The Europeanisation of the Swedish Women’s Movement
– A Case Study of the Swedish Women’s Lobby and its Member Organisations

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Abstract
This thesis investigates the Europeanisation of civil society at national level through a case study of the Swedish Women’s Lobby (SWL), an umbrella organisation which serves as the Swedish member of the Brussels-based European Women’s Lobby (EWL). Conceptualising umbrella organisations as ‘meta-organisations’, in Ahrne and Brunsson’s term, Europeanisation is seen as a process which imposes meta-organisational structures on domestic-level civil society. Based largely on semi-structured interviews, the aim of the study is thus to analyse in what ways the women’s movement in Sweden has been affected by the imposed meta-organisational structure. The findings show that while the SWL has been successful in establishing itself as the actor for the Swedish women’s movement, this success also brought with it some problems. The meta-organisational structure has had certain formalising and excluding effects, as well as bringing internal tensions due to overlapping activities and the desire to speak with one voice. Applying a meta-organisation perspective on the Europeanisation of domestic civil society is thus shown to be useful as it contributes an understanding of how the EU has an impact on inter-organisational relations among civil society organisations.

Key words: Europeanisation, women’s movement, meta-organisation, inter-organisational relations, Swedish Women’s Lobby, European Women’s Lobby

Sammanfattning

Nyckelord: europeisering, kvinnorörelsen, metaorganisation, inter-organisatoriska relationer, Sveriges Kvinnolobby, European Women’s Lobby
Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning
EU har visat sig ha inflytande inte bara på medlemsstaternas politik och ekonomi, utan även på dess civilsamhälle. En effekt av EU är att sociala rörelser och intressegrupper bildar transnationella paraplyorganisationer med kontor i Bryssel där de lobbar EU:s institutioner. Kvinnorörelsens paraplyorganisation, the European Women’s Lobby (EWL), har nationella medlemmar vilka i sin tur är paraplyorganisationer och samlar kvinnorörelsen i respektive land. Syftet med denna studie är att undersöka hur den svenska kvinnorörelsen har påverkats av EU genom bildandet av Sveriges Kvinnolobby, den svenska medlemmen i EWL. Eftersom Sveriges Kvinnolobby har organisationer som medlemmar är syftet även att se hur relationen ser ut inom Sveriges Kvinnolobby och om det uppstår några konflikter mellan lobbyn och dess medlemmar. För att ta reda på detta har jag intervjuat representanter för lobbyn och några av dess medlemsorganisationer. Resultaten visar att Sveriges Kvinnolobby idag är en etablerad aktör som ses som den svenska kvinnorörelsens samlade röst, men att det även har uppstått en del problem. Eftersom både lobbyn och dess medlemmar är organisationer med liknande mål tenderar lobbyn att ta över verksamheter från, och tala för, dess medlemmar vilket inte alltid uppskattas. Ett annat problem är att lobbyn har medlemsregler vilka till viss del exkluderar mer löst organisierade delar av kvinnorörelsen.

List of Abbreviations
CEDAW UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO Civil Society Organisation
CSW Commission on the Status of Women
DG Directorate General
EC European Commission
EP European Parliament
EU European Union
EWL European Women’s Lobby
GA General Assembly
MEP Member of the European Parliament
NGO Non-Governmental Organisation
SMO Social Movement Organisation
SWL Swedish Women’s Lobby
UN United Nations
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1. Introduction
The women’s movement in Sweden has seen some important changes in recent years. One of them is the emergence of a uniting nationwide umbrella organisation – the Swedish Women’s Lobby (SWL).¹ The SWL, which gathers nearly 40 women’s organisations, is the Swedish branch of the European Women’s Lobby (EWL), the principal European umbrella for women’s civil society organisations. One of the main driving forces behind the existence of the SWL can be seen to be the European Commission which initiated the creation of the EWL. Since the EU is widely considered to be suffering from a democratic deficit, the Commission is eager to involve civil society as a way to “connect Europe with its citizens” (EC, 2001:3; see also Strid, 2009:248). The Commission was also seeking to unite the diverse European women’s movement into one voice, which is a further reason why it initiated the creation of the EWL (Rolandsen Agustín, 2012:26; Strid, 2009:20). Given that the EWL in turn demands from its national members to be nationwide and representative umbrella organisations (Strid, 2009:158), and the fact that there was no such uniting umbrella in Sweden before, the coming into being of the SWL is an indirect consequence of the EU.

The EWL is today highly financially dependent on the EU as it receives around 80% of its budget from the Commission as a grant (EWL, 2013b). This gives the EWL the administrative capacity to hold an office in Brussels with several employees and to coordinate lobbying campaigns at different levels. Moreover, the EWL today has a privileged position both in relation to the Commission and the Parliament since the organisation is seen to represent women and women’s interests, and hence it “functions as an intermediary of interests between the EU level and the national level” (Strid, 2009:183;250). However, the EWL has also been accused of monopolising “the role of speaking on behalf of women” in the EU (Rolandsen Agustín, 2012:27). Furthermore, the status and funding of the EWL entails an institutionalisation and professionalisation of women’s interests at the EU level since the organisation with time has been found to adapt to the multi-level decision-making procedures of the EU system (Strid, 2009:257).

The EWL is a very typical case of how civil society, social movements and interest groups are pushed into adapting to the EU multi-level system by forming transnational Brussels-based

¹ Hereafter ‘the Lobby’ or ‘the SWL’
networks. As pointed out by Imig and Tarrow (2001:8;20) and Marks and McAdam (1999:104), the EU encourages civil society actors to perform elite lobbying rather than to protest as a form of collective action and, consequently, institutionalised transnational networks such as the EWL, focusing on interest representation in order to be accepted by the EU system are formed. A question here is what impact EU-level umbrellas have on domestic civil society, and more specifically what impact the EWL has on national women’s movements. Sofia Strid, who has written extensively on the EWL, suggests that the European umbrella organisation “has changed the way in which women organise on the national level” by introducing umbrella organisations and argues further that national branches and grassroots are being disciplined through the EWL statutes’ demands for representativeness (Strid 2009:186; 264). Strid, however, does not go into detail on what these changes has entailed because her focus is not on national coordinators. In fact, while scholars such as Strid (2009), Helfferich and Kolb (2001), Hoskyns (1991) orRolandsen Agustín (2012) have focused on the supranational level, there is a lack of research on the impact of the EWL on national level. Given this lack, Strid proposes the national co-ordinators as the object of future analysis, and asks: “[w]hat has the EWL meant for the organising of civil society on national level?” (Strid, 2009:264). In a Swedish context there are a few studies where the Swedish women’s movement is mentioned in relation to the EU, however this does not represent the main focus of the work (see for instance Bergqvist et al, 2007). Given this scarcity of research, this thesis will focus on the Swedish Women’s Lobby as a case of Europeanisation.

1.1 Civil Society and Europeanisation
Since the publication of the European Commission’s white paper on governance in 2001 (EC, 2001) stressing the importance of civil society, there has been a growth in scholarly research on how European integration affects civil society. Although a majority of this literature concentrates on European-level civil society actors, there is also an important amount of work focusing on the national level. As a point of departure, Warleigh (2001) gives an overview of the literature discussing NGOs as “key catalysts” for the Europeanisation of civil society. NGOs are seen as the link between EU institutions and citizens and thus as possible “educators” of EU policies. Warleigh is however sceptical and argues that NGOs suffer from a lack of internal democracy. Lobbying elites have too much of an impact and do not include their grassroots in their work sufficiently. What is more worrying, he argues, is that “NGO supporters do not actually want to undertake such a role” (Warleigh, 2001:635).
There is also a discussion on whether or not civil society and its actors have a “European dimension”, i.e. if they act at the European level, turn to European institutions and/or regularly deal with European issues. For instance, Sánchez-Salgado (2007:266) argues that civil society organisations’ European dimension depends on their interactions with EU institutions. Those organisations with more intense connections with the institutions have undergone a socialising process whereby they tend to share these institutions’ values and therefore adapt to the system. Moreover, Imig and Tarrow (2001:18) and della Porta and Caiani (2009:14) argue that social movement organisations are mainly Europeanised through domestication, meaning that they only target the EU indirectly through their nation state. The degree and nature of Europeanisation also depend on the actors’ organisational characteristics as well as on the type of state. Here, Klüver (2010) argues that actors in a corporatist and decentralised state will be less inclined to Europeanise. Also Saurugger (2007) has focused on national institutional contexts by looking at the so called democratic “misfit” between the French conception of civil society participation and that of the EU.

Another strand of research pays attention to the actors’ strategies and how they organise to gain influence, and asks whether or not they have any influence in EU policy making. Here, different ways or routes to the EU are mapped out for civil society actors. For instance, Ruzza and Bozzini (2008:297ff) identify four possible routes for these actors to get involved in EU politics: the traditional way involves domestic actors continuing to address their national institutions; the national route is instead used to influence EU policy in cases where the civil society actors see their national government as influential; the European route-up means that Brussels-based organisations participate at the EU level to influence EU policy; and lastly, through the European route-down the aim is to influence national decision-making procedures by participating at EU-level.

To conclude, the literature on the Europeanisation of domestic civil society mainly regards the conditions under which civil society actors Europeanise and the focus lies generally on the relationship between the domestic actors and the EU institutions. However, as pointed out by Eising (2007: 177f), what is missing is knowledge about internal dynamics of organisational relationships, i.e. in what ways the EU has had an impact on the relationship between different civil society organisations. Given that the issue of interest here regards what happens within the organisational landscape at domestic level due to the changes that EU brings, the inter-organisational focus brings questions about forms of cooperation, internal conflicts and
struggles between civil society organisations. This thesis will seek to fill this research gap through a case study of the Swedish Women’s Lobby and its member organisations.

1.2. Aim
Being an umbrella organisation gathering nearly 40 women’s organisations the Swedish Women’s Lobby can be understood as an ‘organisation of organisations’, or a meta-organisation in Ahrne and Brunsson’s (2008) term. As such the Lobby differs from organisations of individuals which indeed raises questions around intra- as well as inter-organisational dynamics. Given that there was no uniting umbrella before the Swedish accession to the EU, I see the coming into being of the Lobby as one of the effects of the EU. Conceptualised in terms of Ahrne and Brunsson’s meta-organisational perspective, I see the Europeanisation of the Swedish women’s movement as a process which imposes meta-organisational structures on domestic-level civil society. It is important to point out here that even though, in a Swedish context, the meta-organisational structure is common both among CSOs and other organisations without any influence from the EU, the case of the Lobby demonstrates how the EU imposes this structure when it otherwise would have been unlikely to exist. The general aim of this thesis is thus to analyse in what ways the women’s movement in Sweden has been affected by the imposed meta-organisational structure. More precisely, this thesis seeks to answer the following questions:

- What role did the EU play in the formation of the Swedish Women’s Lobby and what role has it continued to play in the Lobby’s position within the women’s movement in Sweden?
- What tensions are there within the Lobby and how can they be understood?

As a consequence the utility of applying a meta-organisational perspective on the Europeanisation of domestic civil society will be explored.

1.3. Disposition
The structure of this thesis will be as follows. Before presenting the study’s results, I give an overview of the literature on European-level women’s organisations and on the Europeanisation of the women’s movement in other countries; describe a theoretical framework mainly consisting of a meta-organisational perspective, in which dynamics and conflicts inherent in meta-organisations are identified; and then present the method applied. The main body of the thesis is a case study of the Swedish Women’s Lobby. An initial section sketches the formation of the Lobby and pinpoints the role of the EU within it. The second
part analyses the Lobby’s organisational structure and what this structure means for the Swedish women’s movement. The third section identifies possibilities and constraints of being a EWL national coordinator. Finally, I explore the internal dynamics of the Lobby by identifying conflicts, challenges and tensions in its relationship with its member organisations.

2. Previous Research
As previously stated, there is a lack of research on the effects of the EU on the Swedish women’s movement and its organisations. There are, however, a number of works on women’s organisations in other European countries and the impact of EU, as well as extensive work on transnational women’s organisations operating at the European level. This chapter will present an overview of these two areas of literature and draw conclusions on the impact of the EU on the women’s movement.

2.1. Women’s Networks at the European Level
Regarding the women’s movement, a significant part of the Europeanisation literature is European-level focused, analysing networks acting transnationally. The European Women’s Lobby (EWL) is, as mentioned, the strongest and most influential European-level civil society actor representing women and working for women’s rights and gender equality (Strid 2009:135). In an article from 1991, Catherine Hoskyns describes how the EWL was formed at a meeting in Brussels in 1990 after the idea of a European umbrella for women had started to grow already in the early 1980s due to the existence of the European Commission Youth Forum. At a seminar in 1987 the idea became reality when a group of women were chosen, by women within the Commission, to seek funds from the Commission for preparatory work (Hoskyns, 1991:67). The EWL was thus initiated from within the Commission and is still financed by it. According to Strid (2009:139), the EWL is a result of the Commission wanting *one* women’s organisation to deal with and it was thus initiated from above. The women within the Commission were however supported by women from national women’s civil society actors who believed that a unified EU-level lobby was needed for influence at domestic level (Strid, 2009:182). As we will see in the Swedish case, the Swedish Women’s Lobby was created in a similar way.

There is an issue over whether the EWL is institutionalised and even co-opted by the Commission. Strid (2009) argues that the EWL is the only women’s civil organisation which has managed to create a platform for women in Europe and the only one with a genuine
influence vis-à-vis EU institutions and impact on EU policies. This is, for instance, due to being formally and hierarchically organised with actors at both sub- and supranational levels in all EU member states which fits the EU multi-level policy game. Barbara Helfferich and Felix Kolb (2001) argue that the EWL’s success is a result of its “multilevel action coordination”. As an example they point to the EWL campaign prior to the new EU treaty in 1996 which they consider had an impact on the negotiations. The strategy of the EWL was not only to focus on the EU institutions but to simultaneously lobby member-state actors, and consequently they mobilised their national co-ordinators which then lobbied their own governments, members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and citizen groups (Helfferich & Kolb, 2001:158). The influence of the EWL is also attributed to the paid multilingual staff in the Brussels-based secretariat, membership monitoring and a formal process whereby demands are being aggregated through the different levels – from the grassroots to the General Assembly. In the eyes of the Commission (and other EU institutions), the EWL functions as an intermediary between the EU and member-state level grassroots, as well as contributing to the Commission’s legitimacy through representing women. For the EWL, the position entails influence. There is however a trade-off for this elevated position. Although the EWL is not co-opted by the Commission, it has come to be both institutionalised and professionalised, according to Strid (2009).

The first way in which the EWL is institutionalised is the fact that “the EWL has to be open, transparent, democratic and accountable to its members” (Strid 2009:258), which has pushed it into monitoring its members to ensure the representativeness demanded by the EU, and it also controls the form and structure of the national-level members. Secondly, with the huge grants comes the price that the EWL has to present an annual work programme which has to be approved by the Commission, making long-term planning difficult. There is also the possibility of a moderation of demands considered too radical due to the request for the annual work programme. Strid (2009: 258) argues demands are being moderated, though not through the EWL leaders but by the members themselves. She calls this “self-moderation”: the organisation structure entails a mechanism whereby demands are being filtered through several steps and levels before becoming a motion which can be adopted, or not, by the General Assembly. Thirdly, and as noted already at the start by Hoskyns (1991:68), the EWL has some negative effects on diversity through its demands for organised structure and thus excluding “any direct representation of poor women or of black and ethnic minority women who are not organized in that way”. Furthermore, Strid (2009:248ff) even argues that the
EWL has come to function as a “gatekeeper”, constraining other women’s representation and demands. For instance, the European Forum of Muslim Women (EFoMW), basing their identity on the double discrimination Muslim women experience, felt it was not accepted by the EWL and has to date not been able to co-operate with the EWL (Stubbergaard, 2013).

This inability to represent a diversity of women is something also noted by others, especially researchers focusing on Eastern Europe. The EWL has been criticised for not being inclusive enough and not being able to understand women’s issues and situations in former socialist countries, which has led to new European networks such as the Karat Coalition, the Central and Eastern European Women’s Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASTRA), and the Network of East-West Women (NEWW) (Hašková, 2005:1103f; Roth, 2007:471, see below). Lise Rolandsen Agustín (2012:24) argues there is “a struggle over meaning” between different civil society actors, as they strive to be seen as legitimate actors representing women and thereby gaining resources and the right to define women’s interests. Other women’s networks – such as European Women Lawyers’ Association (EWLA), New Women for Europe (NWFE), Black European Women’s Council, or the European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW) – challenge each other since they all try to get their voices heard by the EU institutions and claim to represent women and women’s interests. The struggle between the privileged EWL and other women’s transnational networks pinpoints the problem of representing “women” when not all women share the same identity or interests, as well as stressing the problematics which the EU creates when preferring to have (and supporting) only one interlocutor between itself and women as citizens. However, the EWL has seen its privileged position challenged lately by the more conservative NWFE whose focus is on family and “pro-life” issues. NWFE have managed to gain some expert status through their conservative allies in the Parliament, following the increase in conservative MEPs after the 2004 EU enlargement (Rolandsen Agustín, 2012:32). Since the EWL has been the main consultative actor on women’s rights and gender equality issues for the Parliament, as well as having earmarked funding, the NWFE used the claim for democratic pluralism to obtain both funding and status as a representative of women (Rolandsen Agustín, 2012). Even though the EWL remains the main actor for the Parliament and the Commission, the confrontation made by the NWFE reveals the challenge for the EWL to be both inclusive, representing women from different regions, cultures and religions, and to act as a united force for women’s rights.
Another issue is that of which possibilities and constraints there are for women’s organisations participating at the EU level. In an earlier study, Rolandsen Agustín (2008) analyses transnational civil society actors and their possibilities of “substantively” representing women, meaning that evaluating traditional sites and actors such as institutions of representative democracy and politicians is not enough. Instead, by analysing the consultation process prior to the Green Paper on “Equality and non-discrimination in an enlarged European Union” in 2004, Rolandsen Agustín found that there was a limited and short time-period for input which meant that the transnational civil society organisations did not have enough time for internal debates to ensure that their input actually represented their members’ opinions. Consequently, transnational networks such as the EWL could not consult with their national constituencies (national co-ordinators and their members) when giving input to the Commission. Moreover, the Commission preferred online questionnaires to written contributions as they are more quantifiable and manageable which further reduced the organisations’ chance of substantial influence since it did not allow them to fully explain their standpoints. Another constraint was resources, both in the form of financial assets and of organisational infrastructure, since only large and well established organisations were able to participate in the consultation. Consequently, the conditions for participating in the EU institutional context limited the organisations’ possibilities for substantial representation of women (Rolandsen Agustín 2008:508f; 514f).

