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Research Article

Europeanization through the European Women's Lobby: A Sociological Comparison of the French and Belgian National Coordinations

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Abstract

What impact has the creation of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) had on national feminist Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in France and Belgium? To find this out, I examine how the national CSOs' coordinations have adapted their practices, discourses, strategies and internal organisation to be part of European Civil Society. Drawing on 40 interviews and two internships within both French and Belgian EWL intermediary coordinations, I put forward an actor-based sociological perspective focusing on three causal paths in order to explain the findings derived from comparing the Europeanization of the CSOs in France and in Belgium. If identical effects of this Europeanization were identified in both coordinations, the French coordination appears to be more proactive on EU issues and more EWL-orientated than the Belgian. These two distinctive outcomes can be explained by three factors: cultural, organisational and individual. While cultural factors explain some long-term Europeanization outcomes, factors to do with actors' individualities also highlight the mutability of the Europeanization process.

Keywords

European Women's Lobby; Europeanization; Feminism; CSOs; Proactivity

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European institutions are widely criticised for being distant and technocratic. Since the 1990s, however, the European Commission has been eager to address this legitimacy gap by making funding for European Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) such as the European Anti-Poverty Network contingent on their representativeness.

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) was created in 1990 with the Commission's financial support. Representing 2,700 women's CSOs through 19 European-wide thematic networks (e.g., the European Network of Migrant Women), 31 national coordinations in the 28 EU member states and three candidate countries for accession to the EU (the Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey), it has become 'the largest European umbrella network of women's associations' (EWL website). The coordinations are defined by their geographical membership, in other words, one organisation per country relaying to the EWL secretariat in Brussels the needs of the national CSOs it represents. By looking at the EWL's impact at the national level, this article investigates how and to what extent the EWL national coordinations have engaged in a Europeanization process, integrating a European dimension into their own action repertoires, discourses, strategies and internal organisation. Since the national coordinations experience Europe mainly by interacting with the EWL, Europeanization is here understood as their EWL (more or less active) membership and identification. The EWL case is specific regarding Europeanization since the network is working on an area of social policy that has receded in importance and subsidisation at the EU level in the past decade. We could then expect all the coordinations to become less Europeanized but, while all of them wax and wane in their adherence to the EWL, these variations seem to differ from one national coordination to another. Therefore, the core research question on the EWL's impact at the national level leads to various sub-questions based on the fact that each national coordination interacts with the EWL in its own way.

Can common trends among all EWL coordinations be identified? What are the variations from one coordination to another? Finally, what are the main factors that can explain these variations?

To answer these questions, I compare the French and Belgian coordinations by using participatory observations and in-depth enquiries into specific non-consensual topics on which the EWL has taken strong stands: abortion, surrogacy and prostitution. Because positions are by default only expected in areas covered by European directives and public policies, controversial ones such as the latter, i.e. in areas with no dedicated European competency, make the study of Europeanization through the EWL case even more compelling. Furthermore, as EU umbrella organisations are mostly considered top-down, this article is original in arguing that the relationship between the EWL and its national members can take different paths and could be better understood through a more interactional and sociological perspective, by focusing as much on individual or cultural factors as organisational ones. Since these three factors are in continuous interaction, the effects of Europeanization are multiple and impermanent and this sociological, actor-centred and comparative 'onboard research' aims to go beyond the macroscopic perspective that considers European institutions and lobbies as a whole and overlooks nuances. This method helps challenge the mainstream top-down approaches to Europeanization by rediscovering the individual's and groups' political capacity to adapt – and sometimes be passive or resistant – to EU pressures. It also helps focus on the complexity of the Europeanization process at the EWL level: its content (political values, practices or internal organisation influenced by the EU umbrella organisation), its diversity and mutability (from one national coordination to another or from one person to another) and its three different causal paths where several types of factors interact.

In this article, I first highlight the relevance of both the interactional sociological perspective and the comparative 'onboard' research method in order both to identify the different Europeanization processes and outcomes at the EWL and, thereafter, to explain these through three different causal paths: one where both coordinations are similarly impacted in a typical top-down way and two others where they are impacted differently depending on their degree of proactivity towards the EU/EWL. Second, I illustrate these causal paths through three types of factors: organisational, cultural and individual.

UNDERSTANDING THE MULTIFACTORIAL EUROPEANIZATION OF THE FEMINIST CSOS

The Europeanization concept is relevant here in order to study the relations between the EWL national and European levels because it is sufficiently flexible to accommodate inductive research methods. When Europeanization is approached as 'something to be explained' rather than as 'something that explains' (Radaelli 2004: 2), this concept covers both top-down and bottom-up processes, as well as organisational, cultural and individual factors.

