



1968

Governmental Support of International Non-governmental Organizations

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Published in *International Associations*, 1968, 7, pp 466-473 [[PDF version](#)].

Also French version (*Les contributions gouvernementales aux organisations internationales non-gouvernementales, Associations Internationales*, 1968, 7, pp. 477-508; [PDF version](#))

Part I: Survey

A resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on June 6, 1967 [Res. 1225 (XLII)] resulted in a laborious process of revision of the consultative status of non-governmental organizations in relation with the Council. Several times already this year there, has been reference to this subject in the columns of our magazine, in particular in the January and February numbers (pp 2-31 and 86-91). During the discussions of the NGO Committee of the Economic and Social Council held in March and April this year a final draft resolution (E/C. 2/L.28) was made of the revision of Resolution 288 B(X) which dates from 1950 and which up to now has determined the system of consultative relations between the United Nations and NGOs. The Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with ECOSOC (1) has circulated to its members an excellent document containing the texts of Resolution 288 B(X) and the draft resolution E/ 2/L.28, a list of the paragraphs of the new text showing the most significant changes to the 1950 arrangements, and a commentary on the main trends in evidence during the sessions of the NGO Committee of ECOSOC in March and April.

The Committee's discussions dealt mainly with the character of NGOs : their international quality, their representativeness. In the May 1968 issue of "International Associations" the UAI published a documentary analysis of statistics relating to national participation in international NGOs and showing the progress made as regards the geographical extension of leadership and members.

The NGO Committee of ECOSOC also expressed concern over the presence of government representatives among the members and leading officials of NGOs and the question of direct or indirect financial support from governments, factors which could affect the non-governmental character of these NGOs.

There appears to be a good deal of ignorance of the facts and much confusion regarding this subject, and for this reason we are pleased to publish in the following pages a detailed analysis made by our collaborator A.J. Judge, together with a commentary on the findings by G.P. Speeckaert.

Purpose of Survey

The survey was conducted in order to determine to what extent governmental support of any kind was given to international non-governmental organizations. The distinction between intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is based on the definition adopted by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in its Resolution 288 b (x) of 27 February 1950, namely, 'Any international organization which is not established by intergovernmental agreement shall be considered as a non governmental organization'.

This survey is only concerned with government support of international *non-profit*, non-governmental organizations. Commercial organizations, international corporations, etc have therefore been excluded, except where they have linked together via a nonprofit organization.

Support was taken to have two meanings in this context. Governments or their subsidiary organs can either be direct *members* of non-governmental organizations in which there is a category permitting governmental membership. The governments are then providing partial support of the organization as members. Alternatively, as non-members, governments or their subsidiary organs can provide *financial assistance* of one kind or another. In the first case, this financial assistance will also include membership fees. In the second case, the financial assistance may take the form of direct grants, subsidies, etc. which may cover any percentage of the organization's budget.

Data for the Survey

The 1,935 international non-governmental organizations which were analyzed in this survey are those listed in the 11th edition of the Yearbook of International Organizations (1966-67). This publication has an editorial policy endorsed by the United Nations.

The survey was based on the data *as listed* in the entries in the Yearbook. The majority of these entries has been approved by the executive officers of the organizations concerned. Different interpretations are however made on the terminology used in describing membership types and the nature of financial support in different countries and languages. Every effort is made to eliminate the more obvious discrepancies when the Yearbook entries are prepared, but the editorial staff cannot depart to any great extent from the text returned by the organization. No effort at reinterpretation was made during this survey. It may therefore be assumed that the survey was made on the most comparable data base available under the circumstances when it was impracticable to attempt a detailed analysis of each organization.

Survey Categories Used

1. Membership

Two types of governmental membership support of international NGOs were distinguished.

A Membership was noted when the Yearbook entry indicated some form of *direct* governmental or official membership participation. The terminology accepted as being indicative of this was the following :

- Government or State membership category.
- Government departments amongst members.
- Governmental delegates or officials in official capacity.
- Governmental, semi-governmental, official or semi-official institutions or bodies.