The EWL has thus managed to establish itself as a representative and voice of women within the EU and has a privileged position vis-à-vis EU institutions, principally the Commission. Although not necessarily co-opted by the Commission, the EWL is indeed an institutionalised actor initiated from above which has adopted its organisational structures in accordance with the logic of the multilevel structures of the EU. Moreover, it has benefited from the EU consultation processes while other, less resourceful organisations are disadvantaged. However, there is the question how much it manages to actually represent its grassroots when its hierarchical structures entail a mechanism whereby demands are being moderated, and when the Commission does not allow it to confer with its national constituency during the consultation process. Furthermore, the EWL has been criticised for its lack of diversity, and its privileged position may have a marginalising effect on other women’s EU-level organisations. Turning to the case of the Swedish Women’s Lobby, the question is whether we can see the same tendencies or not. Do these drawbacks of the EWL trickle down to its national coordinators?
2.2. Europeanisation of Domestic Women’s Movements

Turning to the national level, there is a focus on the concept *political opportunity structures* in the Europeanisation literature. The idea is that the EU provides domestic civil society actors with resources such as new arenas for deliberation, policy instruments, and the possibility for networking and funding. These possibilities allow the civil society actors to empower themselves vis-à-vis the national state. Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) use the term *boomerang pattern* to explain how intergovernmental organisations (such as the EU) may empower domestic NGOs: if an NGO is obstructed or ignored at home it can turn to other states and/or transnational networks and through them “try to bring pressure on their states from outside” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998:12). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the object of research here has lately been civil society actors in some of the new member states in Eastern Europe.

By studying women’s organisations in three new member states – Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia – Hana Hašková (2005), Silke Roth (2007), Imogen Sudbery (2010), and Ondřej Císař and Kateřina Vráblíková (2010) draw similar conclusions. One common conclusion is that during the accession period the women’s organisations saw some political opportunity structures opening up since they could apply for EU funding, build coalitions and seek allies in other countries as well as through transnational advocacy networks – such as the EWL, or the Karat coalition – but also because they gained access to EU institutions. Most importantly however, the women’s movement actors were empowered by the EU through their national governments’ ambitions to live up to EU standards and thus there was an incentive to, as well as an acceptance of, gender-sensitive legislation which earlier had not been considered an issue (Roth, 2007:476; Sudbery, 2010:143f). In the Czech Republic women’s issues and gender equality had been seen as irrelevant political problems by the political elite, and the demands by women’s organisations had even been seen as communism “in disguise” (Císař & Vráblíková, 2010:214). However, these “boomerang” effects which at first empowered the women’s organisations soon faded out since the women’s organisations lost their leverage when their countries eventually joined the EU. The urge to live up to EU demands had only been “window-dressing” since concrete changes were few and real impact on gender equality issues was limited, and the EU did not hold their governments accountable for not conforming to the aspect of gender equality in the *acquis communautaire* (Císař & Vráblíková, 2010:214; Hašková, 2005:1087ff; Roth, 2007:477).
Another common conclusion in the case of these three new member states is that EU funding turned out to be problematic. First, previously important international donors (such as the US) withdrew from the new member states since they assumed their financial support would no longer be necessary when there was EU funding to apply for and therefore turned their attention elsewhere, such as Turkey. Second, EU funding has led to a greater divide between weaker and stronger women’s organisations. Due to the strict demands by the EU, smaller organisations found it difficult to apply for EU funds while already larger NGOs or umbrellas with the experience of grant writing were empowered by and benefitted from the EU funds. Consequently, Roth (2007:474) argues, EU membership led to a “greater differentiation within the women’s movement in the new member states”. Hašková (2005:1089f) argues that those women’s groups and organisations in the Czech Republic which were willing or able to accept EU demands have started to professionalise in terms of formally registered organisations with a staffed office, and equipped with expertise, which in turn has strengthened them both in resources and influence, while others, “unable or unwilling to professionalise” were marginalised (Hašková, 2005:1094). Čisař and Vráblíková (2010:213), who draw heavily on Hašková’s work, further maintain that EU funding also entails a shift in the women’s organisations’ agendas to correspond with EU priorities, i.e. gender mainstreaming. In Poland, Sudbery (2010:151ff) found similar effects in terms of greater differentiation but she also points out that those obtaining funding felt restricted since the funds were connected to pre-determined projects aimed at implementing an EU agenda.

There are, additionally, some interesting findings in the case of the Czech Republic and the EWL. Hašková (2005:1102ff) points out the ambivalent relationship Czech women’s organisations have with the EWL. On the one hand they express the importance of the EWL and a belief in its ability to have real influence at EU level. But on the other hand there is a general sense of alienation from the EWL. Hašková explains this distance by the fact that Czech, and other east European, women’s organisations joined the network NEWW and the Karat coalition already in 1991, while the EWL became an important actor relatively late. Consequently, Czech women’s organisations tend to identify more with these regional networks despite the fact that both NEWW and Karat are, in comparison with the EWL,

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2 Gender mainstreaming can briefly be understood as the integration of gender equality aspects in all policy areas. For more information and a clear overview of this concept, see Jeff Hearn’s preface in Lindholm, Kristina (ed.) (2012). Gender Mainstreaming in Public Sector Organisations: Policy Implications and Practical Applications. Lund: Studentlitteratur
evidently less powerful and influential. The Czech women’s organisations also criticise the EWL’s monopoly and some criticise the EWL for being exclusive and not representing their interests (Hašková, 2005). Moreover, eastern European women’s organisations felt the EWL did not help them enough during the accession period, which was a result of the EWL’s lack of a mandate from the Commission to spend funding on non-member states, and thus were constrained in their eastern enlargement activities (Roth, 2007:471f). Still the EWL membership is seen as important since “[i]t is better to be in than to be out” (Interviewee cited in Hašková, 2005:1103). Císař and Vráblíková (2010:215f) also point to the impact the EWL has had on the inter-organisational relationship between domestic women’s organisations.

Before the Czech EU membership, women’s organisations had not managed to come together and cooperate, but when the EWL membership became a question a variety of Czech women’s organisations united under a new umbrella, the Czech Women’s Lobby, in 2005. An interesting effect of this is that the formerly excluded and unaccepted Czech Union of Women suddenly became recognised and even one of the most important organisations within the Czech women’s sector due to its large membership, which the EWL saw as an advantage. Thus, the EWL “introduced motives for cooperation” and to a certain extent changed the power structures within the Czech women’s movement (Císař and Vráblíková, 2010:217).

On the Western parts of Europe the scope of literature is narrower. A while ago now Charlotte Bretherton and Liz Sperling (1996) studied women’s voluntary organisations in the UK and their relation to the EU. Their results showed that there was a relatively weak focus on the EU level and EU policy was in general not considered to be very relevant for women; instead, women’s organisations tended to turn to UK decision-makers, even where issues fell within EU competence. Even though the national platform NAWO, the English representative in the EWL, was seen as important to the women’s organisations by providing them with information, they found it difficult to actually understand what was going on at the EU level and showed little interests or involvement in EU matters. NAWO, on the other hand, claimed to be very active and influential at the EU level given that they saw the EU policy process to be very important for women (Bretherton & Sperling, 1996:496). Hence there was a gap between the local and EU levels and consequently the authors argue for a “more effective inclusion of grassroots women’s groups in EU-focused networking” (Bretherton and Sperling, 1996:502). Furthermore, they maintain that there are barriers to EU networking for domestic (local) women’s organisations in the form of inadequate resources and the nature of the EU policy process. Given the structure of the EU, which requires “co-ordinated action between

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like-minded groups across several Member States” who can lobby simultaneously at several levels, weak and informal women’s groups are distanced from the EU policy process. Another barrier was the UK government’s relationship and attitude to the EU. Well known for trying to curb EU influence and repeatedly “opting out” of EU measures, the UK government made it uninteresting for the women’s organisations to lobby the EU when there was a great chance their government would “veto or fail to implement decisions” anyway (Bretherton and Sperling, 1996:504).

To conclude, Europeanisation entails incentives for women’s organisations to cooperate; formalisation in terms of professionalisation and “elitisation”; and may change inter-organisational power structures due to the push towards a greater emphasis on formalistic representation and unity when umbrella organisations are created. We have seen that the EU has a differentiating effect on the women’s movement, both domestically and at EU level, by creating lobbying elites while less formal and weaker women’s organisations or groups are marginalised. Even though Cisař and Vráblíková (2010) are to some extent an exception, there is a lack of more in-depth studies of how the EU may have an impact on social movements’ inter-organisational relations. Given that CSOs within most social movements come together under European-level umbrellas it becomes essential to understand the organisational impact of such participation, especially when national-level umbrellas are also formed in order to join the European umbrella. In this thesis, I intend to help fill in this research gap by studying the Swedish Women’s Lobby as a case of the Europeanisation of civil society in the sense of the EU imposing meta-organisational structures and by exploring the implications this has had on the relations between women’s organisations in Sweden.

3. Theoretical Framework  
Given that the Swedish Women’s Lobby is a coalition of different organisations trying to achieve something together through a common platform, the case of the Europeanisation of the Swedish women’s movement calls for an understanding of inter- and intra-organisational dynamics. This chapter therefore presents a theoretical framework comprising theories and perspectives from both the organisation and the social movement research fields. It starts off with a presentation of Ahrne’s view of society as located between organisations (Ahrne, 1990; 1994). In order to understand the mechanisms of inter-organisational relations in the case of the Swedish Women’s Lobby, this will be followed by organisational perspectives on coalition participation within social movements, as well as a theory of meta-organisations.
3.1. The Organisational Landscape

Göran Ahrne (1990; 1994) argues that society as a whole can be understood as interaction between organisations and as individuals’ relations to organisations. He applies a rather broad definition of organisations including business enterprises, voluntary associations, states, and even families. Moreover, instead of using the term society, Ahrne prefers to apply the metaphor social landscape which allows for a more boundless understanding of society since the “landscape is not a unit” (Ahrne, 1990:23). The most important component of a social landscape is the organisation; when different organisations interact in different types of constellations people are affected since social processes “happen within and between organizations” (Ahrne, 1994:114). Consequently, changes in the relations and interactions between organisations bring about social change (Ahrne, 1990:139; 1994:115). The metaphor of the social landscape also involves other useful geographic and spatial terms such as terrain, open (social) spaces or glades. If we think of society as a social landscape, we can imagine that there are more or less open spaces in the terrain depending on whether something has already been organised or not. Consequently, the creation of new organisations or the expansion of already existing ones depends on whether there are any openings in the landscape or if other organisations have already occupied it. In the latter, there is a case of “crowding out” (Ahrne, 1994:154; Ahrne & Papakostas, 2002:110). The growth and spread of organisations can thus to a certain extent be explained by the existence of open spaces, or glades, in the social landscape. The open spaces offer opportunities for innovation; however, even though these spaces are normally necessary they are not enough for new organisations to emerge: material and human resources are also needed (Ahrne & Papakostas, 2002:107). Moreover, they point out that open spaces are not empty, they are simply not completely full; hence there is space for more. Also, it is not evident that an open space is visible but they are all latent possibilities. Ahrne and Papakostas also make a distinction between free and protected spaces. Free spaces are not known by, or of interest for, established organisations, while protected spaces are not organised but protected by established organisations from other forms of organising because of their unwillingness for change or their fear of the emergence of new organisations which could compete with them or in other ways threaten their existence (Ahrne & Papakostas, 2002:112;116).

Other central concepts for Ahrne are centripetal and centrifugal forces which are used to explain cohesion in an organisation: why members of organisations stay or leave. One important factor is resources. It is for instance easier to leave a less influential organisation
than an influential one. Likewise, it is easier to leave if there are alternatives. Consequently, an organisation with monopoly within a certain field as well as large resources is characterised by strong centripetal forces. Another advantage is strong institutional or monetary support from another organisation since “such support can keep organizations going even without a high level of commitment from affiliates and even without much control or sanctioning capacity” (Ahrne, 1994:93). Conversely, an organisation “with few common resources, a weak internal culture, unclear aims and low monitoring and sanctioning capacities” suffers from centrifugal forces which are common among newly created organisations (Ahrne, 1994:94). Ahrne also points out that there is always an inherent centrifugal force in organisations since individual members always strive for independence and self-determination which of course oppose the will of any organisation striving for some sort of control and influence over its members. Thus, organisations strive to find a balance between the two forces.

Following this I will seek to understand the creation of the Swedish Women’s Lobby in terms of free and protected open spaces in the social landscape since these terms allows for an understanding of the emergence of new organisations. I will also seek to apply the concepts of centripetal and centrifugal forces and the factors behind them to understand the resilience of the Lobby and the position it has today.

3.2 Social Movement Coalitions
The advantage of applying an organisational view upon social movements is that it acknowledges that a movement is not homogenous, as it comprises a diversity of organisations with differing goals. Consequently, this view allows for tensions, conflicts, and competition within a specific movement. In their 1979 article, the resource mobilisation theorists Mayer Zald and John McCarthy point out that social movements are not “unified affairs” but a collection of social movement organisations (SMOs), and groups, competing for resources, legitimacy and constituents’ support (Zald & McCarthy, 1979:1). However, being competitors, SMOs within a social movement may also cooperate and share resources. Thus, by presenting a number of hypotheses based on organisation theory, Zald and McCarthy try to grasp the inter-organisational relationships between SMOs. Firstly, they argue that SMOs need monetary resources to be able to work towards their goals. Given that SMOs may share similar goals and focus on the same issues, they will share to a certain extent the same possible supporters and thus compete over “symbolic dominance” to gain resources and
support (Zald & McCarthy, 1979:5). Consequently, when the availability of resources decreases, competition and conflict will intensify. Similarly to business firms on a market, there will be a “slight product differentiation” among SMOs competing with each other (Zald & McCarthy, 1979:7). By this they mean that the competing SMOs tend to differentiate themselves by offering slightly different goals, tactics, strategies and targets and consequently, if a SMO expands its agenda, it might enter into competition with organisations which it did not compete with before.

Secondly, SMOs also try to obtain funds and influence the state. Here, the competition is mostly based on the claim for legitimacy. Since authorities tend to prefer less radical demands they will see some SMOs as more legitimate spokespersons than others which may create conflict over who is a more legitimate representative of the constituency. Thirdly, there is however a “relative lack of conflict” and instead a relatively high degree of cooperation among SMOs which calls for an explanation (Zald & McCarthy, 1979:11ff). SMOs can cooperate in more or less formal and more or less long-lasting forms ranging from ad hoc temporary and small exchanges to the setting up of a joint organisation with its own personnel and action program which gives it some autonomy. It is more likely that SMOs pursuing the same goals manage to cooperate if they have “different but not contradictory” tactics than if they carry out similar activities (Zald & McCarthy, 1979:14ff). Moreover, there may be external incentives for SMOs to cooperate. Institutional funders such as the state are very likely to encourage such cooperation since, from their perspective, “conflict is counterproductive” while cooperation means efficiency (Zald & McCarthy, 1979:20). Consequently, coalition grants may be provided to persuade SMOs into cooperation. From an efficiency point of view it would seem an advantage if cooperating SMOs merged into one organisation. This rationalisation would allow them to properly speak with one voice. However, SMOs do differ from other organisations since their focus is not efficiency and because they have a much stronger drive to organisational maintenance (Zald & McCarthy, 1979:21f). Zald and McCarthy (1979:22) also argue that it might be an advantage for a movement to have many and diverse organisations since it “allows for innovation in tactics and makes it difficult for authorities to target social control efforts”. Thus, mergers are rare within social movements while coalitions are common. Yet institutional funders prefer SMOs to join in alliances so that they know to whom to speak, and the SMOs themselves strive to present unity or the funders will point to divisions within the movement. Lastly, Zald and McCarthy (1979:24) identify the power imbalance present in these inter-organisational
relations and hold that collaborating SMOs sometimes want to take over each other’s fields or want to absorb each other. Thus, SMOs with common goals tend to end up in a complex situation: the need for cooperation collides with the individual organisation’s strive for its own autonomy and survival which brings about differentiation and competition.

Drawing on a resource mobilisation perspective, Suzanne Staggenborg (1986) discusses the relation between and within social movement organisations and argues that coalition work is problematic. However, she emphasizes the importance of the organisational environment and argues that actors such as counter-movements, government authorities or established interest groups impose obstacles and opportunities for SMOs. In line with this she claims that “...coalitions are most likely to form when either environmental opportunities or threats emerge” (Staggenborg, 1986:375, emphasis added). However, given that SMOs, just like any other organisation, strive for organisational maintenance they will compete for resources and try to distinguish themselves from others by claiming to be unique, which in turn will complicate and obstruct any long-term cooperation among them. Equally to Zald and McCarthy, Staggenborg (1986:384) discusses the extent of formalisation in coalitions and argues that if a coalition takes the form of a coalition organisation, i.e. a new organisation, or joint organisation in Zald and McCarthy’s words, this new organisation will strive for its own maintenance which further adds to the internal tensions. The difficulties increase because the coalition organisation will try to establish its own identity while its individual member organisations will protect their visibility. Meanwhile, since both the coalition and the participating organisations need resources, there will be a concern about member organisations not contributing enough, which further adds to the tensions (Staggenborg, 1986:384). However, inherent tensions can be reduced. Firstly, coalition success is more likely if the coalition organisation is kept rather informal which will reduce the worries about resources, or if external funding can be secured. Secondly, the coalition is more likely to survive if it focuses on “specific tasks such as lobbying that are too expensive for any one organization or on which high-resource organizations would prefer not to spend all of their resources” (Staggenborg, 1986:388).