An Interactional and Sociological Perspective on Europeanization: Bringing the Uploading Mechanism and Actors' Choices back into the Analysis

When studying impacts attributed to Europe, scholars have usually chosen the top-down Europeanization approach either to study what happens at the European level and the implications for the feminist CSOs participating in an EU umbrella organisation (Hoskyns 1996; Jacquot 2001; Ramot 2006), or to study what happens at the national level when Europe hits home, giving more or less power to CSOs according to the political opportunity context for gender equality in the EU

(Cullen 2014) or changing the inter-organisational relations between women's CSOs in the country (Císař and Vráblíková 2010; Karlberg and Jacobsson 2015). Indeed, the few studies analysing the EWL focus on the supranational level, i.e., the EWL lobbying strategies, its professionalisation and its Brussels secretariat (Cavaillé 2005; Helfferich and Kolb 2001; Pauget 2009; Strid 2009) or on the EWL organisational impacts on its Swedish coordination (Karlberg 2013). There is however a new trend focusing on bottom-up Europeanization. Mixing both, this article is constructed around an interactional approach that emphasises the need to analyse the 'internal dynamics of organisational relationships' (Eising 2008: 177) and conceive of Europeanization as a 'two-way process' (Duez, Paye and Verdure 2014; Radaelli 2006). Consequently, I study the ongoing circular interactions between the actors forming the two levels of the EWL: the European EWL Secretariat and its national coordinations. I argue that these interactions, leading to the Europeanization of CSOs, are facilitated by national actors labelled 'mediators'. These actors are national delegates, sent to the EWL meetings to vote on the European programme and motions that will later become EWL public position papers. These mediators perceive their roles in the EWL in very different ways according to their own national context or individual profile. As such, this article extends the Europeanization notion (mostly focused on structures and practices) to discourses, beliefs, identity or memory. It analyses not only the impact of the European level on national CSOs' structures, but also the impact on individual EWL coordinations' employees and delegates: their non-automatic agreement to the EWL feminist political positions, their memory of the EWL and its coordinations or the meanings they give to the EWL's role and their own role in it. Finally, it analyses these actors' involvement in the Europeanization (passive or proactive, adapting or resisting).

Thus, this article adopts the recent sociological actor-centred design which defines Europeanization as 'the whole set of institutional, strategic, normative [to which Hassenteufel (2011: 259) added 'cognitive'] adjustments induced by the European integration' (Palier and Surel 2007: 39). I therefore bring actors' choices back into the analysis to study how they 'fed, modified or refused the European resources' (Weisbein and Mischi 2004). This design models its 'from below' Europeanization perception and its interest in socialisation on sociology and it takes a focus on memory, identity and national context-based specificity from EU history.

> The actor-centred perspective can enrich the general notion of Europeanization: because social activities are embedded in small territories and long histories, 'Europe' has different meanings and entails different impacts and kind of mobilization' which can be better analysed through 'in-depth enquiries and ethnography (Georgakakis and Weisbein 2010: 104-105).

This perspective challenges the mainstream macroscopic approaches to Europeanization and helps rediscover individuals' and groups' political capacity to adapt to and resist EU pressures. Taking cognitive Europeanization into account helps to study the ways in which national actors can create impact through references, discourses and stories. It helps in analysing the EWL benchmarking logic that highlights EWL 'best practices', favouring persuasion and practice appropriation by individuals over constraints to change (Guigner 2007).

Finally, this article is inspired by a chronological analysis of the Europeanization process at the EWL, built for my [unpublished] doctoral thesis. Indeed, this three-step analysis already combined top-down and bottom-up processes with three types of elements (organisational, cultural and individual). First, it showed that the EWL originally emerged through a top-down process in 1990, created by some women working within the European Commission. During this first stage, the EWL identity was more organisational in nature due to the priority placed on organising feminist CSOs into national coordinations rather than producing a common ideology. Second, I distinguished bottom-up Europeanization since the EWL's political identity was and still is evolving thanks to some EWL coordinations having enough organisational resources (i.e. salaried staff) and individual skills (e.g.

multilingualism) to upload their positions by sending their delegates to convince others at the EWL annual meeting. And third, I assumed that these national delegates, gaining 'European status' by being labelled 'mediators', disseminated the terminology, the tools and the good practices elaborated at the EWL European meetings. This third stage of the analysis is also limited by several organisational factors (e.g. too long a chain of representation down to the grassroots) and cultural factors (e.g. different coordinations' history). Thus, this chronological analysis inspired the article's comparative method of focusing on three types of factors, which showed that the potential for Europeanization is not equal among coordinations as it is dependent on organisational and cultural backgrounds as well as on individuals' ability to upload perceptions, positions and practices into the EWL decision-making process.