B' Membership was noted when the Yearbook entry indicated some form of *indirect* governmental or official participation in the membership of the organization. Indirect participation was defined as participation through a body, which may or may not be independent of the government (depending on the degree of nationalization in a given country), but which normally receives some form of government financial assistance. When such a body is a member of an international NGO, it is clear that a form of partial governmental financial support is being provided for that NGO.

This category of membership was noted when bodies such as the following were indicated as being members of the NGO :

- National broadcasting organizations.
- Railway administrations.
- Military health authorities.
- National museums.
- National airlines.
- Patent offices.
- Lighthouse authorities.

2. Financial Assistance

Two principal types of governmental financial assistance to international non-governmental organizations were distinguished. A third category was introduced to cover *possible* governmental assistance.

'C' Finance was noted when the Yearbook entry indicated some form of *direct* government financial assistance was being supplied. The terminology accepted as being indicative of this was the following :

- Government grant, subsidy, subvention, assistance, etc.
- Membership fees where 'A' type membership existed, except where membership fees were not a stated source of income.

Excluded from the 'C' category were the following :

- Government contracts.
- UN or Specialized Agency contracts or aid.

'D' Finance was noted when the Yearbook entry indicated some form of *indirect* or less clearly specified financial aid from official bodies. Indirect support was defined to include support from a body of the type indicated under 'B' membership.

The terminology accepted as being indicative of this was the following :

- Grants from official or public bodies, including intergovernmental bodies.
- Grants-in-aid, subsidies.
- Membership fees where 'B' type membership existed, except where membership fees were not a stated source of income.

Excluded from the 'D' category were the following :

- Grants from foundations, private sources, industry, municipalities, UN and Specialized Agencies.
- Donations.

E' Finance was noted when the Yearbook entry indicated some form of 'grant' of an unspecified origin. This category will clearly include a proportion of governmental or official grants of the 'C' and 'D' type, but also includes grants from private sources. This category is

only useful as an indication of the possible extent of government financial support.

The terminology accepted as being indicative of this was the following :

- Grants, subventions.

Comment on Categories Used

1. Membership

One very important type of government indirect support of non-governmental organizations is not covered by the categories as they stand. The Yearbook entry does not distinguish between 'institutions' of governmental and non-governmental type as members of international non-governmental organizations. In many cases this is probably because the organization itself does not evaluate to what extent a national research institution, or some such body, is government supported or independent. This problem of institutions is particularly important in the field of science. A separate survey would need to be performed to determine what proportion of all institutions were government supported and what proportion of each of their programs was government financed. Such bodies were not considered as indicative of category 'B' membership support. An example might be an international association of cereal chemistry, where the national members, particularly in the developing countries, would tend to be government research institutes rather than private bodies supported by industry.

In addition the survey does not bring out the cases where an international NGO may be a member of or receive funds from another international NGO which may have either governments as members or receive direct finance from governments. This is particularly true of the member organizations of the International Council of Scientific Unions which would not have been indicated as receiving government aid even though they might be receiving grants from ICSU. A portion of these grants would come from those members of ICSU which are governments.

The problem of determining the extent to which a member of an international nongovernmental organization is an extension of the government of a particular country extends to bodies such as public cleansing institutes, school associations (which may include government schools), universities (which may be entirely government financed), hospitals, etc.

It is also difficult to evaluate the status of the non-governmental organizations in the socialist countries where such associations are so much more closely integrated into the state administrative apparatus. A rather unsatisfactory example of this situation is the long standing controversy over the 'amateur status' of athletes from these countries participating in the Olympic Games. The majority of these athletes is probably represented on national Olympic committees - nongovernmental organizations - nevertheless the means by which the individual athletes training is financed is still a matter of controversy.

Municipalities were also treated as a borderline case and were not considered as indicative of 'B' type membership, although municipalities and local authorities are arms of the central government in many countries.

Nationalized industries such as gas, coal, steel may be members of international nongovernmental organizations. The members from some of the other member countries may not be nationalized. The study does not bring out such forms of governmental support, except as defined under category 'B'.

The problem is also complex at the national level since a government body may be one of many members of a national organization, e.g. a government library may be a member of a national library association which is non-governmental. This national non-governmental association may then become a member of an international non-governmental library association.