Will Hathaway and David Meyer also focus on conflict within social movements as they criticise the view of coalitions as a tool for success; instead they ask what “potential negative consequences for individual organizations” coalitions may have (Hathaway & Meyer, 1993:157). Drawing upon both Zald and McCarthy and Staggenborg, they outline the
conflicting tendencies within a movement based on SMOs’ political goals and their organisational needs, and argue that “[c]oalition formation reflects the external environment”. When SMOs cooperate the goal is political influence and given that “numbers matter in any democratic polity”, joining forces and presenting a united front is essential (Hathaway & Meyer, 1993:160). However, given that an SMO competes with its political allies and “not with its political opponents”, it is not evident whether it should cooperate with them or not; however, this decision is very important since it sets the rules for its relations with its allies/competitors (Hathaway & Meyer, 1993:161). Furthermore, they argue that SMOs working on the same issues and striving to influence the government in a similar direction have incentives for both cooperation and competition since they both want to improve the possibilities for influence (goal) and to secure their own survival (organisational needs) (Hathaway & Meyer, 1993:162). Groups and organisations within the same movement need to differentiate themselves from each other yet at the same time agree upon broad common goals if they want to cooperate. Consequently, there are opposing forces within a movement coalition. In accordance with Zald and McCarthy they argue that there is product differentiation between SMOs within a movement, especially when resources within the sector are scarce. However, when there is a crisis within the movement, the organisations are more inclined to mobilise and cooperate. Similarly to Staggenborg, they also argue that a more informal coalition which keeps a low profile allows for potential internal tensions to be reduced and participating organisations do not need to compete with their coalition arrangement (Hathaway & Meyer, 1993:172). Thus, loose structures will contribute to coalition survival.

Following this I see the Lobby as an arena comprising SMOs which are political allies and share a general goal while they are at the same time possible competitors. The ambivalent and ambiguous situation they are in gives us an understanding of the difficulties involved in joining forces under a new organisation and the possible tensions which can arise. These strands of an organisational understanding of social movement coalitions share some common features of the following meta-organisation theory. They all try to explain the tensions arising from organisations both wanting to cooperate and remain independent. However, from meta-organisation theory we obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms behind these tensions, even though this theory has a more general focus comprising all types of organisations – such as international NGOs, the EU, trade association, and even sport federations.
3.3. Meta-Organisations
Göran Ahrne and Nils Brunsson (2008) distinguish organisations with organisations as members from organisations with individuals as members, and maintain that what the authors prefer to refer to as “meta-organisations” work under different conditions than do individual-based organisations and therefore their study requires its own theoretical framework.

Basing their meta-organisation theory on standard organisation theory, Ahrne and Brunsson argue that there is a new order created among organisations when a meta-organisation is formed as they have “constituted an environment for each other” (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:43). The environment is important to all types of organisation as they all try to influence and control their environment in one way or another. The establishment of a meta-organisation may therefore be seen as an attempt to influence parts of the environment as a new order is created when a number of organisations sharing some similarities need to cooperate as members in an association – the meta-organisation. The environment is otherwise difficult to exert influence upon and predict, but as other organisations such as the state, companies or NGOs, are part of one’s environment, the creation of a meta-organisation for a certain group of organisations limits the number of actors and creates a higher degree of order in one’s environment (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:64f).

In order to understand a meta-organisation such as the Lobby it is essential to understand its origin and reason for existing. According to the authors there are several different reasons for creating a meta-organisation. First, it might be necessary to improve the communication and interactions within a group of organisations. A meta-organisation can help them share information with each other and thereby increase their knowledge, but also facilitate collaboration as a meta-organisation “changes the condition of interaction”, for instance through rules, a new authority or joint resources (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:66f). Second, a meta-organisation allows organisations to join their forces and create a new and strong actor which coordinates and expresses the group’s shared opinions. This is commonly expressed as the strength of “speaking with one voice”. By joining forces and pooling resources, greater power to change the environment can be obtained which may be done through lobbying or campaigns as the aim is often to influence the rules of other organisations, the environment, in the name of its members’ interests (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:69). From a Europeanisation point of view, this might be important for the Swedish women’s movement since the EU tends to prefer a united voice when interacting with civil society. Third, meta-organisations
only accept organisations within a specific category – for instance, Swedish women’s NGOs – which may give its members a certain status and identity. Besides, the potential members are normally known in advance and in many cases the meta-organisation started at a conference to which all of them were invited (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2008:70;79). Consequently, a meta-organisation may create, reinforce or confirm an identity and by the limited membership it may also give those accepted as members a certain status as they are seen as “proper” organisations within a certain category. This occurs if the meta-organisation has managed to connect itself well enough to this certain category, and meta-organisations do in fact demonstrate a tendency to reach monopoly, which is why an organisation may decide to join only as a safeguard and on the basis of not wanting “to be left outside” (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:81;88). However, a meta-organisation might want more actors to be involved without diluting its own identity. This dilemma can be solved by allowing anyone wanting to support the meta-organisation to become an associate member (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:70ff).

In addition to interaction, joint forces and common identity, Ahrne and Brunsson also – similarly to Zald and McCarthy’s (1979) observation that SMOs may cooperate as a consequence of external incentives – argue that the reason for creating a meta-organisation may come from the outside. Other organisations may find it convenient to have one in place as “they want to change their environment”, by reducing the number of individual organisations to only one major organisation to relate to. In addition, a meta-organisation, for example an international one, might cause the establishment of other new, for example national, meta-organisations that can become members, creating a “meta-meta-organisation” (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:75). This furthers the convenience even more for external actors wanting to interact with this group of organisations. As we will see, demands from the outside and other organisations striving for convenience and efficiency played an important role in the case of the creation of the Lobby, just like they did in the case of the EWL.

3.3.1. Autonomy and Identity
The meta-organisation set-up entails an ambiguous relationship between the meta-organisation itself and its members, and brings more sources of conflict than do organisations with individuals as members. The ambiguity is based upon every organisation’s need for, and pursuit of, autonomy and uniqueness, which collides with the meta-organisation’s existence being built upon some sort of similarity between its members. Ahrne and Brunsson argue that an organisation risks losing some of its autonomy in joining a meta-organisation as the meta-
organisation has authority when implementing decisions or making its members follow rules that have been decided upon. It is not evident that the members of a member organisation should accept this. On the one hand, accepting it will also question the importance of the member organisation since some of its autonomy has been reduced. On the other hand, the meta-organisation needs to have some sort of impact on its members and be relevant to its environment on its members, or it will see its own importance and reason for existence being questioned (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:111). This is also connected to identity. The meta-organisation is dependent upon the similarities between its members as it strengthens its own identity and internal homogeneity. However, this ruins the member’s claim to be unique – important for volunteer organisations as they want to attract donors and attention to their issues (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:111f). To deal with this balance between not demanding too much of its members and still remaining an important actor with the ability to actually accomplish something, meta-organisations tend to make decisions based on consensus, or at least through qualified majority. Consensus allows the meta-organisation to claim legitimacy for its decisions and the members to uphold their autonomy (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:123). Another way of avoiding tensions and conflict in meta-organisations is to limit the members’ zone of indifference, i.e. “the area within which the organization can make decisions”, since the more the meta-organisation is able to make its member organisations do the more it threatens its member organisations’ authority and autonomy (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005:442).

3.3.2. Competition
There is also the question of “who does what”. Given that both individual-based organisations and meta-organisations are organisations with the ability to act, there will always be a risk of an overlap between the meta-organisation and its members, which, according to Ahrne and Brunsson, leads to a competition between them. The meta-organisation needs to be careful in its operations so that it does not hijack its members’ functions and activities. Moreover, a larger, resourceful and/or very important member might claim to be the actor which decision-makers will listen to and therefore find it challenging if the meta-organisation is formulating opinions to its environment (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:109). This member might even find it difficult to see the reasons for remaining as a member, especially if it has a higher status and action capacity than the meta-organisation. Since strong organisations may struggle to see the advantage of becoming a member, there is the risk of a “meta-organisations for the weak” (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:82). For credibility and status the meta-organisation becomes dependent upon those who are already known and important within the certain category. The
meta-organisation needs to prove it actually is representing this certain category, and thus some organisations may become more interesting as members than others (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:86).

**3.3.3. Decision-making**

Meta-organisations typically also differ from individual-based organisations when it comes to voting. In other cases, voting is based upon the general norm that all individuals are equal and therefore the rule “one person, one vote” is applied. It is difficult to claim that all organisations are equal, but should larger ones and those with more members or contributing more with more resources have more votes? Additionally, as the voters do not represent themselves but the member organisation, their vote can be questioned (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:118f). A further difficulty for a meta-organisation is the fact that the member representatives cannot meet on a daily basis as within smaller and local organisations, and as a result they normally meet once a year at summits. This demands from the participants that they make decisions on many issues at once as the opportunity to make decisions is so rare (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:129). Many meta-organisations have secretariats dealing with the day to day administrative work and a strong secretariat may have its own interests such as expanding the meta-organisation’s ability to make decisions since this will enhance its own role and importance for the organisation. Moreover, if the secretariat is able to claim having expertise in some area it will strengthen its role and the meta-organisation’s authority, but weaken that of the members (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:129f). In sum, the meta-organisation and its members “compete with and tend to undermine each other” (Ahrne & Brunsson 2008:112).

Even though they are aware of the many differences between the various types of meta-organisations, Ahrne and Brunsson (2008:23) remind us that their aim is to identify their similarities and what these types of organisations have in common in contrast to individual-based organisations. However, it may be instructive here to point out that civil society meta-organisations differ from private companies and public sector meta-organisations. Civil society or social movement meta-organisations rarely demand from their members to do certain things and there are no forbidding rules or sanctions; instead, their decisions normally regard the meta-organisation’s focus and priorities. Thus, the challenge for these meta-organisation members is that their meta-organisation wants to speak for them and that the meta-organisation shares the same area of interests which means it could in theory do what its
member organisations do. Following this, the term *zone of indifference* is less applicable here compared to other meta-organisations such as business associations. Instead, the concern here is whether or not a social movement meta-organisation can expand on its *sphere of action*, i.e. its agenda and area of interest. In what follows, the term *sphere of action* will be used instead of *zone of indifference*.

Given that I see the Europeanisation of the Swedish women’s movement as a process which imposes meta-organisational structures, the Lobby will be seen as an arena of inherent potential conflicts and tensions. Understanding the Lobby as a meta-organisation allows for a focus on inter- and intra-organisational relations and thus to explore what the Lobby has meant for the movement and its members organisations in terms of potential internal difficulties and tensions.

4. Methodology
This chapter presents the research design – a case study – followed by a description and discussion of the research method, which is mainly based on semi-structured interviews with representatives of the Lobby and its member organisations. The chapter concludes with some critical reflections on the applied method and the gathered data.

4.1. A Case Study
As a case study of an organisation, the Swedish Women’s Lobby, I am interested in its complexity and particular nature, and I seek to reveal its unique features (Bryman, 2012:66, 69). Case studies are commonly criticised for not being representative and for their lack of generalisability (Siggalkow, 2007:20; Bryman, 2012:69), but given that case studies are detailed and intensive analyses of single cases which are dealt with as objects of interest in their own right, the intention is not to generalise and show how this one case can represent a certain category, i.e. external validity (Bryman & Bell 2003:62f; Bryman, 2012:70). In addition, as pointed out by Siggalkow (2007:21), trying to defend yourself by arguing that your case study is representative is a “mismatch of method and goals” since representativeness would call for a different methodology. The case of the Swedish Women’s Lobby cannot represent all umbrella organisations gathering different movements and group interests; the goal is instead to show what is specific about the Lobby and how that can be understood as a case of *something*. I suggest that the Lobby can be understood as a case of the Europeanisation of civil society in the
sense of the EU imposing meta-organisational structures to domestic civil society. The Lobby can thus prove to be a case of a social phenomenon (Swanborn, 2010:13). Consequently, it is possible to generalise the findings in the case of the Lobby theoretically or analytically (Bryman, 2012: 71). Through a case study of the Lobby the findings may instead shed light on aspects of a theory and “give meaning to abstract propositions” (Bryman & Bell 2003:63). Following this, a case study cannot prove that A leads to B, but it can say: “[h]ere is one example of how A leads to B” (Siggelkow, 2007:23, emphasis added). According to Siggelkow (2007:21), case studies are useful because they can motivate research questions, function as inspiration for new ideas and, perhaps most importantly, they may be used as illustrations of theoretical concepts. In fact, he argues that cases are only interesting if they help the reader to see the world differently and gain new insights about something (Siggelkow, 2007:23). My ambition is thus to add to an understanding of the Europeanisation of civil society, and more specifically the women’s movement, by seeing the Lobby through the lens of a meta-organisation theory.

4.2. Semi-structured Interviews
Unstructured or semi-structured interviewing is a qualitative research technique and as such the purpose is to gain a full report from our respondents and to develop a more holistic understanding of an object rather than obtaining systematic, standardised and comparable results which can be understood through statistical methods (Weiss, 1994). Kirk and Miller (1986:9) point out that a qualitative observation “identifies the presence or absence of something” while a quantitative observation “measur[es] the degree to which some factors are present”. The purpose of this study is thus to gain a holistic picture of the Swedish Women’s Lobby through comprehensive accounts and different perspectives on the Lobby and its relationship with its member organisations. In order to gain relevant information this thesis is largely based on interviews with representatives of the Lobby and some of its member organisations.

More specifically, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 11 individuals: two board members of the Lobby; two employees of the Lobby; two former board members of the Lobby; four representatives of four different member organisations; and one MEP, namely the chair of the European Parliament Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality.

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3 This is of course only one out of several possible effects of the Europeanisation of CSOs and domestic social movements.
(FEMM committee). The interviewees were chosen more or less strategically. Given the lack of research on the Lobby I needed to speak to people who could give me information about its history and therefore former board members were included in my sample, but in order to understand how the Lobby functions today, present board members as well as employees of the Lobby were also of interest. Given the focus on tensions and conflicts within the Lobby, it was essential to interview both board members, employees and member organisation representatives as they all take up different positions within the Lobby and therefore may have different views and opinions on the organisation. The member organisations were chosen based on my focus on potential conflicts and tensions within the Lobby and I therefore contacted member organisations which I thought would give me valuable information. The member organisations contacted are consequently organisations which may find it problematic being members and making common decisions based on their own identity and position within the movement. For instance, one member organisation was chosen because of its established and relatively strong position and as such I found it interesting to know how this organisation relates to a new actor trying to speak for the women’s movement in Sweden. Another organisation was contacted due to its more informal structure and activist approach which stands in contrast to the Lobby which is a very formal lobbying organisation. However, this organisation was difficult to contact and I never received a response to my request about an interview.

All interviews were carried out in the spring/summer of 2013 in Stockholm, or by phone in a couple of cases when a face-to-face interview was not possible. All interviews but the last one lasted between 45 and 100 minutes which depended upon the interviewee’s spare time and availability. The interview with the chair of the FEMM Committee lasted nearly 30 minutes. When possible, the interviews were recorded and transcribed; if not, detailed notes were taken during the interview and shortly after written out properly. Even though they did not mind being identified by name and title, I have decided to let my interviewees, except the chair of the FEMM Committee, remain anonymous since I consider some topics and answers to be sensitive due to the already existing conflicts and tensions within the Lobby.

The semi-structured interviews were based on a few standard questions depending on the type of interviewee. If for instance the interviewee was a representative of a member organisation, I asked questions such as: “Why did [organisation X] join the Lobby? How did you reason around it? What are the advantages of being a member of the Lobby? Can you see any
difficulties?”. If the interviewee was a board member of the Lobby I asked questions such as: “Can you describe the Lobby’s relationship to the Swedish Government? Which issues does the Lobby pursue in the EWL?” or if the interviewee was a former board member I asked questions such as: “Can you tell me about the start of the Lobby? Why was an umbrella organisation needed? Were there any difficulties during the creation of the Lobby?”. Since they were semi-structured, the interviews allowed for a relatively free narration and the interviewees could expand on their accounts and feelings which gave me valuable information, such as how they interpret events. As an interviewer I was allowed to adapt my questions along the way, to pick up markers and ask supplementary questions while keeping the standard questions in my mind. In addition, since I started off not knowing much about the Lobby due to the lack of previous research, the semi-structured interviews allowed me to reformulate my questions and to shift focus according to what information I gained from my first interviewees. Some questions disappeared along the way as I realised they were of less importance while others were added since the accounts informed me about what was essential. The method was thus rather inductive. I started off with little knowledge about the Lobby and its relation to its member organisations and had a vague idea of what sort of information I was searching for which guided me through my interviews. However, with time and more information it became clear to me that the case of the Lobby was a case of a meta-organisation and consequently, combining a growing empirical knowledge with theory gave me a clearer picture of what I was searching for and I could adapt my questions so that they were more focused and thus became more fruitful (Weiss 1994:154).

The interviews were cross-validated with other sources of information: written documents such as statutes, annual meeting statements, and Internet home pages. I have also consulted a Ministry report, and a couple of news articles. Regarding the formation of the Lobby I have analysed annual meeting proceedings and annual reports which can be read at the archive at the Lobby’s office in Stockholm. In addition information has been obtained through e-mail correspondence with representatives from other member organisations or organisations which are no longer members, and a former Undersecretary of State.

To process the data I started off chronologically – with the coming into being of the Lobby – in order to understand its origin. Given that there is a lack of research on the Swedish Women’s Lobby, I had to reconstruct the course of events which preceded the situation of the Lobby today through a comparison of the accounts given to me in interviews and written
documents from the time of the event. In general, when I processed the data from the interviews, I divided it into very general themes – such as the formation, organisational structures, the EWL membership, and the relationship between the Lobby and its member organisations – which helped me to structure my analysis. In the next step I searched for recurring topics within each general theme. One recurring topic was, for instance, the annual meeting in 2011 when the Lobby made a common statement against surrogate motherhood. Since this event was repeated by several of my interviewees, I started to look for similarities and differences in their accounts and from there I could analyse the event in terms of the meta-organisation theory-related themes of competition, identity and autonomy. The recurring topics thereby functioned as springboards for my analysis. On the whole I analysed my data based on a tensions- and conflicts focus. When I processed the transcripts of my interviews I asked myself: what is problematic here? How are difficulties dealt with? What are the advantages and disadvantages for the Lobby and/or its member organisations in this situation?