A Novel Comparative 'Onboard Research': Focusing on Three Causal Paths where Three Types of Factors Interact to Explain the Different European Impacts on Coordinations

To compare the EWL impacts from one national coordination to another, this article draws on an analytical framework of three causal paths leading to different Europeanization outcomes. While the first casual path explains why both coordinations are similarly affected in some areas, the second and third causal paths explain why one coordination adopted a proactive stance, while the other did not. Each outcome can be explained by the combination of three types of factors mentioned earlier: organisational (structures, procedures, geographic distance from the EWL Secretariat and the grassroots), cultural (national histories and habits, linguistic divisions, political cultures of CSOs) and individual (skill sets such as multilingualism, previous European socialization, perceptions, status, intimate relationships). While this analytical distinction may help to grasp causal paths better, it is important to keep in mind that these factors are interrelated and that the outcome of the Europeanization process depends on this interaction. For instance, when certain cultural and organisational factors (such as an environment that gives incentives to engage proactively in the Europeanization process) do not encourage a Europeanization process, we expect individual factors (such as the possession of skills to act upon these incentives) to have much less impact. Moreover, organisational factors seem to enable the rest of factors. As Eva Karlberg (2013) suggests, Europeanization is to be conceived as a 'process which imposes meta-organisational structures[1] on domestic-level civil society'.

My first finding is organisational: Europeanization has a greater impact on such new 'meta-organisational structures' than on older and better organised coordinations and this partly explains the coordinations' different resulting levels of proactivity when engaging in relations with the EWL. Finally, I expect organisational factors to be more relevant in top-down Europeanization; and the cultural and individual factors to be more relevant for explaining differences in both casual paths on proactivity.

We will see if these expectations correspond to reality or not by comparing the French Coordination of the EWL (CLEF) in Paris with the French-speaking Belgium Council of Women (CFFB) in Brussels. Both cases under analysis are western country coordinations with a similar perspective on religion (Belgian neutrality and French laicity). They are also founding members of the EWL and use French as their working language. The most salient difference is that they represent two different structural models at the EWL. Indeed, like most EWL national coordinations, the CLEF was created in 1991 in order to join the EWL. In Belgium, however, as in eight other countries, the national grassroots women's CSOs chose an existing structure – established as 'National Women Councils' since the nineteenth century – to represent them at the EWL secretariat.

The originality of my study lies in its sociological perspective which focuses on three types of factors while Eva Karlberg's current thesis project also compares two EWL coordinations (the Polish and the Swedish ones) but only to study the organisational consequences of the Europeanization of CSOs. Moreover, she has chosen not to focus on any specific topics while I conducted in-depth enquiries into specific non-consensual topics on which the EWL has taken strong stands: abortion, surrogacy and prostitution. Indeed, although the network is vast and favours consensus, some of its ideological positions are in fact bones of contention within the feminist world. For instance, the EWL declared itself against surrogacy (2013), in favour of abortion rights (2002) and for the abolition of all forms of prostitution (1998). When internal disagreements arise within the EWL on those issues or when members believe their countries are not 'ready' for these positions, they usually express their divergent stands by abstaining from voting in order not to prevent other members from moving forward. Accordingly, the last motion on prostitution was adopted in 2014 with 70 votes in favour and no votes against but with 25 abstentions including the Dutch and German delegates.

Another factor of originality in this article is that it compares two EWL coordinations through 'onboard research', meaning that I was working inside and with the object of my research. As such, the data was collected during two three-month long internships at both coordinations and 40 semi-structured interviews derived from these internships.[2] Being a researcher embedded in my field, combining both a colleague's and a scientist's status, implies difficulty in being objective but permits direct access to the object. Unlike the Weberian neutrality approach which claims that science must disconnect research from politics and neutralise the effects of the researchers' social integration, this article is inspired by Delphine Naudier and Maud Simonet (2011) who suggested that researchers' personal involvements with the actors they study do not endanger the scientific legitimacy of their work but, to the contrary, lead to deeper knowledge. Additionally, participant observations during both national and European annual meetings and the study of EWL internal documents have allowed me to list the changes and difficulties national members have encountered in adapting to the European technocracy disseminated by the EWL Secretariat. Finally, collecting biographies helped build a prosopography of the EWL 'founding mothers' and national coordinations' delegates. The same way Adrian Favell and Virginie Guiraudon (2009) collected biographies to underline the differences in individual investment in Erasmus friendships and networks, I wanted to put faces to the actors who built Europe day by day, who translate it more or less proactively at the domestic level and who sometimes refuse to invest in European processes. This biographical method enables us to grasp cognitive Europeanization as defined by individual criteria such as perceptions or socialisation.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE CAUSAL PATHS OF EUROPEANIZATION AT THE EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

A Top-Down Causal Path to Explain Similar Changes in Both National Coordinations' Relations with the EWL

