalence toward a potential increase in EU influence, with just under a third (6 out of 19) in favour of an increase as a potential source of more expansionist asylum and immigration policies. 2 NGOs, neither of which was active at the European level, were against further European influence, viewing it as leading to a 'Fortress Europe'. There was a widespread consensus between those interviewees who were broadly in favour of greater EU influence and those who were ambivalent, that recent EU policies have permitted a lowering of minimum standards in many member states. This newfound scepticism has replaced a former, somewhat naïve normative optimism among NGOs that the EU would be a key driver of more expansionist immigration and asylum policies in Europe.

While NGOs had hoped and believed for several years that European influence would encourage member states like Britain to make their migration policies more expansionist, this position has come to be tempered with an awareness that recent EU policies have in fact advanced a restrictive agenda, driven by the member states. In short, realism has set in. For example, when asked whether her organisation was in favour of increasing EU involvement in migration policies, the director of the Jesuit Refugee Service responded:

'Not sure. The hope I have for an increase in European influence is some sort of minimising effect on the UK government from more liberal government. The fear I have would be that the UK takes the EU down its route and leads the race to the bottom of a limitation of rights.' Director, Jesuit Refugee Service, London, 3 Mar 2003.

This ambivalence was widely shared by British-based pro-migrant NGOs. In a similar vein, a representative from Oxfam commented that her organisation had been strongly in favour of EU involvement in policymaking in principle, but now that the relatively restrictive outcomes of that involvement were becoming apparent, NGO attitudes were becoming increasingly ambivalent regarding the European dimension of policy:

‘[S]peaking to a lot of agencies recently, we’ve spent years where our default position has been we want a harmonised asylum policy... So after years of being strongly in favour of an increase in European influence, now that we’re realising how that European influence is being used and constructed, and the outcome of it, I think we’re all in a funny position of having to say... what do we want, are we still calling for harmonisation now that we see that the outcome of harmonisation is not great?’ Oxfam GB representative, Oxford, 10 Mar 2003.

NGOs have become increasingly aware of the largely intergovernmental nature of European politics in the asylum and immigration field, coming to perceive the European arena as strongly influenced by the national politics of EU member states, rather than viewing the EU as a set of institutions that will automatically push an expansionist agenda on asylum against restrictive nation-states. Europe was still seen by a number of NGOs as positive and as leading to greater expansionism on specific issues. For example, the Medical Foundation viewed the EU as important for protecting refugees and for promoting human rights in Central and Eastern Europe: ‘I think [integration] is potentially the best way to safeguard asylum seekers and refugees, by pushing back the boundaries. It will also have an influence on improving human rights standards in Europe’. In the contemporary context, however, these perceptions of the positive impacts of EU influence are balanced by a realistic appraisal of the ability of nation-states to pursue restrictive agendas on asylum within the EU framework, as the further statement from the same MF representative that nation-states were ‘taking their own self-interests to harmonisation and trying to drive standards down to what they perceive to be an acceptable level’ illustrates.

Finally, we asked NGO interviewees for their assessments of the likely future importance of the EU compared to national politics for their organisations, and the likely trajectory of European involvement in policies. Here there was a broad consensus that the European level of policy was becoming more important for the NGO sector, with 14 out of 18 interviewees expressing this view. These NGOs also viewed this increasing European dimension of asylum policy as having a largely negative or ambivalent future impact, typical opinions expressed being that there would be a continued lowering of asylum standards and that asylum policies would become more restrictive across Europe. In contrast, immigration policy was identified by a number of interviewees as potentially becoming more open, depending on Europe’s labour market needs. As an ILPA representative pointed out, ‘European asylum policy will continue to be more restrictive for spontaneous arrivals, but European immigration policy depends rather on the European economy and whether there is deemed to be a need for migrant labour’.

In sum, it seems that NGOs have lowered their expectations for the EU to have an expansionist influence on European asylum policies, now that they are witnessing the actual impacts of the growing European dimension of asylum and immigration policy. This can be seen as a ‘growing up’ and loss of innocence with regard to the potential for European policies to change radically with the emergence of the EU as a more significant maker and shaper of policy. It also indicates that pro-migrant NGOs are developing a more mature appreciation of the rules of the game at European level. Rather than being starry-eyed about the chances for achieving increased political efficacy by working through European paths, NGOs are coming to judge the opportunities available for engaging with Europe on their potential merits.

Conclusion

To our knowledge this is one of the first attempts to systematically and empirically study how a set of campaign and lobby organisations that were already established in a national policy domain have started to adapt their activities and perceptions in the face of advancing European policy involvement and influence. Given that our set of pro-migrant NGOs were relatively weak within the British immigration and asylum policy domain, we have found a perhaps surprising ability to respond to the new European supra- and transnational political opportunities. However, organisational adaptation has not been uniform and even. We specified different types of NGO within the sector and these exhibited different abilities to build organisational linkages to, and address power in, the supra- and transnational political arenas. The European lobby is a specialist group. Organisations such as Amnesty UK, with pre-existing transnational organisational structures have addressed Europe, but their focus on other issues means that they are not perceived as relatively influential among the NGOs on immigration and asylum policies. More influential were the Refugee Council which draws on resources of sponsorship from the British state, and the ILPA with its network of committed legal professionals. From the independent campaign organisations the JCWI is an important proponent of the cause in Europe, whereas other ideologically motivated groups applying mainly protest strategies, such as CDAS, did not address the EU, and were rather sceptical of it. Overall we found that there were several bottom-up 'pathways to Europe' dependent on the scope of the organisation and its resource base, which served to build organisational links from within British politics to other member states and to the EU. Especially important within this emergent organisational framework has been the role played by ECRE, which although British-based, has established itself as an intermediary European transnational organisation, which has allowed transnational flows of communication and learning processes between NGOs, co-ordinated campaigning, as well as a feedback of EU opportunities and situations in other EU countries to the British NGO sector.

We also uncovered that an increasing engagement with Europe has led to British NGOs having a more concrete and realistic appreciation of what can be achieved through European activism. Somewhat naïve and normative expectations that the EU would advance an expansionist immigration and asylum agenda against restrictive nation-states have been replaced with the realisation that EU politics in this field is largely intergovernmental, which has meant that advancing European policy developments and harmonisation have in many cases meant a push to the lowest common denominator and restrictive outcomes. Nonetheless, NGOs have been able to carve out a presence for themselves within the new European policy arena, which allows at least some public scrutiny of such developments. Without overstating the case, there is an emergent organisational structure in place which can respond and develop further, depending on the direction which the Europeanisation of policy takes.

Overall it is clear that many formerly national NGOs have become multi-levelled in their activities, which bridge different political levels within the European polity, including those within the nation-state (national, regional and local) as well as trans- and supranational European levels. Such findings are compounded by the fact that we know that such groups co-operate strongly across the sector. This finding challenges

the argument made by Guiraudon (2001) that a missing link exists between EU-level NGOs, equipped with technical know-how and Brussels-level connections, and grassroots migrant groups mobilising primarily at subnational levels in the European polity, which she considers lack the insider knowledge and resources to mobilise at the European level. In the long run, we consider that for European politics, the Europeanisation of national NGO activity will be at least as, if not more, important than the emergence of a technocratic Brussels-based transnational lobby sector, because it links the representatives of national and sub-national public constituencies to the new emergent loci of power, thereby providing a more likely avenue for public engagement in policy deliberation.

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