4.3. Reflections

Even though studies are rarely purely inductive or deductive, but rather “iterative, going back and forth between data and theory” (Siggelkow, 2007:22), they are more or less one or the other. As already mentioned, my approach was relatively inductive as I gradually found my way by gaining more information about my case and by informing myself with theory. Consequently, I developed ideas and questions along the way. This approach was in many ways fruitful. Given that I had to start with a rather open mind and was not limited by a theory or a specific focus I started off with a wide outlook which allowed for many possible perspectives. I was thus able to ask “what is this a case of?” instead of trying to find evidence for a specific theory. There are however drawbacks. Without a clear focus from the very beginning it was of course difficult to know what to search for and to know which information was relevant, and I may have lost the chance to gain relevant information at the start. With a theory already in mind, I could have asked more specific and focused questions already from the start as a theory “provides guidance to the writer about what details to exclude” (Siggelkow, 2007:23). Instead, I was constrained by the relatively inductive approach at the start. Since I worked out a clearer focus along the way I also realised what I had missed out on in earlier interviews. With the understanding which emerged with time and more data gathered there were several new questions which came up and which I regretted not having asked during previous interviews. Consequently, with the knowledge and insights I have today, I would do some things differently. On the other hand we are always influenced
by preconceptions and we always have some sort of pre-understanding of the objects we study. Despite the lack of a clear focus at the beginning I was still guided by ideas and guesses about my case, based on what I had already read, for instance about organisations or the Europeanisation of civil society. Given that I was, at an initial stage, interested in potential conflicts and tensions within the Lobby, I did have some sort of searchlight which guided me through all of the data available and all possible interpretations. It could thus be argued that these preconceptions and hunches about my case mislead me and constrained me from seeing certain things while putting too much emphasis on others, but then again, as Siggelkow (2007:21) argues, “an open mind is good; an empty one is not” since we need some sort of frame of reference to be able to actually see anything at all.

Another limitation and a weakness is that my sample of interviewees representing member organisations is rather small, which of course leaves out voices from other member organisations which could have given a different picture of the relationship between the Lobby and its members, or between the members. The member organisations in my sample were not picked out randomly but strategically since I contacted a number of member organisations which I knew were large and resourceful and/or important to the movement in one way or another, which was based on the idea and the prevision that there might be tensions within the Lobby. Consequently, the way in which my sample may have affected the findings of this study and the conclusions I draw from them is that tensions and conflicts within the Lobby are exaggerated. On the other hand, I am not claiming to give a full picture of the Lobby but to show some aspects of what the meta-organisation structure may entail for the movement and the participating organisations. Besides, after interviewing these four as well as former and present board members of the Lobby and employees, I felt that I reached data saturation since the latter interviews started to confirm accounts given to me in earlier interviews. It would however be helpful with a more holistic analysis of the Swedish Women’s Lobby based on a survey with standardised questions to all member organisations asking them about the advantages and drawbacks of being a member, how much they participate and feel engaged, if they are involved in other networks etc. Questions could also be sent out to some women’s organisations that are not members in the Lobby and ask them how they see the Lobby and why they have not become members (or why they have left). From this, more generalised conclusions could be drawn upon which a few semi-structured interviews with representatives from a sample of the organisations could be based.
Due to the fact that some organisations did not reply to my request for an interview despite several attempts from my side, I ended up with four interviews with people representing member organisations. It is of course understandable that representatives of CSOs do not have a lot of time on their hands to be able to be interviewed by a university student which explains why some did not reply, but it is also possible that my request was a sensitive one given that there are tensions and conflicts within the Lobby or, as we will see, because of commitment being relatively low among the member organisations. Representatives of member organisations may be extra cautious if they see the membership as problematic, or feel unengaged in their umbrella.

As is always the case in research, there is the question whether or not we have interpreted our data correctly, i.e. the question of validity (Kirk & Miller, 1986:19f). According to Weiss (1994:212), my interviews may have been biased if I encourage my interviewees to provide me with information in order to confirm or support a thesis or theory in mind. But I may also have misinterpreted the accounts given to me. To avoid misinterpretations due to my own preconceptions or lack of knowledge, I tried when possible to ask follow-up questions, and in a couple of cases I contacted the interviewees again via e-mail and asked what they meant with this or the other comment. Even though the risk of misinterpretations is always there, the most important way for me to avoid this risk has been by always keeping in mind the background and context of the person I was interviewing and to always try to read between the lines of what was being said. However, the context of an interviewee’s account is not always so transparent. Individuals’ accounts should not be seen as “the truth” by researchers, but as subjective interpretations of reality and as expressions of identities, values and desires. Consequently, interviewees may have their own aims and agendas when being interviewed and this is important to bear in mind. Individuals act and talk from a certain position that they are in and consequently their answers and stories are affected by how they see themselves (and their organisation) in relation to others (and other organisations). One interviewee may put more emphasis on certain things while ignoring others and thus convey a reality which is not necessarily untrue, but somehow distorted. This became very clear during my interviews, for instance since each interviewee stressed their own organisation’s (or their own individual) prominent importance and influence when remembering the history of the Lobby.

Furthermore, events such as the formation of the Lobby took place around 15 years ago now, which leads us to the question of whether they actually remember what happened and how,
when and why. I noticed during my interviews that people tend to remember different things and that they forget a lot, which became evident when comparing the different interviewees’ retrospections. By asking not only one person about the history of the Lobby, I could however compare and draw my own conclusions about events such as the formation. In this case I could, in addition, supplement my interpretations of the interviewees’ accounts by analysing written documents and thus overcome some of the drawbacks of having to deal with subjective and divergent interpretations.

As already pointed out, I have chosen to let my interviewees remain anonymous. Naming interviewees and the organisation they represent and having a larger sample of interviewees could have allowed for a more comprehensive account, and individuals’ replies and specific views could have been understood through the position in a field of their organisation. Drawing on Bourdieu’s theory of fields, Fligstein and McAdam (2012) have for instance developed a theory of strategic action fields (SAFs) in which they argue that actors within a SAF must be understood by the position they take up within that field, whether they are for instance incumbents or challengers – comparable to Bourdieu’s terms “dominants” and “prétendants”. Thus, through a more holistic analysis taking into account the specific organisations which the interviewees represent these power relations between the different women’s organisations could be mapped out and understood as positions within the SAF of the Swedish women’s movement.\(^4\) I consider this a task for future research, rather than being my aim in this thesis. In addition, I hold that the benefits gained from anonymity outweigh those of naming my interviewees in this case, namely that I can be less cautious when referring to my interviewees’ accounts and thus gain access to internal organisational tensions which are otherwise a sensitive issue.

\(^4\)For an example of how this theory has been applied to the research field of the Europeanisation of CSOs, see Johansson and Lee’s (2013) paper on the Platform of European Social NGOs.
5. A Case Study: The Swedish Women’s Lobby
This chapter starts off with a presentation and analysis of the Lobby’s history: how it all started and why the Lobby was formed in a certain way. This is followed by an analysis of the Lobby’s organisational structures, its relationship to the European Women’s Lobby (EWL), and finally, an analysis of the consequences of the achieved position through an examination of the relationship with its member organisations.

5.1. The Formation of a Meta-Organisation
The history of the formation of the Lobby shows the crucial role the Swedish accession to the EU played in the establishment of a meta-organisation uniting the Swedish women’s movement. It also demonstrates that the forming of a coalition organisation was a sensitive issue. Indeed, prior to the creation of the Lobby there had not been any sustained attempt to unite the Swedish women’s movement. The closest the movement came to unity was the short-lived network of “Stödstrumporna”, formed in the early 1990s as a single-issue pressure-group aimed at raising the number of women in parliament.\(^5\)

The actual founding of the Lobby in 1997 was due to two different but parallel events: the Swedish EU membership in 1995 and the 4th UN world conference on women in Beijing in 1995. Sweden’s accession to the EU raised the question of who would represent Swedish women in the EWL, since there was at the time no nationwide umbrella for women’s organisations which could work as a national coordinator. The Beijing conference similarly raised the question of joining forces and of external representation. The Swedish UN association invited women’s organisations prior to the conference in order to prepare and to influence the Swedish government before going to China. When they came back there was the question of how they would continue and follow up this work and cooperation and consequently the idea and the need for an umbrella organisation had started to grow, according to a former board member of the Lobby (Interviewed 2013-05-02).

To actually form a coalition was however not easy. “Sveriges Quinnoråd” (SweQ), the Women’s Lobby of Western Sweden (VSQL) and “Svenska Kvinnors Europanätverk” (SKEN) were all new women’s organisations founded in the mid-1990s in relation to the Swedish EU membership. All three wanted to become the Swedish coordinator of the EWL, but despite their efforts they failed to unite the Swedish women’s movement. SweQ, which

\(^5\) For further information on “Stödstrumporna” see for instance Rönnblom (2002:73f).
started off in 1995 as a network met some obstacles trying to gather the Swedish women’s movement since it was unknown to the “established” women in Stockholm, according to a representative of a member organisation (Interviewed 2013-04-30). A representative from another member organisation also remembers how difficult it was to agree on the form of cooperation:

Then there were others who thought: no we don’t want to be with you [SweQ]! – Why didn’t they want that?
Well, Sweden is small. And it’s always been a struggle for the women’s organisations and it’s all about the women’s movement having to fight for its existence. There was a fear that one [individual women’s organisations, author’s note] would disappear. So, that’s why it became very important how this would be formed (Interviewed 2013-06-27).

An already existing organisation trying to gather the movement was simply seen as a threat to other women’s organisations and, consequently, a completely new umbrella organisation was the only possible way to unite the movement. SweQ thus gave up its ambitions and instead redefined itself as a network which wanted to help for this new umbrella organisation (Member organisation representative, Interviewed 2013-04-30). It was however not enough to simply invite the women’s NGOs, as those inviting could be questioned and seen as trying to take over the new organisation. Somebody from the outside of the field of the Swedish women’s movement was thus needed as a neutral base. According to a former board member (Interviewed 2013-05-02) and a booklet written by the Lobby (SWL & Alfredsson, 2008:9), two representatives from the Swedish section of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (IKFF) met Ingegerd Sahlström – Undersecretary of State at the Gender Equality Unit in the Ministry of Labour – and they mentioned that there had been a discussion on creating an umbrella organisation. Sahlström showed interest and asked if she could be helpful in any way. Given the sensitivity of the issue, the representatives from IKFF thought other women’s organisations would be less sceptical if someone more “neutral” took the lead, and thus asked Sahlström to invite the women’s movement’s organisations to a meeting (Former SWL board member, Interviewed 2013-05-02). This initiative was then discussed within the Minister’s inner circle before Sahlström sent an invitation letter to those 22 organisations which the government perceived as the most active in the work for gender equality (Correspondence with Sahlström).

It is interesting to consider the Government’s motives here. In a booklet which the Lobby wrote to summarise its first ten years of existence, Sahlström explains that:
We needed *one voice* which spoke for the Swedish women’s movement [...] and Sweden needed an umbrella organisation which could represent the Swedish women in EWL (quoted in SWL & Alfredsson, 2008:10, emphasis added).

The “we” is a bit unclear here as it could be interpreted as the Swedish Government, Sweden, or in the sense that the issue of women’s rights and gender equality needed one voice. I argue that it is likely that all three were on Sahlström’s mind. Around this time, gender equality and women’s rights were “red-hot” issues, which is why contacts with NGOs focusing on gender equality were important to the Gender Equality Unit trying to implement the Social Democratic government’s goals on gender equality (Correspondence with Sahlström).

Sahlström also talks of how an umbrella would “facilitate” the communication between the Government and the women’s organisations (Correspondence with Sahlström).

A meeting was thus held on the 4th of September in 1996 at Rosenbad, the Government Chancellery and, at a further meeting on the 1st of February 1997, 41 women’s organisations decided to form an umbrella organisation: the Forum for Cooperation of Women in Sweden, or “Samverkansforum för Kvinnor i Sverige” (Sams) in Swedish (SWL, 1997a; SWL, 1997b). Sams would later change its name to ”Sveriges Kvinnolobby”, or the Swedish Women’s Lobby (SWL), to better correspond to the European Women’s Lobby’s name and because Sams was difficult to translate into English, according to a former board member (Interviewed 2013-05-08). Nine board members were elected with Gunvor Ngarambe as chairperson, as well as representatives for the EWL (SWL, 1997a). Later that year, on the 22nd of November, Sams held its first annual meeting. By that time 34 organisations had joined the new umbrella organisation, which meant that it represented 1.5 million women (SWL 1997c; SWL 1997d).6

Already from the start it was evident that the question of “who is who”, i.e. representation, was an issue since the nomination committee at the first annual meeting emphasised that the board members had to see themselves as representatives of Sams and not of their own organisation (SWL, 1997c). Moreover, a former board member of the Lobby remembers that “there was an enormous resistance” from some of the organisations at the very first meetings and “there was a bit of a row all the time at the annual meetings because everybody wanted *their* candidates to be included” (Interviewed 2013-05-02). Also, the large and established

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6 See Appendix A for a list of all participants at the meeting of the 1st of February 1997, and a list of the initial 34 member organisations.
Fredrika Bremer Association decided to leave the newly formed umbrella already at this meeting for reasons we will come back to later. Nevertheless, within a year the new umbrella organisation had organised a seminar prior to the EWL General Assembly, sent three motions to the EWL General Assembly, and applied for EU funding together with the Women’s Council in Denmark (SWL, 1997d).

Today, after more than 15 years of existence, the Lobby is an established organisation seen as the representative of the Swedish women’s movement. According to an employee, the Lobby sees itself as the “united voice for the women’s movement” (Interviewed 2013-04-10). Overall, the Lobby has “good contacts” in the Government Offices and is the Government’s main actor in relation to the women’s movement, especially concerning more general issues such as gender equality in the labour market, pensions and women’s situation in society at large, according to the Lobby’s board members (Interviewed 2013-05-21 and 2013-05-27). The Lobby functions as an overall organisation with a wide range of activities. For instance, it monitors the Government’s work with the UN CEDAW Committee’s recommendations for Sweden, it represents the Swedish women’s movement at the yearly meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the UN headquarters in New York, and it functions as the general public consultation body concerning women’s issues and gender equality. Finally, the Lobby runs a number of projects and campaigns raising awareness around issues such as wage differences between the sexes (SWL, 2013c).

5.1.1. The Formation: ‘Inside’ and ‘Outside’ Motives
In analysing the formation of the Lobby it can be instructive to refer back to the distinction which Ahrne and Brunsson draw when discussing the creation of meta-organisations between incentives among prospective members and demands from outside. Certainly, there existed a clear desire from the inside to coordinate international action. Equally, understanding that the EU would have an impact on Sweden, there was obviously a need to get involved to influence that impact. Yet it does not seem an exaggeration to say that what Ahrne and Brunsson term “demand from outside” – that is to say, the desire of other organisations to control and simplify their own environments – played the dominant role. This is certainly the case with respect to the EU. The Commission, as we have noted, in order to make up for its perceived democratic deficit, strives to connect with EU citizens through interest organisations. It is, however, preferable to have one body that it can turn to for a particular set of issues. In part, this is a question of organisational efficiency: instead of consulting a potentially vast number
of organisations, the Commission can simply confer with one, situated moreover nearby in Brussels. This close one-to-one cooperation also has organisational benefits in terms of establishing a regular – and, crucially, predictable – working relationship. A less immediately obvious, but no less important, consequence is that the Commission also thus avoids radical demands. As Strid (2009:184f) points out, “the very form of the EWL” results in what she calls “self-moderation”; demands put forward by members are being moderated through a process of motions and amendments.\footnote{7} Since the EWL thus acts as a “gatekeeper”, it saves the Commission from having to arbitrate as the Commission can simply refer to the representativeness of the EWL. The EWL, of course, in turn demands that the national members consist of nationwide and representative umbrellas, which is why Sweden had to create a meta-organisational structure for the women’s movement. In this sense Europeanisation can be seen as introducing meta-organisational structure at domestic level. The creation of the Lobby is thus a typical case of how meta-organisations (the EWL) serve as initiators for the creation of other meta-organisations (the Lobby) which can become their members (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2008:75; 2010:5).

The other main external actor was of course the Swedish Government. The interests of the Swedish Government are in many ways the same as that of the EU. Sahlström refers to facilitating the communication between the Government and the Swedish women’s movement, and the same factors of efficiency, predictability and ‘gatekeeping’ undoubtedly play a role in such considerations.

Another crucial point which the history of the Lobby demonstrates is the sensitivity of the issue of cooperation. As we have seen, the gathering of the movement was problematic: prior to EU accession there had been no coalition organisation, and SweQ failed in its attempt to unite the movement and the Government was needed as a neutral base. Even once the Lobby was formed the participating organisations found it difficult to cooperate within the new umbrella. In Ahrne and Papakostas’ terms a coalition organisation was a \textit{protected open space} in the Swedish women’s movement’s organisational landscape. The space was open in the sense that the movement was not organised in this way before, but protected in the sense that

\footnote{7 When member-organisations put forward motions it is required according to the EWL rules that 2 or more full members give the motion support for it to reach the General Assembly (GA). The secretariat then sends the qualified motions to all members to be discussed. The discussions generate amendments which are voted upon together with the motions at the GA (Strid, 2009:164f).}
there was, to a certain extent, a fear of and a resistance to this way of organising among the women’s movement’s organisations. With the accession to the EU and the need for representation in the EWL, however, this space was rendered accessible and it could become occupied by the formation of the Lobby.

5.2. Organisational Structure
In this section I give a brief overview of the Lobby’s organisational structure and membership rules, and I argue that these have important consequences for the women’s movement in Sweden.

**Organisation chart of the Swedish Women’s Lobby**

![Organisation Chart]

The Lobby is a meta-organisation, or an ‘organisation of organisations’, and as such it is a formal organisation with its own organisational structure with common rules, a constitution, a hierarchy and some sort of an “authoritative centre” (Ahrene & Brunsson, 2008:64). As illustrated in the chart above, the Lobby has a board, an annual meeting and holds an office.

