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Project: Who are the lobbyists? A comparative population study of organised civil society interests in Sweden.

The purpose of this project is to describe and analyse the population of organized civil society interests in Swedish national politics, and to compare it with populations in other European countries. In particular, the project will study the mobilisation of bias and the degree of representativeness of groups, which crucially affects the democratic impact of these organisations.

The project uses a combined top-down and bottom-up research strategy. First, we conduct a bottom-up snap-shot census of politically active civil society groups in Sweden, by studying incoming letters to the Government Offices during the year 2011. This part of the data collection was completed in June 2013. The data presently contains ca 3600 letters, and a rough distribution of the types of groups we have is shown in the figure below. During the fall of 2013 this data will be complemented with top down-data from the same year, where we analyze which groups that have been chosen by the government to give input on the proposals referred for consultation.

The first papers from the project are expected in the spring 2014, and will focus on 1) the degree of representativeness of the Swedish interest group population visavi public opinion, in terms of which issues that are raised (for this purpose we will use the coding of the letter subject, which will be connected to public opinion data), 2) the degree to which there is a mismatch between the actual population of groups (as measured by the bottom-up census) and the top-down constructed population in the government consultations. We are also preparing for a comparative survey of a random sample of the population, which will be used also in similar projects in several other European countries.

Figure: Types of groups lobbying the government 2011