Some Europeanization outcomes were identical in France and in Belgium and to explain these common trends, I first highlight a top-down causal path where both coordinations were equally impacted by European organisational and individual factors. For instance, some organisational and individual European factors affected all national coordinations' representativeness. Indeed, from the start, the individual features of the elite women who created the EWL (rich, well-educated, working white women with political influence) influenced the profile of the coordinations' individual members. Accordingly, the women who first joined the EWL coordinations had much in common with their founding mothers. Then the inception of EU funding opportunities aimed exclusively at European umbrella organisations that voiced the concerns of excluded citizens (organisational factor), combined with criticism in the media of an EWL European delegate over the glaring lack of

women from ethnic minorities (Hoskyns 1996 – individual factor), contributed to 'disciplining' all national coordinations. Consequently, both factors forced the EWL to adopt new requirements in 1999 demanding better representativeness of old, migrant or poor women. These EWL requirements 'changed the way Women organized at the domestic level' (Strid 2009: 186), making the French as well as the Belgian coordinations begin to focus on representativeness and integrate CSOs representing ethnic minorities. I witnessed frequent discussions about representation issues during both internships and at the EWL annual meetings. The French coordination now prides itself on counting among its CSOs' members the Franco-African Women's Association of Paris and the Iranian Women's League for Democracy. Likewise, CSOs representing Zairian and Rwandan Women in Brussels are members of the Belgium Women's Council. Furthermore, both national coordinations created a working committee on 'migrant women'.

Another top-down impact is the increase in networking among national coordinations that was almost nonexistent before. Once again, this Europeanization's outcome, visible in both France and Belgium, can be explained by European organisational and individual factors. The EWL enlargement to Eastern European countries made the previous voting mechanism, in which each national branch had to put forward a motion at the EWL annual meeting, untenable due to lack of time. Instead, a draft motion must now be approved by at least five other EWL members in order to be submitted to a vote. This change has fostered horizontal networking and the need to reach a consensus among coordinations ahead of annual meetings. For instance, at the 2015 EWL meeting in Lisbon, the French coordination presented a motion proposing to lobby EU institutions to include abortion rights in the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights. This motion, notably supported by Belgium, Sweden and Portugal, was adopted even though 14 members abstained from voting.

Finally, the last Europeanization outcome common to both coordinations relates to national delegates' knowledge and common discourse on UE issues and the EWL. Stemming from organisational factors this outcome is one of 'European socialisation' planned by the EWL Secretariat. The staff aims to disseminate EWL specific vocabulary and political positions through lobbying kits sent to the coordinations. These kits include draft lobbying letters aimed at national governments and lists of key arguments to use at national meetings to help disseminate a wide ranging Europeanized framework among the members. In addition, a seminar is traditionally planned during each EWL annual meeting that aims to achieve a similar dissemination, as was the case in 1998 when the EWL Secretariat organized a European Summit on Women Employment. The European socialisation described is also due to the characteristics and proactivity of some EWL Secretariat's employees (individual factors), leading to improved national adaptation to EU methods and better knowledge of EWL vocabulary in both countries. For instance, to circulate the EWL's abolitionist position successfully, an EWL secretariat employee travelled to Paris during the French coordination's 2013 annual meeting to advise the French feminists to talk about prostitution as 'violence against women' and never to associate it with 'human trafficking' thereby creating a 'discourse opportunity structure' for the members to adopt (Koopmans and Statham 1999: 228). This same staff member frequently attended a Belgian coordination's working group (unrelated to the EWL) on violence against women where she proposed the drafting of a document inspired by work she had done for the EWL. Although she claims she completed this work in her personal time and not as an EWL staff member, she nevertheless disseminated the EWL ideological arguments and its specific language.

Top-down impacts are often studied in the literature, for instance, the disciplining effect of EU funds in matters of representation for EU-level CSOs (Sanchez Salgado 2014). This article goes further in explaining how representation practices are actually changing in national coordinations, taking into account a variety of factors. While both French and Belgian coordinations are affected by certain European factors, the degree to which they are affected differs according to other (mostly bottom-up) factors. For example, if the EWL's voting mechanism does foster relationships between

coordinations, these relationships also depend on the delegates' characteristics and skills that can help or prevent them from relating to and negotiating with others. To give one example, a French delegate who was fluent in Spanish due to growing up in South America caused the French coordination to get on well with the Spanish coordination and sit at the same table during the EWL meetings. Similarly, with regards to European socialisation, other individual factors (such as the delegates' capacity to incorporate new practices or their perceptions that their role is important enough to invest time in it) interact with other bottom-up organisational factors (national delegates' designation procedures or legal time 'in office') to explain how and why the French coordination is affected differently from the Belgian.