The annual meeting is the Lobby’s highest decision-making body where each full member organisation has the right to one representative with one vote. At the annual meeting the representatives elect board members and an election committee, as well as vote on motions. The decisions are based on simple majority voting (SWL, 2013a). The daily management of the Lobby is done by the board, which consists of at least seven and a maximum of eleven women, according to the statutes, elected at the annual meeting for two years but with the possibility to be re-elected twice. The board includes the chairperson and the treasurer of the Lobby, as well as one delegate and one alternate for the EWL General Assembly. The board
meets at least four times a year and makes decisions, again, based on simple majority voting. The chairperson has a casting vote and can be re-elected three times (SWL, 2013a). The board meetings have EWL questions as a permanent issue. EWL initiatives also need to be dealt with in between which is why a working committee may take care of some issues before they are taken up by the board (SWL board member, Interviewed 2013-05-27).

5.2.1. Ability to Act
According to the meta-organisational model of Ahrne and Brunsson (2008:123), decisions are normally based on consensus, or at least qualified majority, as a precaution against conflicts. By employing consensus the member organisations can protect their autonomy and identity while the meta-organisation is given legitimacy for its decisions. In the Lobby, however, decisions are made by simple majority (or in the event of a tie lots will be drawn), which means it does not need to seek consensus but instead it can “agree” on a relatively large number of issues. This gives the Lobby an ability to show unity to its environment, mainly the Swedish state, and be seen as a relevant actor with the ability to act, which is different to the typical meta-organisation which struggles to be an “actor” due to the pursuit for consensus (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2010:9). What is especially interesting here is that this means that the Lobby is in theory capable of expanding on its sphere of action. Without having to reach consensus, decisions on new activities and, as we will see, common statements are relatively easy to make. Compared to a typical meta-organisation or a more informal network coalition, the Lobby is relatively independent of its members and is indeed an organisation in its own right with an ability to act. To avoid threatening and competing with its members, which could increase the internal tensions and eventually lead to membership decrease, the Lobby needs however to balance its own organisational needs with that of its members in order to decrease the centrifugal forces, in Ahrne’s terms. For example, the Lobby does avoid making decisions on some issues, such as taking a common position on the EU (SWL employee, Interviewed 2013-04-10). However, given that the member organisations only meet once a year to make decisions, the board and the office have a relatively large room to act on their own, for instance when there are urgent issues from the EWL to take a stand on.

Another important aspect of the Lobby is its relative independence of its members’ resources. According to Ahrene (1994:93), external funding is a centripetal force which allows an organisation to continue without much support from or without demanding too much from its...
members, and Staggenborg (1986:388) found that social movement coalitions can maintain a more formal structure, while at the same time avoiding an increase in internal tensions which would otherwise tear the coalition apart, if external funding is secured. Drawing on this it becomes clear that the Lobby has a rather secured position since it is not dependent on its members’ resources; instead it is mainly financed by the Swedish state, which allows it to have an office, seated in Stockholm. Since its foundation the Lobby has expanded from only having a secretary to being able to employ two full-time staff, as well as having one project manager or more depending on the project. The Lobby also has a trainee each academic semester. Additionally, the government has donated 10 million SEK to the Lobby’s work on a Nordic Forum – *New Actions on Women’s Rights* – scheduled for the summer of 2014 in Malmö, which enables a separate and temporary office with three full time employees. To a lesser extent the Lobby is also financed through the membership fee (see below) and through project funds (Employee, Interviewed 2013-05-06).

**5.2.2. Membership Rules: A Question of Representation**

The member organisations are essential for the Lobby as they constitute its base and constituency. There are two types of membership: supporting member and full member. Anyone can be a supporting member of the Lobby, which entails a right to be present at the annual meetings but no right to vote. However, not any women’s organisation can become a full member. Just like the EWL, the Swedish Lobby has a number of criteria for possible member organisations to live up to, structuring the women’s movement at the national level. Firstly, only non-profit women’s organisations consisting of at least 80% women, which are democratic and, as we will see, independent of political parties can apply for full membership and, if accepted by the board, will then have the right to one delegate with a vote and the right to express the organisation’s opinions at the annual meeting (SWL, 2013a). Secondly, the applicant organisation has to fill in a form and present its latest annual meeting records, a list of board members, statutes and their latest annual report (SWL, 2013b). Moreover, the members need to pay an annual fee: the majority of the members pay 600 SEK, according to an employee (Interviewed 2013-05-06), but those with more than 3000 members pay 3000 SEK (SWL, 2013b). A board member emphasises the Lobby’s severity concerning these rules when she talks about the latest accepted member:

> We’re severe. I mean, when applying you have to hand in documents and now they didn’t have an annual meeting record and then... they’re welcome but please show us your record. (Interviewed 2013-05-27)
The Lobby thus exerts control over its membership base to make sure its constituency is representative, i.e. that it fulfils traditional and formalistic forms of representation, which in turn gives the Lobby legitimacy in the eyes of external actors. However, the representativeness can be questioned. Through demanding from their members to be formal organisations, with boards and statutes etc. to meet the standard view of what constitutes a democratic organisation, the Lobby in fact excludes parts of the women’s movement. Newly formed organisations get rejected as they have not had an annual meeting yet, but more importantly, the demands result in an exclusion of more loosely connected networks or women’s groups organised in a different way to the typical hierarchal and formalistic representation ideal. At the office an employee acknowledges that the Lobby is “a very traditional organisation and it’s probably difficult for loose organisations to join” (Interviewed 2013-04-10).

For the women’s movement, the question of formal and hierarchic organisations is a particular issue since there exists, within the women’s movement as well as among feminist scholars, a discussion of how democratic liberal representative democracy really is. During the rise of the new women’s movement in Sweden at the start of the 1970s, women started to organise locally and horizontally, and decisions were made through members’ meetings rather than at board meetings. By doing so, the new women’s movement’s alternative organisations questioned the institutionalised idea of what a democratic organisation is and what they perceived as the patriarchal societal structure (see Eduards, 2002:99; Rönnblom, 2002:72). While there has undoubtedly, particularly since the rise of state feminism, been a general tendency within the women’s movement towards more formalised structures, this is still clearly an issue. One of the Lobby’s members, the Women's Front – “Kvinnofronten” – clearly endorses the legacy of the new women’s movement by not having a fixed organisational structure but instead leaving it up to local groups to decide on what they want to work with. Further, they explain that they do not want to have a traditional board since they do not want to have a “patriarchal, hierarchical structure”, instead they “want to be an organisation where the members have control – in a real sense” (Kvinnofronten, 2013a; 2013b, emphasis added). Even though the Women's Front has managed to become a member of the Lobby they demonstrate the existence of the feminist critique of the standard

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9 The main example here is “Grupp 8”, originating from 1970 (see Schmitz, 2001).
formalised and hierarchal organisation structure, which the Lobby to a certain extent challenges by its own structure and membership rules.

At the same time, the Lobby does not work actively to recruit new members even though there are more women’s organisations which could become members. A board member explains that the Lobby wants to focus on its activities instead:

> We work to do good things, we don’t work to recruit /…/ they’re very welcome to join but it’s not like we have ‘oh, let’s find those who aren’t members’. We should, instead, deliver on what's been decided. That's our focus. (Interviewed 2013-05-27)

When comparing this approach to that of the EWL, which is very concerned about having members in all member states, it becomes clear how, after all, the Swedish Lobby is less pressured from above to prove its representativeness. As an EU-based civil society organisation, financially dependent on the Commission, the EWL needs to “be recognised as [a] representative [actor] by the EU institutions and officials” and consequently focuses on traditional forms of representation as well as on membership control (Johansson & Lee, 2012). Again, however, the Swedish Lobby’s representativeness can be problematised. First, there is the concern with a long chain of representation. Several member organisations of the Lobby, such as ROKS or RIFFI, are meta-organisations themselves with local or regional organisations as members. The Lobby thus becomes a “meta-meta-organisation” in Ahrne and Brunsson’s words (2008:75), and the EWL a meta-meta-meta-organisation. The meta-organisational structure (with its several layers) is, as pointed out by Ahrne and Brunsson, a question of convenience and rationalisation from the point of view of the state and the EU. Regarding the meta-(meta-)organisational structure as presented in Figure 1, it is however clear there is long way from the grassroots organisations at local level, through their respective “mother-organisations” at regional or national level, to their umbrella, the Lobby, or even further to the EWL (or yet further if considering the Platform of European Social NGOs).

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10 She argues, however, that there are not that many possible members due to the Government's directives for civil society limiting the number of organisations which can receive grants.
Civil society has been seen as bringing legitimacy to EU institutions and there has been a hope that civil society would shorten the long chain of representation from citizens to the EU level. However, as pointed out by Ruzza (2008:310), the chain of representation within civil society organisations “tends to be even longer from the EU CSO platforms/umbrellas to the grass roots associations”, which becomes very clear in the case of the Swedish Women’s Lobby. Second, and as pointed out by Ahrne and Brunsson (2008:118f), voting is problematic in meta-organisations. Since the voters vote for and represent organisations, their “home” organisations may question their votes. A further issue with implications for the Lobby’s representativeness is the fact that its members are differentiated; they differ especially in size and resources. Given that the Lobby, as a typical meta-organisation, applies the rule “one organisation, one vote” but cannot appeal to a general norm that all organisations are equal, it could thus be accused of giving smaller member organisations more influence than the larger ones. Conversely it would be equally difficult for the Lobby to start giving larger and more resourceful member organisations two, or three votes each.

In sum, the Lobby’s membership rules result in a paradox: due to its membership rules focusing on formal representation and accountability the Lobby excludes, to a certain extent, some parts of the women’s movement, which in turn may challenge the pursuit for representativeness. Additionally, the Lobby’s meta-organisational structure adds to the long chain of representation from grassroots level to state (and EU) level.
5.2.3. The Lobby as a Coalition
Several researchers have pointed out either the preference of social movement organisations for informal rather than formal coalitions, or the fact that informal coalitions tend to be more resilient because they reduce tensions and facilitate cooperation among otherwise diverse actors (Staggenborg, 1986; Hathaway & Meyer, 1993; Jacobsson & Johansson, 2009). We can think of the different types of social movement coalitions as running through a scale of ‘minimalist’ to ‘maximalist’ formalisation. At one end of the scale the participating organisations form a loose network, perhaps on an ad hoc basis, often for the purpose of sharing information. At the other end the coalition takes the form of a permanent organisation with a broad agenda that can claim to speak for its members (ultimately the extreme point is that of a merger, where the individual organisations cease to exist).

The Lobby is a relatively formal coalition organisation: it has a hierarchical structure of representation and decision-making and it is an organisation in its own right with its own office, employed staff and external funding. A crucial question, and one we will turn to later, is what effects this has on its relationship with the member organisations and on tensions and cooperation between the member organisations.

5.3. The Relationship with the EWL
This section deals with the Lobby’s relationship with the European Women’s Lobby. What does the membership entail in the sense of both opportunities and constraints and how does the Swedish Women’s Lobby deal with being a national coordinator for the European umbrella?

As a national coordinator the Swedish Lobby can influence the EWL by writing motions. However, before reaching the EWL General Assembly (GA), the motion needs to be supported by at least three other full members, and then follows a procedure of amendments where each amendment is voted upon before the final version is voted upon as a whole at the GA. If a majority of the delegates vote in favour of the final motion it becomes an official position of the EWL. Consequently, the EWL might express a standpoint which is in opposition to the Swedish Lobby. However, the Swedish Lobby does not need to participate in all activities and campaigns operated by the EWL (Strid, 2009:169f). In general, the Swedish Lobby does not act on its own at EU level but through the EWL membership. Yet, individual board members of the Lobby have close contact with the Swedish MEP Mikael
Gustafsson, Chair of the FEMM Committee.\textsuperscript{11} The Swedish Lobby is seen as a very strong actor and a good representative of the Swedish women’s movement since it has a large membership, which gives it a “strong voice” according to Gustafsson. However, he admits that the committee normally prefers to ask the Brussels-based umbrella organisations and their offices for input since “they know exactly what we want” and hence it is “easier” to go that way. The EWL knows how to write, for instance, an amendment and it can write its proposals in a way that easily fits in with a piece of text from the European parliament, which is an ability that the national NGOs lack. Consequently, the EWL is the main actor for the FEMM Committee (Gustafsson, Interviewed 2013-05-30).

5.3.1. Possibilities
The EWL is in many ways a resource for the Swedish Lobby. Firstly, it connects the Swedish Lobby with the EU institutions. Most importantly and most obviously in this respect, the EWL serves as a path for influence at the EU level:

EWL has an entry in the Commission which we can’t have. I mean, we’re not there in Brussels /…/ That’s impossible, we’re minimal! (SWL board member, Interviewed 2013-05-27)

Well, I think it [the EWL membership] means a lot because it’s one way to get in, in the EU then /…/And that’s probably why one thinks it’s important to be a member. Because it’s a way to be seen within the EU and try to influence the EU institutions. (SWL board member, Interviewed 2013-05-21)

Due to its location and size the EWL thus functions as a channel to Europe for the Swedish Lobby. Moreover, the Swedish Lobby lacks the means to be present in Brussels on a regular basis and to keep up with everything that happens at EU level and consequently the Swedish Lobby does not, in general, act on its own at the EU level but through the EWL initiatives and lobbying activities. The EWL, in contrast, has a secretariat with several employees in Brussels and a close relationship to several EU institutions, giving them the advantage of daily updates on the EU agenda. The EWL secretariat has, according to Strid (2009:207), a great deal of expertise on the EU system and EU policy, and she argues that it is “unlikely” that anything concerning gender equality at the EU level would pass the EWL staff unnoticed. Thus, for the office in Stockholm the EWL mainly functions as a “watch dog”, in the sense that it alerts the national level on EU policies or events in connection with gender equality and women’s interests (SWL employees, Interviewed 2013-04-10 and 2013-05-06). As a national

\textsuperscript{11} The European Parliament Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality
coordinator the Swedish Lobby has the right to be informed of any EWL activity. Consequently, the Swedish Lobby receives EWL annual reports and work programmes, as well as motions from other members (Strid, 2009:158). However, the day-to-day information from the EWL is normally communicated through newsletters and newsflashes sent by E-mail once a week to the national coordinators, as well as regular E-mails and updates on the EWL website whenever there is something urgent to inform about or to ask for. According to the office in Stockholm, the EWL regularly asks them to lobby the Swedish government and parliament on certain issues since there is an expectation that the national governments in turn will influence at EU level (Interviewed 2013-04-10). The Swedish Lobby has for instance sent a letter to the Swedish EU minister demanding a stand against surrogacy motherhood. These demands follow on from the EWL being in line with the multi-level decision-making structure of the EU (Strid, 2009:157), applying its “multilevel action coordination” (Helfferich & Kolb, 2001). In some cases the EWL even sends out a model letter for the national coordinators to translate and send to their politicians. On the one hand, this procedure of pre-written letters is an effective way to reach out quickly. On the other hand, in a Swedish context these letters are sometimes useless and have to be rewritten entirely by the Swedish Lobby to be more in line with Swedish customs:

They [the EWL] have a very bureaucratic Belgian way to express themselves…Our politicians would laugh out loud! (SWL board member, Interviewed 2013-06-27)

Secondly, and most importantly, the EWL confers legitimacy on the Swedish Lobby in two different ways. The first way is in relation to the Swedish state. In general, the EWL brings strength in relation to the state through its claim of representing all women in the EU member states. According to a board member, the Lobby sometimes refers to the EWL when writing to Swedish policy-makers to make their claims more powerful: “and then we said that the whole European women’s movement thinks just like us, that this is an issue, an area of concern” (SWL board member, Interviewed 2013-05-21). At the office, an employee explains: “It’s good to be a member in such a big and recognised organisation as the EWL. It gives legitimacy” (Interviewed 2013-04-10). The second way is in relation to other women’s organisations in Sweden, since the EWL separates the Swedish Lobby from other organisations by giving it a specific role. According to a former chairperson of the Swedish Lobby, the EWL gives it “a clear mission”, saving it from being perceived as too vague in its purpose, but the EWL also distinguishes the Swedish Lobby from its members, by being this
liaison between the national and European level (Interviewed 2013-05-08). A representative of a member organisation takes the argument even further and claims that “[the Lobby] only exists because the EWL exists” (Interviewed 2013-04-17).

5.3.2. Constraints
Being a member of the EWL is not always an advantage but can sometimes be problematic. The major and most serious criticisms of the EWL are that, as an organisation, it is ineffective and undemocratic. An important factor here, in the eyes of the interviewees, is the size of the EWL board, or “the Board of Administration” as it is called. Instead of 7-11 board members, as in the Swedish Lobby, the EWL board consists of around 40 members as all EWL full members are included. With a representative from each and every full member the board functions in the same way as the General assembly, according to a board member of the Swedish Lobby (Interviewed 2013-05-27). Several interviewees thus argue that it becomes very ineffective. Since the board only meets a few times a year and consists of a large number of members, it tends to be unable to act.¹² A representative of a member organisation even calls it a ‘dummy board’ (Interviewed 2013-04-17). As a result, the real power lies in the secretariat in Brussels:

It’s a very *office controlled* organisation. So, when you talk about how we work in the EWL, then it’s about how we work in relation to those initiatives coming from the EWL secretariat (SWL board member, Interviewed 2013-05-27, emphasis added)

The EWL is falling apart, which makes the secretariat too powerful, and then it sort of becomes like the secretariat is pursuing the issues (Representative of member organisation, Interviewed 2013-06-27).

According to a former board member of the Swedish Lobby, this bureaucratisation of the EWL is also an effect of its resource dependency on the Commission, which does not fund the EWL board members to have meetings but funds the secretariat. Consequently, it is only those who can afford to go to Brussels more than once a year that have the possibility to be active, while the staff has the advantage of seeing each other every day, which further reinforces the power of the secretariat (Interviewed 2013-05-08). Equally, Strid argues that the EWL is a professionalised organisation since, in practice, it is the secretariat “setting the real agenda of the EWL” (Strid 2009:149). The Swedish delegates have tried to change this as

¹² According to the EWL statutes, the Board of Administration meets at least three times a year, however “the Board of Administration will be validly constituted if 50 % plus one of the members of the Board of Administration are present or represented by their alternate” (EWL, 2013a).
they suggested cutting down the number of board members, but only a few others supported them, for instance the other Nordic countries and France. A board member of the Swedish Lobby argues that the EWL national members refuse to assign power to others, which is why they all have to be represented in the board, and she sees the resistance they met trying to cut it down as a sign of how the EWL is on a more “rudimentary” level of democracy, by which she means that several EWL national co-ordinators are not willing to give a mandate to an elected board since they believe democracy means that everyone has to be represented in a board (Interviewed 2013-05-27). Additionally, the EWL secretariat seem to prioritise efficiency over representativeness by the way it tends to “shower” their board members with E-mails and urgently demanding a stand point also adds to the bureaucratisation. A board member of the Swedish Lobby finds this problematic and undemocratic since the decision-making is then up to those with the time on their hands to read their E-mails frequently (SWL board member, Interviewed 2013-05-27). And at the office in Stockholm, always trying to prioritise E-mails from the EWL, it is impossible to reply to everything as these demands come so frequently (SWL Employee, Interviewed 2013-05-06). Consequently, the EWL secretariat does not need to take into account all 40 members’ opinions, making the day-to-day work much more efficient but reducing real representativeness and grassroots input.