2. Finance

The study does not indicate any forms of indirect support of international non-governmental organizations by government through tax relief legislation. In some countries both the national non-governmental organizations and any international organizations would receive indirect financial assistance because of preferential tax status for non-profit organizations. The form of this legislation varies extensively from country to country being more lenient for some groups in one country than for equivalent groups in another.

In the United States, for example, government tax relief extends even further in that subscribers to some periodicals may treat the annual subscription as a tax deductible expenditure. This results in indirect government support for the national organization and, more indirectly, for any international organization to which that national organization may belong.

Other forms of government assistance to non-governmental organizations are : government training programs for officers of national organizations (e.g. trade unions), government paid part-time officers of non-governmental organizations (e.g. where a particular civil servant is permitted to devote part of his working time to administering such an organization), government or IGO financial assistance in the organization of an international meeting of a non-governmental organization (e.g. supply of meeting hall, travel expenses, hotel expenses, entertainment, etc.). None of these could be detected by this survey.

Government financial assistance to nongovernmental organizations is particularly important in developing countries where there are not sufficient private resources to support national participation in international voluntary action. The extent of this form of support could not be detected by this survey.

Relation between governmental support and policy formulation and control

a) *As a result of Government Membership.* Governmental membership of international non-governmental organizations does not necessarily result in governmental control of policy. Where both governmental and non-governmental bodies are members of a non-governmental organization, policy control depends on the manner in which the voting system is designed and the relative number of

governmental and non-governmental members.

b) *As a result of Government Finance.* Government finance of international nongovernmental organizations does not necessarily result in governmental control of policy. Each case must be judged on its merits. In some cases government aid is given for one particular program of the international non-governmental organization. The other programs may be of no interest to the governmental body concerned and any control it might have over the way in which the aid is used for the one program would not necessarily result in any control over the other programs of the organization. In many such cases the government concerned is only justified in requesting a copy of the accounts for the fund or program with which it is associated.

Summary of Channels of Government Support of International NGOs. This list is given in an extremely approximate order of degree of governmental participation in policy formulation. The order is approximate because the voting systems and degree of governmental influence vary in each case, as does the degree of control over expenditure of government allocated funds.

Channel

Government contract to NGO Government direct membership ('A' type) Government indirect membership ('B' type)

Government controlled or financed bodies which are directly or indirectly members of international NGOs (e.g. universities, nationalized industries, research councils, hospitals, municipalities, etc.)

Government direct finance of NGO (or 'A' membership fees)

Government indirect finance (or 'B' membership fees)

Survey Coverage

Not covered Covered as 'A' type Covered as 'B' type

Not covered unless a specific link with government was shown

Covered as 'C' type; but is not comprehensive as some of these funds are under 'E' and some are not mentioned

Covered as 'D' type; but is not comprehensive as some of these funds are under 'E' and some are not mentioned

- Government legislative tax relief to international NGOs or Not covered indirectly to their national members
- Government control, membership or finance of a national Not covered organization which is a member of a national NGO, which is itself a member of an international NGO
- Government aid or tax relief to businesses or corporations Not covered which are linked through national or international NGOs

Survey results

A. Total international non-governmental organizations 1935

Less: Common Market NGOs for which no details on 'Members' or 'Finance' are given 245 1690 100 %

Total indicating government support as members

- direct (A) 59 3.5%
- indirect (B) 64 3.8 % (only 1 organization had both A and B)

Total indicating government financial support

- direct (C) 97 5.7%
- indirect (D) 104 5.7% (only 4 organizations had both C and D)

Total indicating *possible* government support

- (E) 94 5.6% (only 1 organization had both E and A 1 organization had both E and B and D no organization had E and C)

Total organizations indicating A, B, C or D 219 13.0%

Total organizations indicating A, B, C, D or E 311 18.4%

B. The following combinations between different forms of support were noted (excluding E) :

- A and B only: 1
- B and C only: 4
- A and C and D: 4
- A and C only: 42
- B and D only: 47
- A, B, C and D: 1
- A and D only: 1

C. The results were compared with the classification of NGOs according to their consultative relationship with the United Nations Ecosoc. (The list available in April 1968 was used for purposes of comparison, whereas that listed in the 1966/67 Yearbook should have been used. The changes are not significant.)