Anyway, if there are no cultural factors described in this top-down causal path explaining similar changes in both coordinations, it seems to be because this type of factor only contributes to distinguish France from Belgium.

Passive or Proactive? How to Distinguish the French from the Belgian CSOs in their Relations with the EWL

The main finding of an actor-centred sociological approach on Europeanization is that EU impact on the national CSOs' structures, action repertoires and identities differ from country to country. Being more proactive on European issues and participating in EWL work, the French coordination has a different relationship with the EWL than the Belgium platform. However, the other two causal paths identified above can explain these proactivity differences by detailing the combinations of organisational, individual and cultural factors.

Firstly, to come back to the differential outcomes observed, the French coordination is more proactive as its EWL delegates made bigger efforts to fulfil their 'mediator' roles. While the Belgian coordination's paid staff understands the Belgium EWL delegates' mission to be to take a seat at the EWL meetings once a year (leaving the day-to-day work and the contacts with the EWL Secretariat to them), the French EWL delegates showed enthusiasm towards Europeanizing their structure and its members. In 2011 for example, the EWL secretariat staff asked their national coordinations to modify their own structures in order to enhance EWL internal communication. To that end, the secretariat recommended the creation within coordinations of an EWL team whose role would be to translate EWL documents from English into their own national language to better disseminate knowledge of the EWL's processes and its tools. The French coordination tried to follow this recommendation in 2013 by creating a strategic cell within which national delegates to EWL meetings would present the EWL's tools and priorities to the heads of the CLEF working committees. No such initiative was implemented in Belgium. This French pro-activism is also present in the CLEF's will to put forward numerous motions at the EWL's General Assembly. Indeed, within the twenty years' worth of motions' archives analysed, the CLEF proposed 22 while the Belgian coordination proposed only seven. The CLEF also frequently invites EWL staff members to France to give training sessions on EU Affairs, but the Belgian coordination does not. Finally, the exchange of good practices only succeeded in inspiring such organisation in some countries. It was in fact the French coordination that proposed the creation of a European Centre on Violence against Women, founded by the EWL in March 1997 (Ramot 2006: 88). This European centre in turn produced related synergies on national agendas and structures as shown by the creation of national centres on violence against women in Ireland and Denmark in 2002, then in Greece and France in 2003. This trend however did not spread uniformly since such centres were not created everywhere. In Belgium for instance, there exists only a federal institute for equality between men and women, created in 2002, and no specific observatory on violence against women.

Secondly, differential impacts of Europeanization through proactivity can be explained thanks to three types of factors: organisational, cultural and individual.

To begin with, the CLEF is more proactive due to organisational factors. Indeed, this smaller ad hoc organisation with clear objectives regarding the EWL and mostly voluntary workers is more proactive than older organisations which may have a large pool of paid administrative staff but for which the EWL is but one membership among others. In line with this, even though the Belgian coordination was better at producing deliverables and organising conferences, most of them were not EWL or even Europe-related during my internship there. This Belgian platform then had 15 workers while there was only one subsidised position at the French Coordination, created in 1991 specifically to join the EWL. And the elected CLEF members were and are acutely aware that their coordination exists in order to work as the EWL's intermediary in France. They described the CLEF's main objectives as such. For instance, the French employee told me: 'we represent the EWL in France. We are a part of it, its voice here' (informal exchange with the French employee, 2015, my translation). By contrast, I never heard the Belgian actors describing their platform (created in 1905[3] as a 'National Women's Council' which only later assumed 'EWL coordination' status) in relation to the EWL. The meaning given to the EWL membership varies between France and Belgium, which illustrates how the coordinations' own histories have helped build, through a cognitive socialisation process, different organisational cultures. Each platforms' staff and members have a different perception of what the EWL coordination's objectives are and what the role of its delegates is. Accordingly, French pro-activism clearly stands out when looking at the two coordinations' websites. The CLEF website does not present any historical national heroine, while the CFFB website presents itself primarily as a member of the International Women's Council, with its own national history and memory dating to before European institutions even existed. It thus puts emphasis on the Belgian feminist 'pioneer' who created the Belgium Women's Council: Marie Popelin (CFFB website). It may therefore be the absence of a pre-EWL organisational history that motivated the French coordination's members to take a more active part in the EWL story than the Belgians. Finally, another organisational factor explaining the CLEF's proactivity is its geographic dispersion. In such a context, proactivity seemed necessary for the new coordination as it exists as a vast feminist associative map of geographically spread out French CSO offices together with a remote EWL office. By contrast, the old Belgian Council is better known by feminist grassroots CSOs than the CLEF is in France because of the smaller Belgian territory and the historical geographic concentration of feminist CSOs' offices in two addresses in Brussels: *rue Blanche* and *rue du Méridien* at *Amazone* House, where the EWL Belgian coordination has its office along with twenty other feminist CSOs. Importantly, the Belgian Council office is only two streets away from the EWL office. Thanks to this proximity, Belgians were naturally invited by the EWL secretariat to join in the protests organised by the European staff in Brussels in 2015. To compensate for the geographical distance creating gaps in media coverage and a lack of proximity to the grassroots and the EWL office, the French coordination needs to be more proactive than the Belgian in answering EWL questions and becoming more EU-orientated.