Moreover, the interviewees point out that the EWL suffers from economic problems and that the Swedish Lobby has tried to solve this problem by suggesting that the membership fee is raised or, again, that the number of board members are cut down. Instead the EWL focuses on fundraising through what it calls “Friends of the EWL”, individuals who donate money, or through “flashy” campaigns trying to attract sponsors. In the eyes of the board member of the Swedish Lobby this way of working is “silly” and not appreciated. There is also a dividing view on campaigns and initiatives between the European and the Swedish Lobby due to the Swedish position in the field of gender equality. Even though some EWL initiatives are very appreciated by the interviewees, such as the EWL’s work on EU2020 or their standpoint on prostitution, the problem with the EWL from a Swedish perspective, as a representative of a member organisation puts it, is that their campaigns sometimes “push at already open doors” (Interviewed 2013-06-27). One example is the EWL maternity leave initiative which meant the EWL was pushing for EU legislation on women’s rights to 20 weeks’ full pay after giving birth. Since this is very far away from the Swedish case where both parents have the right to parental leave longer than 20 weeks, the Swedish Lobby could not accept this initiative from the EWL. First, its delegates debated the issue at the EWL board and executive, but without
results. And voting against a maternity leave initiative at the General Assembly did not help either since only the other Nordic countries were on their side. Consequently, the Swedish Lobby had to accept that majority wins, and since it did not want to cause an internal conflict in the EWL, the Swedish Lobby dealt with this by inactivity and silence:

And then we’ve said like this that we understand that there is nothing [parental leave] in some countries, we respect that. Therefore we will not go out there and speak against EWL but we will do nothing to spread it (Interviewed 2013-05-27.)

Additionally, the EWL has created a gender equality index which would give countries with maternity leave a high score. In this index Sweden would score very low as Sweden has gender-neutral parental leave rather than maternity leave, and a board member of the Swedish Lobby thinks this is incorrect and deceptive:

That’s just silly! I mean, we don’t have any maternity leave but women can stay at home up to a year and a half if they want to (Interviewed 2013-05-27).

This time the Swedish Lobby acted in a more offensive way since it ignored the index and prohibited the EWL from including Sweden in it. The cases of the index and the maternity leave initiative clearly demonstrate the problematic situation in which the Swedish women’s movement finds itself in relation to the EU. Given that Sweden is a forerunner in gender equality in comparison to many other EU member states, the Swedish women’s movement has little to gain from EU policies at domestic level and thus their main incentive, in general, must be to improve the situation for women in other countries rather than hoping for the EU to influence the Swedish state in these matters. From here also follows that the EU is more of a “threat” to, rather than a saviour of, women’s interests and gender equality in Sweden, especially after the eastern enlargement which brought an increase of conservative MEPs challenging established gender equality policies (Rolandsen Agustín, 2012:32). Consequently, Sweden’s particular position as a forerunner on gender equality policies entails a certain role for the Swedish Lobby – to spread the Swedish example – which, as we have seen, in turn causes a few tensions in relation to the EWL.

In sum, the EWL does indeed bring opportunities to the Swedish women’s movement, mainly through its privileged and established position as the key representative of women, its access to EU institutions and through its expertise on EU matters and ways of functioning. The EWL is also appreciated for its ability to keep track of EU activities concerning women and for
informing its members on EU matters, as well as for bringing legitimacy and weight to the Swedish Lobby and their demands in relation to the Swedish state actors. Perhaps most importantly to the Swedish Lobby itself, however, is that the EWL distinguishes it from its members. This is crucial since too strong similarities between a meta-organisation and its member organisations are a key source of internal tensions. In contrast, the EWL gives the Swedish Lobby a clear role and reason for existing, which in Ahrne’s terms increases its centripetal forces as it protects it from being questioned, both by its members and its environment. Thus, Keck and Sikkink’s (1998) boomerang patterns are present even in the case of the Swedish women’s movement; however, slightly modified, it is a case of a transnational actor empowering one specific domestic actor (the Swedish Lobby) in relation to others within the same field (the women’s movement) rather than a group bypassing an unresponsive state and gets strengthened by transnational allies which put pressure on the state. On the other hand, the classic boomerang patterns are less relevant here since the Swedish Lobby meet with obstacles in the EWL in terms of the “already open doors” and thus cannot use the European umbrella to bypass the Swedish state.

5.4. The Relationship with the Member Organisations
After a short presentation of the membership base, this section deals with the Lobby’s internal dynamics: its relationship with the member organisations. Through the years the Lobby has met some obstacles and has had to rearrange its boundaries. Meanwhile, the member organisations have had to deal with the complicated situation they are in trying to cooperate while striving for organisational autonomy. The section ends with a discussion on the participation and commitment within the Lobby.

5.4.1. The Members
As part of a social movement industry, in Zald and McCarthy’s words, the members of the Lobby share a common interest and general goal while at the same time being diverse in their tactics, strategies and focus. In total there are 39 member organisations of the Lobby in 2013. Some originate from the turn of the 20th century, such as the Fredrika Bremer Association (1884), the Swedish Association of University Women (1904), and the Left Federation of Swedish Women (1914). However, the majority of the Lobby’s member organisations are only up to 20 years old. In their characteristics, the members range from the more radical and activist Women’s Front, organising feminist circles and which initiated a

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13 See Appendix B for a list of all members
“people’s campaign against porn” in 1985, to the more neoliberal Women Can, focusing on women as leaders and entrepreneurs. Moreover, there are three Christian women’s organisations; no other religion is, however, represented within the members. Some member organisations focus on immigrant women’s interests, such as the latest member Women’s Association of Kurdistan in Sweden. Other interests represented are different professions, women with disabilities, and women’s health. There are also members with a wider focus such as the already mentioned SweQ and the Fredrika Bremer Association, working with general women’s issues and gender equality for example the gender pay gap, equal pensions, women in power, or gender equality in local authorities. There are local networks and umbrellas linking women and women’s organisations in their own area, as well as some which have an international focus dealing with war related issues or women in poor areas of the world, such as IKFF and UN Women. Thus the Swedish Women’s Lobby comprises a wide range of women’s organisations with different interests and focus which complicates cooperation. As we will see in the following section, and as pointed out by Ahrne and Brunsson (2005:440), it is this diversity between the member organisations which imposes conflict among the members of the meta-organisation.

5.4.2. Identity Struggle: Exclusion of Party Political Organisations
Meta-organisations are based on similarity. Their member organisations all share some sort of similarity and specific characteristics which give the meta-organisation its specific identity. Consequently a meta-organisation is very concerned about who its members are and only a limited number of organisations can become members. Furthermore, a meta-organisation is interested in stressing this similarity to its environment since it is connected to its own identity. The member organisations however are, as all organisations, concerned about their own dissimilarity to others, i.e. their uniqueness (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005; 2008; 2010). In the following section, we will see how the very diverse party political women’s organisations proved too much of a challenge for the Lobby which is interested in unity. In other words, it is a case of a meta-organisation fighting for its own identity and legitimacy.

The membership base has changed throughout the years as a consequence of the Lobby trying to find its form in the process of establishing itself as a new actor. As we have seen, the Swedish women’s movement’s different organisations found it difficult to cooperate already from the start, which is why Sahlström was seen to be needed as a “neutral” base. However, it was not only around the establishment that the new umbrella organisation had difficulties in
cooperating. At the beginning of the new millennium the party political women’s organisations which were then members started to cause problems for the Lobby as the discussions had become infected by party politics. There are dividing opinions on what actually happened during this time but “S-kvinnor” – the Social Democratic women’s section – claimed in an article in Dagens Nyheter published in 2003 that the Lobby had started to work against them and, consequently, they decided to leave the umbrella organisation (DN, 2003). On the other hand, “Centerkvinnorna” – the Centre party’s women’s section – perceived the organisation to be linked to the Social Democrats and too leftist in its solutions on gender equality problems which is why they too decided to leave the Lobby (Correspondence with Centerkvinnorna, 2013-06-04). One after another, the party political organisations started to leave; even the two women’s shelter organisations SKR and ROKS left.

Since they claim to represent a specific identity, meta-organisations are dependent on their members and thus for credibility reasons generally strive for 100 per cent membership (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2008: 88; 2005:438). The fact that such important members as the party political women’s organisations and the women’s shelter organisations left thus proved to be a challenge for the Lobby. This crisis not only affected the Lobby’s credibility as a unifying umbrella organisation but also its finances as it no longer received any grants from the government. In the article from 2003 the former director of the Government Offices’ Gender Equality Unit explained that since the Lobby was no longer representative of all women’s organisations they found it difficult to give them grants other than enough means to keep the membership in the EWL active (Marianne Laxén, quoted in DN, 2003). In 2004 the second chairperson resigned at her own request due to the political conflicts in the Lobby (Anki Elken, quoted in DN, 2003). A first step the Lobby took to solve the crisis was to rearrange its boundaries. At an annual meeting the decision was taken to exclude all party political organisations to prevent the NGOs being overshadowed by party political discussions, but also to regain confidence both externally and internally. Instead Q-sam, a women’s network for all political parties and the Lobby, was set up to encourage cross political cooperation (SVT, 2005).14

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14 Today, however, the network seems to be inactive. A SWL board member explains that during her time in the Lobby they have never received any response from the parliamentary parties when they have sent invitations for Q-sam meetings or taken initiatives for cooperation (Interviewed 2013-05-27).
The situation with the party political women’s organisations highlights one of the most important aspects of meta-organisations, their inherent opposing forces: on the one hand, all member organisations claim to be unique and thus oppose similarity being placed upon them; on the other hand, a meta-organisation is both based and dependent upon similarity among its member organisations. In the case of the Lobby some of its members proved to be too diverse and perhaps more concerned about other identities than that of “Swedish women’s movement”, namely the identity of the “Social democrats”, the “Centre party” etc. When these very important organisations left the Lobby, it did of course challenge its credibility; however, since the Lobby as a meta-organisation is interested in unity, this quarrelling part of its membership base would have meant a threat to its identity also if they remained as members. Thus, seeing them leaving gave the Lobby a chance to redefine itself and thereby maintain a coherent identity.

Another crucial point is that the Lobby in a sense owed its survival during these troublesome years to the EWL membership. Because of its vital link to the EU, the Lobby was seen as an important actor in the eyes of the Government which therefore stepped in to pay the EWL membership fee and ensure its continued existence.

5.4.3. In and Out of the Lobby

The most serious sacrifice for organisations joining a meta-organisation is the risk of losing some of their autonomy (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005:434). Ahrne and Brunsson (2008:83) have pointed out that it is quite common for larger and resourceful organisations to find it challenging when meta-organisations try to speak for all of their member organisations, since it reduces their own uniqueness and detracts from their position as an important actor. It might even seem unnecessary for large, important and resourceful organisations to join since they may have much higher action capacity or status than the meta-organisation itself. Hence the risk of becoming a meta-organisation “for the weak” (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2008:83). At the same time, however, meta-organisations have a tendency to reach monopoly since it is difficult to create several meta-organisations for the very same category. Having a monopoly is also the aim for a meta-organisation, as it strengthens its identity and attractiveness (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005:439). In the following we will see how the Lobby has managed to attract important members despite the risk of sacrificing some of their autonomy, due to the lack of alternatives and because of the Lobby being able to claim some sort of monopoly.
As we have already seen, the Fredrika Bremer Association left within a year after the formation of the Lobby. The Fredrika Bremer Association is certainly an established and influential actor with a long history of working for gender equality and women’s rights, which is why they might have found it challenging when a new actor claiming to speak for the women’s movement was created. According to a representative, the association left because of the social democratic dominance and as a consequence of the Lobby’s statements going against their opinions (Interviewed 2013-04-17). The official record, however, differed and shows the association’s unwillingness to give up part of its autonomy and independence. When the election committee at the first annual meeting in 1997 suggested that the elected board members represent the umbrella rather than their individual organisations, the Fredrika Bremer Association objected and called for the proposal to be referred back for further consideration. When this was rejected, the association announced that they would not participate in the election and promptly withdrew entirely from the umbrella (SWL 1997c).

Yet there was controversy already before the formation of the Lobby. At the initial meeting the women’s organisations discussed the possibility of the umbrella organisation being a public consultation body. According to a representative of another member organisation, the Fredrika Bremer Association disagreed since they had been a major public consultation body for years before (Interviewed 2013-04-30.). As an established organisation within the women’s movement, the “symbolic dominance” (Zald & McCarthy, 1979:5) of the Fredrika Bremer Association was threatened by the new actor demanding its own identity. This established association’s actions show how identity and autonomy is always a sensitive issue and a matter of dispute in meta-organisations. Similarly to the logic reported by both Staggenborg (1986:384) and Hathaway and Meyer (1993:172), it is likely that the Fredrika Bremer Association would have preferred a more informal cooperative network which could have kept a lower profile and thus allowed the Fredrika Bremer Association to protected its own visibility. Such an arrangement would thus have been less of a challenge than the autonomous representative and formal organisation which the Lobby in fact became.

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15 It was founded in 1884 and therefore the oldest of the Lobby’s members.

16 In a statement the FBA stated that they did not intend to participate in the election of the Board since the proposal of the election committee was known the very same day as the meeting was held. They argued that the association therefore could not discuss it internally. Consequently they handed in “a written notice of withdrawal from Sams with immediate effect” (SWL 1997c).
The women’s shelter organisations SKR and ROKS have, as mentioned, also once left the Lobby. According to a representative of the SKR, the two women’s shelter organisations decided to make common cause to leave as they found the Lobby undemocratic and lacking transparency, especially when it came to which member organisations would represent the Lobby internationally (Interviewed 2013-06-03). The two organisations differ from other members since they represent an essential part of the women’s movement: the women’s shelter movement. For the meta-organisation the Swedish Women’s Lobby, claiming to represent the women’s movement, it thus becomes essential to keep the women’s shelter organisations as members or it will lose some of its credibility as a representative body; and as we have seen, the head of the Gender Equality Unit at the Government Offices claimed that the Lobby was no longer representative of the women’s organisations after the political women’s organisations and the shelter organisations had started to leave the Lobby in 2003 and consequently withdrew the grants. A former chairwoman of the Lobby asserts that the Lobby saw the women’s shelter organisations as a very important part of the movement and consequently, during these years of difficulties, started to have meetings and even “negotiate” with them to gain their trust and get them back as members (Interviewed 2013-05-08). The Lobby succeeded in its efforts since both of the women’s shelter organisations are today back as full members, as indeed is the Fredrika Bremer Association.

Why did these three important and large women’s organisations come back as members in the Lobby? Following Ahrne and Brunsson, I argue that the Lobby with time has managed to reach some sort of monopoly in representing women’s organisations, which is typical for meta-organisations. Moreover, there were no alternatives since there is only one Swedish national coordinator of the EWL. And as we have seen, the EWL gives the Lobby both legitimacy and a clear role vis-à-vis other women’s organisations (see section 5.3). Equally important, the Lobby is seen as a very important actor in the eyes of the Government and has established itself as an overall organisation representing the Swedish women’s movement both internationally and domestically. Thus, for women’s organisations claiming to be an important part of the movement, it becomes essential to be represented within this actor. This becomes very clear when all three of them, according to the representatives, argue that in the end it is better to take part, or as one of them says: “to stand on the outside and just have a row, there’s no point, it’s better to join and try to have an influence” (Interviewed 2013-04-17). More than actually liking what the Lobby does or how it functions, some members thus (re)joined since there was no alternative and because they thought they could change the
shortcomings of the Lobby. Ahrne and Brunsson (2008:81f) argue that in some cases an organisation may join a meta-organisation because it dislikes what it is trying to achieve and thus the reason for joining is to stop it from carrying out certain activities. In the case of the Lobby, however, these organisations did not of course want to prevent the meta-organisation from working for women’s rights and gender equality, but since they realised the Lobby had become “the voice” for the movement and thus an important actor central to the state, they wanted to have an influence within it.

Ahrne and Brunsson (2008:133) maintain that members rarely leave their meta-organisation, and that if they do it is more likely to be a larger and/or strong and important member, which was the case with the three members discussed above. However, in the case of the Lobby there are several smaller organisations which have left. One of them is Sáráhkká, a Sámi women’s organisation which left when it ceased to exist as a formal organisation. Others have been forced to leave as they have not paid the annual fee, which the office sees as unfortunate (SWL employee, Interviewed 2013-05-06). Having enough resources thus becomes important. For instance, the Liberia Dujar Association (LDA) declares that they left because they lacked the resources to pay the fee and to go to meetings (Correspondence, LDA, 2013-06-04). In the case of the Lobby, it is clear that despite its typical meta-organisational structure it does not always manage to keep smaller members. This is due to the membership requirements of being a formal organisation as well as being able to pay the membership fee. Additionally, a member may be excluded by the annual meeting if it works against the Lobby’s goals (SWL, 2013a). This has never happened, however the former member organisation Haro decided to leave in 2010 as they disagreed with the Lobby’s view on gender equality.17 Apparently, this did not come as a surprise to several of the interviewees as Haro had expressed divergent opinions before. Haro’s focus is on parenthood and the family’s right to choose its own way of childcare, and this entails a certain “housewife” focus which does not correspond with the Lobby’s goals. Haro explained in an article that they found the Lobby to be based on an “outdated” view on gender equality and that they found it difficult to influence from within as they could not leave a reservation against the board’s decisions.