- Ecosoc Categories used in this survey: *A B C D E*
- UN Ecosoc Category A status: 2 2 12 17
- UN Ecosoc Category B status: 6 9 15 14 14 42 143 29
- UN Ecosoc Categ. Register status: 14 10 17 20 11 49 222 22

Conclusions

The results show that 219, namely 13.0 % of the 1,690 international non-governmental organizations (excluding the 245 Common Market NGOs) listed in the 1966-67 *Yearbook of International Organizations* have themselves *indicated* that they have some form of governmental participation in policy formulation. A further 5.6 % have indicated some form of unspecified 'grant' financing of which a certain proportion will probably be of government origin. (The figure of 13.0 % should also be recognized as excluding any form of aid or contract from the United Nations or the Specialized Agencies, as well as any other form of government 'contract'.)

The survey does not establish the extent of government influence, since this will vary from organization to organization depending on the design of the voting system and the comparative number of governmental and non-governmental members. The influence will also vary from year to year depending on whether grants or membership are continued by governments, and also on the increase in the membership or participation of non-governmental members.

The survey could not bring out a very important source of indirect participation by governments in policy formulation of international non-governmental organizations, namely, the ambiguous or borderline cases where the national members were listed as 'institutions' which may, in many cases, be bodies under governmental control or which have some form of governmental assistance. The influence of government through nationalized industries 'which are members of international non-governmental organizations also varies from country to country. These would require a separate survey.

The figure of 13.0 % is therefore a minimum. Some organizations did not reply on certain points. Detailed replies by organizations on the relationship between each national member and the government of its country would complete the picture, but such a survey would be difficult to perform in practice. Due to the maze of terminology and definitions employed in various countries and languages, these results are the best indication of the true situation that could be given without undertaking a lengthy and considerably more detailed survey.

Les contributions gouvernementales aux organisations internationales non-gouvernementales

Une résolution adoptée par le Conseil Economique et Social le 6 juin 1967 [Res. 1225 (XLII)] a suscité un laborieux processus de révision du statut consultatif des organisations non-gouvernementales auprès de ce Conseil. Il en a déjà été plusieurs fois question cette année dans nos colonnes et notamment dans notre numéro de février p. 86 à 91. Les discussions au sein du Comité ONG du Conseil Economique et Social qui ont eu lieu en mars et avril 1968 ont mis au point un projet (E/C. 2 L. 28) de révision de la résolution 288 B (X) qui date de 1950 laquelle a jusqu'à présent réglé le système des relations consultatives entre les Nations Unies et les ONG.

La Conférence des ONG ayant le statut consultatif auprès de l'ECOSOC (1) a adressé à ses membres un excellent document comportant le texte de la résolution 288 B (X), celui du projet de résolution E/C. 2/L. 28, une liste des paragraphes du nouveau texte qui apportent des changements sensibles aux dispositions de 1950, enfin un commentaire des principales tendances manifestées au cours des séances du Comité ONG de l'Ecosoc en mars et en avril.

Les discussions de ce Comité ont porté notamment sur le caractère des ONG : leur qualité internationale, leur représentativité. A titre documentaire, l'UAI a préparé des statistiques et publié (numéro de mai 1968 de Associations Internationales) une analyse de celles-ci portant sur la participation nationale aux ONG et montrant notamment le progrès réalisé dans le domaine de l'extension géographique du leadership et des membres.

Le Comité ONG de l'ECOSOC s'est également inquiété de la présence de représentants gouvernementaux au sein des membres ou de la direction des ONG, du financement directement ou indirectement gouvernemental: ces éléments n'affecteraient-ils pas le caractère non gouvernemental de ces ONG?

Il nous a paru que beaucoup d'ignorance et de confusion régnait à ce sujet. C'est pourquoi nous sommes heureux de publier ci-dessous une analyse attentive faite par notre collaborateur Anthony Judge, ainsi qu'un commentaire de ces données par G.P. Speeckaert. (Texte français pages 477-481)



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