The French proactivity may also be explained by cultural factors, as delegate positions and proactive reactions may vary according to the national political culture or the ideological positions expressed by its government.

> The EWL staff asked all the coordinations to translate our abolitionist video into their mother tongue. Not many of the EWL employees speak Dutch but the NVR (Belgian Flemish coordination) translated the sentence 'prostitution is violence' into Dutch. Then I received the Netherlands' translation and I saw that it's different from what the NVR did. They added discreetly a word to mean '*Forced* prostitution is violence! (informal exchange with an EWL staff member, 2016, my translation).

This quote shows that the Dutch EWL delegate's position is similar to her country's on prostitution and that her proactive strategy to bypass the opposing stance of EWL is to discreetly re-appropriate the motion. By contrast, Belgium took a more open but less proactive reaction to a disagreement with an EWL position by accepting the opposition and remaining on the sidelines at the EU level. For instance, I observed two different ideological positions on surrogacy within the Belgian coordination. With the EWL, the French-speaking branch stands against surrogacy, while the Flemish branch is in favour of it. The Flemish delegate therefore notified the EWL staff that the Flemish branch of the coordination would not act on this stand and instead would let the EWL and its Walloon counterpart do so. This passive stand is what some Belgian feminists I worked with called the 'Belgian consensual spirit', referring to arrangements or policies of small steps. These culturally-inherited habits, in a country where three linguistic communities coexist and where the feminist movement appeared in a more moderate way than in France, translate to fewer decisions and a slower decision process. Indeed, Belgian feminism appeared in a stable political context, unlike in France with 'the revolutionary feminist traditions of 1789, 1830, 1848' (Gubin, Piette and Jacques 1997: 36; 66). Without these revolutionary phases, Belgian feminism, more linked to political parties and Christianity, seems 'quiet, dull, less visible' (Gubin, Piette and Jacques 1997: 66). By contrast, the 'French spirit of revolution and protest' – described by the international press (as *The Guardian*'s article entitled 'Why do the French protest so much?' in February 2016) and to which some French feminists I met during my internship at the CLEF referred[4] – may play a role in the French proactivity. This 'protester spirit' appears to be confirmed by official statistics[5] (ETUI 2016) which consider France the country with the most numerous strikes. In addition, many CLEF representatives have referred to a historical 'fear of losing control of the feminist fight to politicians' or an excessively powerful and professionalised secretariat. While the Belgians seemed to consider this professionalisation to be part of the EWL's success, the fear of it led the French coordination to develop more horizontal projects with other coordinations and without the secretariat's help:

> That seems great to do things, not only in a vertical way through the EWL, but also between us directly because we (CSOs members) are supposed to decide. I am sometimes afraid that the EWL will become too professional because it will then be more distant. Now, we are working directly with the Germans on an experts' exchange on 'women and cities' (informal exchange with a French coordination member, 2015, my translation).

There are possibly also important individual factors involved, since the French proactivity also depends on specific individual profiles. For instance, if the French coordination was a central actor in the vote of the abolitionist motion at the EWL, it is partly because of Denise Fuchs. This English teacher was elected to the EWL presidency from 1998 to 2003. During that period, she was seconded by the French Ministry of Education to the EWL. This unusual status gave her enough time and financial resources to push through a draft motion written by the EWL staff on the abolition of prostitution, to set up a strategy with the French delegate and to convince the other EWL delegates.[6] It is worth noting that such individual factors seem less relevant in Belgium because the other factors (cultural and organisational) are less relevant. If individuals have little incentive to engage in a proactive Europeanization process, it matters less if they have the language skills, the time, finances or even the personal connections to do so.

Furthermore, just as individual factors are subject to changes, so are outcomes. Accordingly, as the relationship between the EWL and its French coordination has recently become somewhat tense, the French coordination has adopted a less proactive attitude. This could be explained by an evolution of the individual profile of the French coordination's delegates and presidents.

> [Current CLEF president and delegate to the EWL meetings:] We have several project managers in the EWL staff who are very professional women. But when we meet in annual meetings, there is a lot of friction between the staff and the elected group'.
>
> [Previous CLEF delegate to the EWL meetings]: 'Really? We've never known of that kind of relationship with the staff in my time.'
>
> (Interview with two CLEF members, 2013, my translation).