17 Their full name is the National Organisation for Freedom of choice, Gender Equality and Parenthood, or “Riksorganisationen för Valfrihet, Jämställdhet och Föräldraskap” in Swedish.
For the member organisation the 1.6 million club, focusing on women’s health issues, it was instead problematic to accept that the Lobby is outspokenly feminist. A representative of another member organisation asserts that the 1.6 million club has confronted the Lobby by asking them to remove the line in their statutes where it says it is a feminist organisation. Eventually the 1.6 million club joined the Lobby anyway which surprises the representative of another member organisation (Interviewed 2013-06-27). In view of the fact that the Lobby has managed to establish itself as a representative for the women’s movement and plays the role as the interlocutor between the movement and the EU, it is however not so surprising that an individual organisation overlooks the drawbacks for the sake of not being left on the outside. The former member organisation Women for Peace, on the other hand, decided to leave “when it became a ‘Lobby’ which didn’t suit [their] ideology” (Correspondence, Women for Peace, 2013-05-21).

Even though the Lobby has never – apart from the case with the political party organisations – excluded any members for not corresponding with the organisation’s ideology or for working against its goals, the history described above clearly shows how some members found themselves not fitting in or disagreeing with the Lobby’s visions or way of working. Others found themselves too small for the Lobby as they were not able to take part as active members or pay the annual fee due to lack of resources. Moreover, since the Lobby has membership rules focusing on formalistic representation, there is a mechanism whereby informal and more loosely connected women’s groups are excluded (see section 5.2.2.). Instead, due to its established role as the united voice for the Swedish women’s movement, the Lobby manages to keep important members which in theory might feel threatened by this new actor in the field, or even wish to play the very same role as the Lobby. Thus, the Lobby is more likely to become a meta-organisation for the strong than for the weak (cf. Ahrne & Brunsson, 2010:8).

5.4.4. Who Does What? – The Cases of CSW and Violence against Women
A typical source of conflict among member organisations within a meta-organisation is diversity – as in the case of the political women’s organisations not being able to cooperate. Conflict between the member organisations and the meta-organisation, in contrast, is due to similarity (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005:440). Some meta-organisations are associations dealing

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18 The article can be found (in Swedish) at: http://www.mynewsdesk.com/se/pressroom/haro/pressrelease/view/haro-begaer-uttraede-ur-sveriges-kvinnolobby-skl-502035
with lobbying activities while their members are companies selling products; the meta-organisation and its member organisations thus perform wholly different activities and the division of labour between them is clear. However, if a meta-organisation resembles its members both in organisational structure and agenda there is a clear risk of competition; indeed, if a meta-organisation performs the same tasks as its members, the latters’ reason for existing may be questioned (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2010:16). At the same time, the meta-organisation needs to act. The very base of every organisation is its autonomy and identity which derive from its actions and self-determination. Thus, if an organisation does not make decisions or act, it can be seen as irrelevant (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2008:110f). Consequently, a meta-organisation needs to find a balance between what it can do and what it should leave up to its members, so that it remains relevant to its environment while at the same time does not take over its members’ activities. Hence, this part will deal with the question: Who does what?

Since all of its work, according to the statutes, emanates from the UN documents CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action, the Lobby naturally deals with UN-related assignments such as the yearly analysis of the government’s budget propositions (SWL, 2013a). The Lobby is today a given participant in the Swedish delegation to the annual CSW meetings. In 2012, the chairperson of the Lobby was the only representative from the women’s movement in the Swedish delegation (Ministry of Education and Research, 2012). However, depending on the theme of the session, other organisations from the women’s movement may be represented as well. For example, given the theme “violence against women” in 2013, SKR and ROKS had one representative each. However, both UN Women and the women’s shelter organisations feel overruled and rendered invisible by their umbrella as “they always snitch the seat in the delegation”, according to a representative of a member organisation (Interviewed 2013-06-27). Since UN Women’s main focus is on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and on CEDAW, they see themselves as the key actor in the Swedish CSW delegation as well as the central organisation working with these documents. The UN Women have, according to a representative of a member organisation, several times expressed that “the UN is their area” and that the Lobby should instead be more engaged in the EWL (Interviewed 2013-06-27).

For the women’s shelter organisations there is also a feeling of being deprived of the expertise which they have accumulated after 30 years of working against violence against women, but which the Lobby’s management lacks. Faced with SKR and ROKS seeing themselves as experts on the area the Lobby is thus, still, faced with a challenge. Combating violence
against women is a major and crucial issue for the women’s movement. For example, at present the Lobby is running a campaign called “The Sex Purchase Act 2.0” where it argues for an expansion of the Swedish law criminalising the buyer to apply abroad. In September 2012, the Lobby also started a project in cooperation with ROKS and SKR to involve Swedish companies in their work against prostitution by implementing ethical policies against the buying of sexual services. Since these campaigns overlap with the member organisations’ work, there has been an internal discussion according to a former board member of the Lobby (Interviewed 2013-06-27):

/…/ and this is the dilemma: when I sat in the board we discussed this a lot because, this whole thing with the prostitution project was a borderline case, was it the Lobby who should run it or respective [member] organisations?

In the end, she thinks, it turned out fine since it became “clear” that SKR and ROKS were the experts. In this case, overlapping activities between the meta-organisation and its members do not necessarily have to be a problem but the Lobby has to be careful so that it does not overrule those of its members who see themselves as experts. Consequently, it seems safe for the Lobby to run campaigns within this issue area as long as the members are engaged and identified as the experts. The Lobby managed to act and thus strengthen its relevance to the environment while not challenging its members. In the case of the CSW however, the Lobby has been less successful since some members, especially UN Women in Sweden, feel that their meta-organisation has taken over their own tasks. For the Lobby, it is a constant balancing act between maintaining its own relevance and keeping the internal tensions down.

5.4.5. Speaking with One Voice? – The Case of Surrogate Motherhood
Continuing on the theme of “who does what” in a meta-organisation and the above mentioned balancing act which the Lobby constantly has to perform, we now turn to the question of who is to convey opinions to the outside world (cf. Ahrne & Brunsson, 2008:109). A meta-organisation is often created in order to give its member organisations a chance to join their forces and “speak with one voice” (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2008:69). However, as has been the case in other civil society coalitions, it can sometimes be a challenge to speak with a united voice. When Jacobsson and Johansson (2009:184;188) analysed how social NGOs in Sweden tried to cooperate through a network due to the open method of coordination (OMC) in the area of social inclusion, they found that this network only managed to remain unified and “speak with one voice” if it not only maintained a more informal character (as highlighted of course by Staggenborg, 1986; and Hathaway & Meyer, 1993) but also sought “the lowest
common denominator” when formulating opinions, which in turn reduced its influence. In the case of the Lobby, the situation is of course different since it is a very formal body of cooperation, while at the same time compromising members with differing views and opinions. Consequently, the Lobby has had to manage the situation differently which has however caused it some problems in terms of internal challenges.

The Lobby wants to speak with one voice and is also expected to do so. Its unity is one of the Lobby’s advantages, according to a former chairperson. However, this is difficult when the members are diverse and some issues are controversial. One way to clearly speak with one voice to one’s environment is to make a statement on a certain issue. Every year the board invites an inspiring speaker to the Lobby’s annual meeting. In 2011 the writer Kajsa Ekis Ekman was invited to talk about her book on prostitution and surrogate motherhood, which inspired the participants to make a statement on the latter issue, according to an employee at the Lobby’s office (Interviewed 2013-05-06). In the statement the Lobby referred to the European Parliament FEMM Committee’s demand for a directive which sees prostitution and surrogate motherhood as a form of violence against women. The Lobby also pointed out that it sees surrogacy as a trade with women’s bodies (SWL, 2011). Later on, in several articles, the Lobby explained how it sees surrogacy as a form of violence against women regardless of whether the woman does it for money or out of altruism. A board member highlights that the Lobby desired to confirm to the different political parties in the parliament that everyone indeed did agree on the statement (Interviewed 2013-05-27). This is however a contrasting picture to that given by some of the other interviewees. Instead, they argue that the standpoint was not obvious and that not all member organisations agreed with it, or they found it difficult to take a position.

Rolandsen Agustín (2008) found that the European Commission obstructed CSOs from substantively represent women due to its consultation process not giving them enough time for internal debates. Similarly, the Lobby obstructed its members from anchoring their votes within their organisations. Since the question of surrogate motherhood suddenly came up at the annual meeting as a new and unprepared issue, several representatives of member organisations participating at the meeting simply did not know what their respective organisations actually thought on this issue. Moreover, there was no time to have a discussion within the member organisations and thus no possibility to anchor their votes. Some members consequently found it problematic that the Lobby wanted to make a statement about it. For
instance, the Fredrika Bremer Association does not agree with a total ban: “It’s too bluntly reasoned; we don’t want to forbid that you, for example, want to help your sister [to have children]” says a representative (Interviewed 2013-04-17). For IKFF, working with peace related topics, surrogate motherhood was not even an issue and therefore difficult to take a position on, especially as there had not been any discussion, and they therefore pointed out that it was wrong to make such a statement, according to a representative of a member organisation (Interviewed 2013-04-30). SweQ, on the other hand, could back the statement even though they were not completely familiar with the issue. SweQ has also pointed out the importance of emphasizing that only the participants at the annual meeting has signed a statement as it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the Lobby as a whole and the individual member organisations. An interviewed representative of a member organisation sees this as an example of what can be problematic with umbrella organisations and asks: “do member organisations actually back this?” (Interviewed 2013-04-30). A former board member of the Lobby sees the case of surrogacy as problematic and she questions how many member organisations had the time to form an opinion before the statement was taken. Instead, she proposes, the Lobby could have formed a working group on surrogacy which would have entailed a longer discussion as well as a process of learning within the women’s movement, and after that a position could have been taken (Interviewed 2013-05-08).

Why then did the Lobby rush in the case of the statement on surrogacy? The Lobby runs a risk in a situation like this since members who disagree or feel it was unjust to make such a statement could later on say this publicly which could damage the Lobby’s credibility. The Lobby could easily have ignored this issue just like it has not taken a position on the EU because there are diverging opinions among its members. Was the ambition to “speak with one voice” (externally) stronger than anchoring (internally)? I find this likely considering the following quotation by the above mentioned board member talking about this statement:

So you can say it was like a show of power I think at the meeting two years ago /.../ Then we made a common statement. And all agreed. (Interviewed 2013-05-27, emphasis added)

By inviting an inspiring speaker the board of the Lobby makes sure that the participants, the member organisations’ delegates, agree on a certain issue and thus ensures that the whole Lobby speaks with one voice. As some members pointed out, this is problematic. First of all, not all member organisations were represented at the meeting since only 24 members
participated. Secondly, not all of those present agreed on the now taken position. Thirdly, since the issue was unprepared, some of those individuals representing their organisation were forced to vote without knowing their organisation’s standpoint. Consequently, the management’s urge to demonstrate the unity of the Lobby to its environment challenged its representativeness.

Moreover, this is yet again a case of how a meta-organisation, just like any other organisation, needs to show its own identity and autonomy towards its environment (here: the Swedish political context) which collides with its member organisations opposing the extent of similarity which is enforced upon them when the meta-organisation speaks on behalf of them (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2010:12f). Considering the board member’s commentary on the annual statement as a “show of power”, it is clear that the Lobby is eager to display unity and similarity and thereby reinforce its relevance as an organisation. And given that the Lobby cannot change its members’ behaviour or impose rules upon them, the ability to express common opinions becomes very important in order to be visible as an actor.

5.4.6. Participation and Commitment
As we have seen, as a meta-organisation the Lobby has to be careful in its actions, or it may cause irritation among its members due to overlapping activities and the ambition to speak on their behalf. Although the Lobby can be seen as successful since it has managed to expand and to keep most of its members as well as being recognised as an important actor, it is a different matter whether the members are committed, participate and feel that their membership is significant. The most direct way for members to exert influence is by participating at the annual meetings and by sending motions in advance to the board. As we have already seen there were only 24 members present at the annual meeting in 2011.19 At the two latest ones there were 20 (2012) and 21 (2013) members present. The low attendance is, in addition, combined with few motions and nominations to the board and the EWL, according to representatives of the member organisations. One of them sits in the election committee and confirms the decline of motions. She even argues that “lately, the member organisations have been pretty unengaged” and that they had to “chase” nominations at the annual meeting. Moreover, she claims that if there are any motions or propositions they usually involve formalities (Interviewed 2013-06-27). Thus, the members of the Lobby tend to be, to a certain extent, unengaged in their umbrella.

19 The total amount of members has not changed much lately and is, as mentioned above, 39 in 2013.
The reasons for this less than perfect engagement and commitment can be divided into three basic areas. One possibility is that the organisational structure of the Lobby, in terms of forms and rules of participation and decision-making procedures, in some respects militates against individual member engagement. An important general mechanism pointed out by Ahrne (1994:107) is that in voluntary associations – where, unlike in other types of organisations such as business companies, individual members cannot meet on a near continuous basis – there is often a “contradiction in the inner logic between the democratic constitution, the rights of all members to decide about activities of the organisation, and the need for quick decisions and actions”. This tends to lead to “oligarchy”, i.e. that the employed staff and/or executive take actions outside of what has been decided upon simply because it would take too long to ask all members of their opinions and then have a vote upon it. In the case of the Lobby, this is particularly likely as there is only one meeting a year, only one occasion each year at which all members can meet and make decisions. Moreover, there does indeed seem to be a tendency towards this “oligarchy”. Several representatives of the Lobby’s member organisations express a divide between the members and the Lobby itself:

Well, the commitment is strong among those working at the office and in the board but not so much among the member organisations [...] Very often it results in the umbrella doing its own stuff and then the members come once, to the annual meeting, and they elect a board. And then there isn’t much more than that. (Interviewed 2013-06-27)

You could say they [the Lobby] do their own stuff […] they don’t have any footwork, they’re just the board you see, and that’s strange too. (Interviewed 2013-04-17)

Furthermore, some of the member representatives compare the lack of participation at the Lobby’s annual meetings with the situation in their respective member organisations:

When we have our annual meetings there are over 200 people and for two days. (Interviewed 2013-04-17)

[Our meetings] are completely different. And they’re a lot more democratic I think [...] first of all you get a lot of motions which means we have lively debates. (Interviewed 2013-06-27, emphasis added)

Another way of accounting for the lack of engagement is by considering the motives of the member organisations. As has been observed, there is a tendency for civil society organisations to prefer informal to formal coalitions. Since all organisations strive for
autonomy and uniqueness, a meta-organisation based on some sort of similarity is always a potential threat to its member organisations (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2008); therefore, by keeping the coalition organisation rather informal the internal tensions will be reduced (Hathaway & Meyer, 1993:172ff; Staggenborg, 1986:384). In the case of the Lobby it could have been enough for it to be but a link between the Swedish women’s movement organisations and the international women’s movement, dealing foremost with EWL related tasks. Instead the Lobby has a very broad agenda today which, as we have seen, has caused some internal tensions and uncertainties as in the cases of the surrogacy statement and projects on violence against women. Thus, some members may prefer if the Lobby was a less formal body with a narrower agenda. Consequently, it is possible that there are organisations which have joined the Lobby simply on the grounds that “it is better to be in” so that they are not out, rather than seeing the Lobby as a fully legitimate forum. Seen from this perspective, the criticisms may not simply be complaints about something that is working imperfectly, but to some extent a willed reality: when representatives for major individual organisations contrast the lack of participation in the Lobby with the high level of engagement in their own organisations, they justify their own separate importance and detract from the legitimacy of the Lobby.

Yet another possibility is to consider the motives of the Lobby itself. Ahrne and Brunsson (2008:129) suggest that the secretariat of a meta-organisation may see the meta-organisation’s ability to make decisions as a way to enhance its own importance. The more decisions are made, the more authority for the Lobby to act which in turn improves its own reason for existing. However, since members only meet once a year to make decisions on common standpoints and future joint actions the decision-making possibilities are rare, and if the members cannot agree decisions will be few. Consequently, from the Lobby’s point of view a full commitment from all of its diverse member organisations is not a major problem but an advantage since it facilitates decision-making. The Lobby has as we have seen a rather broad agenda and there are indications that it is becoming something more than a coalition for its members, or as a member representative phrases it:

An umbrella should actually be its members and it feels maybe as if the Lobby is becoming its own women’s organisation. (Interviewed 2013-06-27)

Additionally, a board member says:
But we’re our own organisation, so that we’re not just [...] the sum of our member organisations, but we’re something in ourselves. (Interviewed 2013-05-27, emphasis added)

Thus, the Lobby has managed to occupy the open space and expand its space in the organisational landscape of the Swedish women’s movement by expanding on its agenda and seeking its own organisational maintenance.

6. Conclusion
This chapter summarises the thesis’ findings and concludes on what the meta-organisation structure has meant for the Swedish Women’s Lobby and thus on some of the impact which the EU has had on the Swedish women’s movement. Further, the meta-organisation theory is discussed in relation to its utility when analysing the Europeanisation of domestic CSOs. Finally, further research is suggested.

In the case of the Swedish Women’s Lobby, the EU has proven to be a key from its very creation to the position it takes up today. As we have seen, the Swedish women’s movement had not been organised as a coalition before and thus, following Ahrne and Papakostas, there was an open space in the organisational landscape. However, since the question of an umbrella organisation was a sensitive issue, it can, in Ahrne and Papakostas’ terms, be seen as a protected space. Already established women’s CSOs felt threatened by the possibility of the women’s movement being organised under one actor as this, as we have seen, challenges their own visibility and independence. Protecting it from being organised was thus a way to protect their own importance. The EU made a latent possibility accessible: it became possible to organise the women’s movement organisations since the EWL “introduced motives for cooperation” (Císař and Vráblíková, 2010:217). Furthermore, having an umbrella has allowed the movement to have an influence in the EWL, to gain access to and information about EU policy processes and EU institutions, but also to speak with one voice both internationally and domestically. Yet, the meta-organisational structure has brought with it some internal difficulties and challenges. I argue that the internal tensions have been manageable due to certain centripetal forces given to the Lobby through its EWL membership. As a national EWL coordinator, it has a clear role and mission vis-à-vis its member organisations and is consequently appreciated by the Swedish state which sees the Lobby as an important actor speaking on behalf of the women’s movement and also saving it from having to arbitrate. Moreover, the Lobby is mainly financed by government funding, which makes it more or less
independent from its members’ resources, and which in turn reduces some possible internal tensions since the members do not need to make significant financial contributions. Furthermore, there are no alternatives to the Lobby, giving it some sort of monopoly and making it attractive to all of the important women’s organisations which tend to prefer to “be in, rather than out” as a safeguard despite the difficulties it might mean for them. This shows that it is difficult to ignore the (relatively) new actor – the Lobby. All of this helps the Lobby to overcome its inherent centrifugal forces, i.e. that its members strive for autonomy and their own visibility, and explains the established and safe position of the Lobby today.