The first French delegates appear to have had a better socialisation experience at the EWL than current delegates. Holders of generalist degrees from French 'Grandes Écoles' and prestigious universities (Science Po, Cambridge, *École Nationale d'Administration*) travelled a lot, were multilingual and worked for ministries and parties on EU and UN-related issues directly with the EWL 'founding mothers'. By contrast, the current delegates to the EWL meetings have vocational/practical degrees (social worker, business or librarian trainee) and are in some cases not even fluent in English, the EWL working language. The French coordination even chose a woman without previous European experience and with very limited English to become its delegate to the EWL meetings for six years. When other delegates highlighted the importance of lobbying work during coffee breaks and meals around the meetings, she was in fact unable to take advantage of these windows of opportunity and had difficulties communicating with the other delegates during working groups, where interpreters were not present. The previous French delegates belonged to an elite microcosm similar to that of the EWL founding mothers and understood the importance of feminist institutionalisation and professionalisation. By contrast, the recent French appointed delegates have seemed threatened by the EWL staff's professionalisation and proactivity, something that is not noticeable in the Belgian coordination. For instance, in order to be more efficient, some EWL staff members reach out to powerful national feminists with whom they have close relationships but who are, however, not members of any EWL national coordination. This shortcut has, as a consequence, made the coordination members feel useless and excluded from the network, resulting in them being less proactive. Several members of the French coordination have indeed expressed their feeling of being 'excluded' by over-controlling members of staff on some issues. An example of this is a paid EWL Manager who, in order to disseminate the EWL's abolitionist position, chose to work with her boyfriend; an important manager of the French abolitionist CSO Le Mouvement du Nid, not a member of the EWL French Coordination. The French coordination did not appreciate being kept out of the French abolitionist fight and tensions rose between the Secretariat and the national coordination that led to a less efficient chain of practices and data circulation through the coordination down to the grassroots. This therefore impeded the Europeanization process and the organisation's proactivity.

The relationship between EWL staff and one national platform can therefore evolve. Europeanization may, for example, have been stronger before (and proactivity higher) at the CLEF because of the original delegates' strong former European socialisation, which could be a sign of delegates' profile normalisation.

I was not able to identify any variation of the delegates' status or skills in Belgium. Unlike the French delegates, the Belgians have good linguistic skills, which could be explained by cultural factors, since the historical linguistic division and the presence of EU institutions in Brussels forces Belgians to be multilingual. The evolution between previous and current delegates may also be more obvious in France because their first delegates had closer relationships to the six EWL founding mothers than the Belgians. Five out of the six founding mothers happened to be French.[7] It is therefore no surprise that the Europeanization of the French feminist movement through the EWL is very distinct from that of the Belgians. Whatever the reasons behind the dissimilar evolution of the Belgian profile, the French delegates' evolution is evidence that Europeanization's outcomes are impermanent. Thus,

Europeanization seems more complex because it may be affected by specific individuals and their skills, capacity and previous socialisation. It may be impacted by coordination members' individual choices to appoint bilingual and Europe-focused persons as 'delegates to the EWL meetings' or not, since there are no enforced guidelines in the EWL statutes for delegates' selection. These individual factors are therefore relevant when analysing the Europeanization process because they show its mutability. They show that Europeanization is a process that requires actors to learn what it means, care about its relevance and act upon it on organisational and cultural contexts. These actors can choose not to sustain Europeanization's reach at national level, leading to tensions and backlashes. However, the previous socialisation only seems to have a real impact when the structures and its priorities are clearly European.

CONCLUSION

In the case of the EWL, considered mostly as a top-down organisation, this article's contribution lies in its demonstration that the relationships between the umbrella organisation and its members (the national coordinations) can take multiple paths. This article also argues that these complex relationships are best understood from a more interactional, actor-centred, sociological perspective on Europeanization and by using a compared onboard research method that distinguishes three causal paths which combine three types of factors, to explain both similar and different top-down impacts between the French and Belgian EWL coordinations regarding their proactivity towards the EU and the EWL. The summary table below illustrates the three causal paths.

This approach distinguishing causal paths helps enrich Europeanization's organisational dimensions – already studied by Eva Karlberg and Kerstin Jacobsson (2015) – with individual and cultural elements. It helps bring national historical contexts and cultures back into the analysis. It even widens the Europeanization framework to include the analysis of dimensions such as socialisation, biography, storytelling of the national CSOs, memory and the meanings actors attribute to their involvement in European issues and in the EWL; dimensions not usually studied by scholars. Consequently, my main conclusion is that smaller structures with fewer paid employees and no storytelling or constructed memory about their national organisation and 'founding mothers' seem to have clearer objectives in relation to the EWL and make more efforts to adapt to the EU level, to integrate the European socialisation and to become EWL 'mediators'. By contrast, bigger, emblematic and well institutionalised structures at the national level tend to take this EU mediator label for granted due to their national standing. Yet they do not seem to prioritise this role in actions. Thus, the relevance of cultural and individual factors depends on this organisational factor, since the previous European socialisation of actors seems to have a real incidence only when the priority of the structure is clearly European.

Further, because of these organisational, cultural and individual factors, the effects and outcomes of Europeanization are multiple: I witnessed elements that were truly 'Europeanized' and others which displayed contradicting national perseverance, or even decreased Europeanization compared to before. Thus, Europeanization is not immutable, as it relies on individual and cultural factors as much as on organisational causes.

Summary Table. Three Causal Paths Combining Three Types of Factors to Explain the French and Belgian Specific Relations with the EWL

Outcomes	Top-Down Causal Path Both coordinations are impacted by European factors.	Proactive Causal Path The French coordination has adopted a proactive stand towards the EU/EWL.	Passive Causal Path The coordination has not adopted a proactive stand (in Belgium) or is adopting a less proactive stand than before (in France).
	Types of Factors		
Organisational	The EU funds demanding more representation of old, migrant or poor women disciplined all national coordinations. The EU enlargement changes the EWL voting mechanism, which previously fostered horizontal networking between coordinations.	Smallest ad hoc coordinations, with clear objectives regarding the EWL and mostly voluntary workers, are more proactive towards the EU/EWL. The geographic distance from the EWL secretariat and from the grassroots CSOs (in a vast country) makes proactivity necessary.	Oldest coordinations with large, paid administrative staff and for which the EWL is only one membership among others are less proactive. The national office's geographic location near the EWL Secretariat and the small associative territory – where the CSOs are regrouped in few houses – does not stimulate the national coordinations' staff.
Cultural	Apart from a 'culture of consensus' that may come from the EU or be strengthened by the EU, I did not witness any European cultural background affecting outcomes similarly in both coordinations. The inter-cultural character of the EU seems to be the primary source of differences.	The 'French protester spirit' inspires proactivity. The French feminists' historical fear of losing control over the feminist fight to politicians or professionalised staff led them to develop more horizontal projects with other national coordinations.	The 'Belgian consensual spirit' implies fewer decisions and a slower decision-making process. Linguistic communities' divisions within a national coordination led to different ideological positions on important issues that made proactivity difficult.
Individual	The female elites who created the EWL at first imposed their model (white, rich, working, well-educated) to all the coordinations' members. Some EWL employees' features and proactivity led to a better national adaptation to the EU's methods and vocabulary.	Delegates socialised to Europe and politics through prestigious general studies in international relations or political science, multilingualism and jobs at ministries or linked to the EU or the UN make proactivity easier and more effective. Specific individuals' status and opportunities (such as being seconded from a ministry to the EWL) can give time and money to be proactive.	Delegates' previous socialisation which is not linked to the EU or to politics is an obstacle to the national coordinations' proactivity (practical studies and poor English). The EWL staff members' intimate relations with powerful feminists in the country but not affiliated to the national coordination make the coordination's members feel excluded from the network, so less proactive.

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ENDNOTES

[1] Kalsberg's definition was inspired by Göran Ahrne and Nils Brunsson (2005) who conceptualised umbrella organisations as 'meta-organisations' (organisation of organisations).
[2] These 40 women (employees of the EWL secretariat in Brussels and members of its French and Belgian coordinations) were interviewed between April 2013 and June 2017 for my PhD research. They consisted mostly of women elected to the national General Assembly for those within the coordinations and many were chosen to represent their coordination at the European EWL General Assembly. All the interviews quoted in this article were recorded and the respondents were informed that they may be used in the thesis and any publications related to this PhD.
[3] This national Council was divided in 1974 between a Walloon French-speaking branch (CFFB) and a Flemish Dutch-speaking branch (Vrouwenraad), but these two coordinating structures stood as one national coordination to be a member of the EWL and the International Women's Council.
[4] For instance, when *Charlie Hebdo* suffered a terrorist attack in January 2015, a French feminist following the news told me: 'Loyal to our French habits of protest, we will very soon be on the streets to defend the freedom of the press'. Later, talking about another country's recent backlash on women's rights, she said 'for that same issue, we French people would already have been on the streets'.
[5] The European Trade Unions Institute estimated that 139 working days were lost in France due to strikes for 1000 employees from 2005-2012, making France the first protester country, far from Belgium with its 71 days lost.
[6] This stand on prostitution was also possible because of the arrival at the EWL of the Scandinavian countries where an abolitionist law was being discussed.
[7] They are M. Devaud, J. Lansier, J. Chaton, I. de Lipkowski and J. Nonon.

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