To conclude, the impact of the EU can then be seen as: 1) giving the Swedish women’s movement an incentive to cooperate and thus making a former open but protected space accessible, 2) imposing a meta-organisational structure on the Swedish women’s movement, which 3) brings new tensions both among the member organisations and between the new actor and its member organisations but, 4) reduces the centrifugal forces by giving the Lobby a clear role and financial independence, thereby providing it with a safe position.

The case of the Swedish Women’s Lobby has proven to be an example of how the EU brings meta-organisational structures to the member state level, but what does it mean for the Swedish women’s movement that the EU entails these organisational structures? Firstly, I argue that similarly to the situation in other EU member states, Sweden has seen an increased formalisation of the women’s movement and to a certain extent a divide within the movement. The formalisation of the Swedish women’s movement is primarily a result of the aggregation of opinions and demands which is a necessary corollary of the meta-organisational structure of the Lobby. Due to its role as the EU link and the EWL membership, the Lobby has the privilege of speaking for the Swedish women’s movement and being seen as the actor for the movement. In an important sense the Lobby can be seen to give the Swedish women’s movement a stronger voice as it is united, yet it can also be seen as contributing to a rationalisation of the women’s movement as diversity is rendered invisible by the Lobby’s privileged position and monopoly. Furthermore, as a meta-organisation the Lobby adds to the long chain of representation which further adds to the formalisation of the Swedish women’s movement as the Lobby functions as an arbitrator between grassroots and policy makers at national and EU levels. There is a divide within the Swedish women’s movement due to the demand for formalistic representation stemming from the Commission and trickling down through the EWL. As a consequence, the Lobby excludes parts of the movement, such as
informal women’s groups. As in the case of the EWL (Strid, 2009:257), the Lobby could thus be seen as a ‘gate-keeper’ as it has achieved a monopoly on speaking on behalf of the Swedish women’s movement. Those women’s CSOs and women’s interests which are not included in the Lobby, or simply demands which have not made it through the aggregation of demands, are to a certain extent rendered invisible by the existence of the Lobby.

Secondly, I argue that coalition in the form of a meta-organisation entails internal tensions and difficulties for the participating member organisations. Both the Lobby and its members are in an ambiguous situation in which they need to balance different advantages and disadvantages. Following Ahrne and Brunsson, this ambiguity and the balancing act they all have to perform are due to the fact that both the Lobby and its members are organisations with a wish to survive (organisational maintenance) and to be unique and relevant to their environments. Consequently their identities and autonomy become essential. The Lobby has through the years been grappling with internal tensions due to the fact that it relies on the similarity among its members, while the member organisations themselves strive for their own organisational maintenance by enhancing their uniqueness and autonomy. We have seen how the Lobby performs a balancing act between trying to be visible and relevant to its environment as an actor while at the same time avoid competing with its member organisations, i.e. the risk of overlap. Some activities have proved to be problematic in these terms. Some member organisations feel that the Lobby has taken over some of the activities they see as their own – as in the case of the CSW meetings. Thus, there is an ever-present question of who does what – the Lobby or the member organisation(s)? Furthermore, there is the question of who speaks for whom? Once again the Lobby wants to be seen as a relevant actor and thus to speak for its members becomes important; however, the member organisations care for their own uniqueness and autonomy. In the case of the annual statement against surrogate motherhood it became even more complicated since the Lobby then prioritised its own identity, visibility and ability to act over representativeness and internal anchoring of positions. However, these internal tensions have been manageable: they have remained tensions rather than evolving into open conflicts between the meta-organisation and its members. What is more, the Lobby has even managed to take up more space and expanded on its sphere of action without deterring members or provoking too much discontent among them.
### 6.1. A Meta-Organisational Perspective on Europeanisation

I have thus seen the Europeanisation of the Swedish women’s movement through Ahrne and Brunsson’s meta-organisation perspective. What can this perspective contribute when studying the Europeanisation of CSOs? Firstly, it makes room for an understanding of intra- and inter-organisational relations within a movement. Secondly, it focuses on both cooperation/coalition and conflict/competition. The meta-organisation perspective explains the ambiguous situation CSOs end up in when forming a coalition. On the one hand, they are eager to cooperate in order to enhance the common goals of the movement. On the other hand, they wish to remain visible and stress their own importance as individual organisations. So when a meta-organisation is in place CSOs wish to have an influence within it while at the same time they do not want to give it full legitimacy. Thus, through the lens of the meta-organisational perspective it becomes clear that the EU restructures the civil society organisational landscape at national level and that the EU therefore has certain organisational consequences, not only political. The perspective also highlights the fact that the EU brings incentives to speak with one voice and thereby gives one actor a leeway and the importance it would otherwise not have. Consequently, the meta-organisation perspective adds to an understanding of how civil society umbrellas may achieve monopoly and thus function as ‘gate-keepers’ in Strid’s words (2009:257).

The meta-organisational perspective further suggests that the EU has harmonising effects not only on domestic laws but on civil society as well since the EU pressures CSOs towards a certain organisation structure. The Europeanisation of civil society can consequently be seen as a top-down process whereby national CSOs adapt to the logics of the EU multi-level system. Knill and Lehmkuhl (1999) have pointed out that one domestic impact of the EU is that the transnational polity prescribes an institutional model to which its member states have to adopt, which then generates domestic institutional change. They call it the mechanism of positive integration and had policies concerning free trade and free mobility in mind. But if we see Europeanisation as a process which imposes meta-organisational structures to CSOs at national level, the mechanism of positive integration can also be applied on civil society since there is a type of domestic compliance when CSOs form meta-organisations in order to fit the multi-level model of the EU.

As always theories are simplified models of reality and as such there will always be empirical examples that do not correspond perfectly to the theory (Siggelkow, 2007:21). The meta-
organisation theory is, as pointed out earlier, very general since it takes into account all types of ‘organisations of organisations’, ranging from the EU to the Swedish Floorball Association. National umbrellas uniting a group of CSOs will consequently differ somehow from the general picture of meta-organisations. The Lobby does, as we have seen, show how these types of meta-organisations differ from the model. First, Ahrne and Brunsson place great emphasis on the meta-organisation’s ability to confer an identity on its members. By joining a meta-organisation they argue that a certain group of organisations can gain a higher status and be seen as proper organisations within this specific category which they would otherwise risk not doing. This conclusion is however based on meta-organisations such as international associations for a certain category of private companies setting rules and standards for its members which gives the members some sort of credibility and a quality label. In the case of the Lobby, the meta-organisation’s identity is important for its members, but since the Lobby does not set standards for its members, they are not dependent on the Lobby’s identity to gain a higher status or be seen as a “proper” women’s movement organisation. Instead, it is more a question of influence. The Lobby attracts members because it has established itself as the actor and thus, as we have seen, women’s organisations join so as not to be left on the outside. Second, and as a consequence, the Lobby has shown a tendency towards becoming a meta-organisation for the strong rather than for the weak. Its achieved position as the actor in combination with its membership rules excluding, to some extent, weaker and informal women’s groups makes it more likely to become a meta-organisation for the strong (cf. Ahrne & Brunsson, 2008:82).

Third, a particularly important aspect of the impact of meta-organisations in a social movement setting is, as highlighted above, that they entail increased formalisation. Since their focus is on meta-organisations in general, and because the vast majority of relevant organisations (e.g. private companies, states, and local authorities) are already very formal in nature, Ahrne and Brunsson do not of course approach this aspect. A discussion of social movement organisations, however, cannot afford to ignore this angle.

Finally, the Lobby builds its decisions on simple majority instead of consensus or qualified majority, whereas, according to Ahnre and Brunsson (2008:123), these latter procedures are ways to reduce the tensions and give the meta-organisation legitimacy for its decisions. I argue that since the Lobby, as a SMO, is not interested in forcing its members to do certain things, for instance implement policies – as private company associations or the EU (seen as
meta-organisations) might do – the Lobby’s decisions are less crucial to its members. The Lobby’s decisions concern its own focus, common projects and common opinions. It does not impose rules or standards on its members and thus its authority over its members is somewhat limited as they are not forced to do or prohibited from doing certain things. Seen from this point of view, the space which the Lobby has been allowed to take up is understandable and so also is the relatively low participation and engagement of its members. As noted in chapter 3, the term *zone of indifference* is less useful when analysing social movement meta-organisations due to the fact that they are not interested in setting rules and standards for their member organisations. Instead, what is crucial for the Lobby’s members, and which explains the nonetheless existing internal tensions, is the question of the Lobby’s own *sphere of action* – who does what and who should formulate opinions to the environment – which is essentially a product of the relative similarity between it and its members. As a social movement meta-organisation, the Lobby is the same type of organisation as its members – they are all NGOs within the civil society sector – and even shares some organisational features such as a board and annual meeting, but more importantly, it shares the same area of interest and possible activities to carry out. In theory, the Lobby could do what its member organisations do (except for pure service activities such as running a women’s shelter), which means that competition is an ever-present area of concern. Thus, understanding Europeanisation as a process which imposes meta-organisational structures on domestic CSOs demands a focus on this similarity and what it means for the participating organisations.

This thesis had as its point of departure the ambition to add to the understanding of the ways in which the EU has had an impact on inter-organisational relationships among civil society organisations and, specifically, how the Swedish women’s movement is affected by an imposed meta-organisational structure in the form of the Swedish Women’s Lobby. Given that there was no research on the Lobby, other than its own 10th anniversary booklet (see SWL & Alfredsson, 2008), an historical account of the organisation’s foundation and early years had to be drawn up in order to understand its origin and characteristics. Consequently, this study has contributed with a substantial basis for understanding the Lobby. The other main area of contribution is that the case of the Lobby suggests a theoretical perspective on the impact of EU-based umbrellas on inter-organisational relations among domestic CSOs. Meta-organisation theory has, with slight modifications and shifts of emphasis, been shown to be a useful tool in the analysis of the Europeanisation of civil society. This thesis does not,
however, claim to be a totalising study of the Europeanisation of the Swedish women’s movement and a number of further research questions remain open.

6.2. Further Research
As we have seen, the organisational structure of the EWL results in a moderation of demands, or what Strid (2009) labels ‘self-moderation’. Given that this thesis has demonstrated the similar meta-organisational structure of the SWL, which rationalises the Swedish women’s movement by an aggregation of demands and interests, it seems likely that organisational forms have consequences for the substance of the movement’s demands. It has not, however, been part of this study’s aims to look into actual practices of demand formation; yet this would be an important contribution to an overall understanding of the functioning of the Swedish Women’s Lobby and the effects of Europeanisation.

The most obvious question for further research, however, is: what is the situation in other countries? How has the EWL membership been dealt with and what are the consequences for other domestic women’s movement? For instance, in the UK, with its different regions, the women’s movement has gathered under the EWL member the UK Joint Committee on Women, comprising English, Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh women’s umbrellas and thereby adding to the long chain of representation. The German EWL member, Deutscher Frauenrat, founded in 1894, is interesting in a different way since it existed before the creation of the EWL and the question is then whether the EWL has given it a stronger position vis-à-vis other women’s organisations and how Deutscher Frauenrat managed to become the EWL member. More knowledge of the situation in other countries would also bring advantages for the study of the Swedish Women’s Lobby. As noted above (see 5.3.2.) the Swedish women’s movement’s relation to the EU and the EWL is complicated due to Sweden being a forerunner in gender equality and consequently the EWL initiatives push at already open doors. Through a comparison with other EWL national members, new light could be shed on the SWL as it would help us see more clearly what the EWL membership means in particular for the Swedish women’s movement and help us draw out its specificity.
References


Marks, G. and D. McAdam (1999). ‘On the Relationship of Political Opportunities to the


Sigtunahistoriska institutet, Södertörns högskola.


Stubbergaard, Y. (2013). Co-operation between Civil Society Organizations in Spite of
Differing and Politicized Collective Identities. [Draft version]


**Material**


**Interviews and E-mail correspondence**

Gustafsson, Mikael, Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality. Interviewed 2013-05-30

SWL employee. Interviewed 2013-04-10

SWL employee. Interviewed 2013-05-06

SWL board member. Interviewed 2013-05-27

SWL board member. Interviewed 2013-05-21

SWL former board member. Interviewed 2013-05-02

SWL former board member. Interviewed 2013-05-08

Representative of member organisation. Interviewed 2013-04-30

Representative of member organisation. Interviewed 2013-06-03

Representative of member organisation. Interviewed 2013-04-17

Representative of member organisation. Interviewed 2013-06-27

Centerkvinnorna, E-mail, 2013-06-04

Haro, E-mail, 2013-04-28
Appendix A

Participating organisations at the meeting in February 1997 (number of representatives if more than one):

UNIFEM Sverige (3), Centerkvinnor, Folkaktionen mot pornografi, Fredrika Bremer Förbundet (2), Kvinna Skaraborg (2), Handikappförbundens samarbetsorgan, Haro, Huset AB, Husmodersförbundet Hem och Samhälle, IKFF (2), IKF (2), IOGT-NTO, Jämställdhetsarbetares förening JA, Kristdemokraternas Kvinnoförbund (3), KSAN, Kvinna till Kvinnan, Kvinnofronten, Kvinnor för fred, LO (2), Miljöpartiet Kvinnoutskottet (2), Moderata Kvinnoförbundet, QWEB Sweden, RIFFI, S-kvinnor (2), Samerna rikspartiet, Sáráhkká, SKEN (2), Svenska kvinnors vänsterförbund (2), Kvinnor Kan, Mälardalens kvinnolobby (2), Stiftelsen Radio Q, Svenska Baptisternas Kvinnoförbund, Svenska FN-förbundet, Sveriges ekumeniska kvinnoråd (2), SweQ (3), Tealogerna, Tösabanken (2), Vänsterpartiet, VSQL (2), Synskadades Riksförbund, Yrkeskvinnors riksförbund (2).

Members in November 1997:

Centerkvinnorna, Disas Vänner, Fredrika Bremer Förbundet, IKF, IKFF, IOGT-NTO kvinnor, KSAN, Kristdemokraternas kvinnoförbund, Kvinna Skaraborg, Kvinnor för fred, Kvinnor i svenska kyrkan, LO:s kvinnor, Miljöpartiets kvinnoutskott, Mälardalens kvinnolobby, RFSL, RIFFI, ROKS, SKEN, S-kvinnor, Svenska kvinnliga läkares förening, SweQ, Svenska UNIFEM kommittén, Vänsterpartiets kvinnopolitiska utskott, VSQL, Yrkeskvinnors riksförbund, Folkaktionen mot pornografi, Forum Kvinnor och Handikapp, Föreningen Kvinnomuséer, Ja-föreningen, Sáráhkká, Svenska kvinnors vänsterförbund, Sveriges ekumeniska kvinnoråd, Synskadades Riksförbund, Tealogerna.
### Appendix B

**Chairpersons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name of the Lobby</th>
<th>Time for presidency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gunvor Ngarambe</td>
<td>Sams</td>
<td>1997-1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anki Elken</td>
<td>Sams/SWL</td>
<td>1999-2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva Fager</td>
<td>SWL</td>
<td>2004-2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertrud Åström</td>
<td>SWL</td>
<td>2009- present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Member organisations of the Swedish Women’s Lobby 2013:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of organisation</th>
<th>Homepage</th>
<th>Founded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Allt är möjligt [Everything is possible]</td>
<td><a href="http://www.alltarmojligt.se/">http://www.alltarmojligt.se/</a></td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Business and Professional Women Sweden (BPW)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bpw.se/">http://www.bpw.se/</a></td>
<td>1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Kristen och Kvinna [Christian &amp; Woman]</td>
<td><a href="http://kristenochkvinna.se/">http://kristenochkvinna.se/</a></td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Doris Film</td>
<td><a href="http://dorisfilm.se/">http://dorisfilm.se/</a></td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Female Integrity</td>
<td><a href="http://www.femaleintegrity.se/sv/index.htm">http://www.femaleintegrity.se/sv/index.htm</a></td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Gröna Kvinnor [Green Women]</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gronakvinnor.se/">http://www.gronakvinnor.se/</a></td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Internationella Kvinnoförbundet (IKF) [International Women’s Union]</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ikf.nu/">http://www.ikf.nu/</a></td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Riksorganisationen för Kvinnojourer och Tjejjourer (ROKS) [National Organisatton for Women’s and Girls’ Shelters]</td>
<td><a href="http://www.roks.se/">http://www.roks.se/</a></td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Riksföreningen Stödcentrum mot Incest och andra Sexuella Övergrepp (RSCI) [National Support Centre Against Incest and Sexual Abuse]</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rsci.nu/">http://www.rsci.nu/</a></td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Website</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sveriges Quinnoråd (SweQ) [Swedish Women’s Council]</td>
<td><a href="http://www.sweq.se/">http://www.sweq.se/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1,6 miljonerklubben [The 1.6 million club]</td>
<td><a href="http://www.1.6miljonerklubben.com/">http://www.1.6miljonerklubben.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>UN Women Sweden</td>
<td><a href="http://unwomen.se/">http://unwomen.se/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nr.</td>
<td>Organisationen</td>
<td>Webbplats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Internationella Kvinnoförbundet för Fred och frihet (IKFF) [WILPF Sweden]</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ikff.se/">http://www.ikff.se/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Sverigefinskt Kvinnoforum [Women's forum in the National Association of Finns in Sweden]</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rskl.se/specialforbund.html">http://www.rskl.se/specialforbund.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Kvinnoorganisationernas Samarbetsråd i Alkohol- och Narkotikafrågor (KSAN) [Women’s Organisations Committee on Alcohol and Drug Issues]</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ksan.se">http://www.ksan.se</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: http://sverigeskvinnolobby.se/medlemsorganisationer (2013-10-16)