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Research Article

# Security Communities in Crisis: Crisis Constitution, Struggles and Temporality

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### **Abstract**

How do we approach a security community in crisis? This article theorises crisis dynamics in and on security communities. How do security communities evolve during crises, and how can we best approach such crises analytically? Responding to a lack of focus and knowledge of crisis dynamics in the literature on security communities, this article develops a methodological model to study security communities in crisis. I argue that the study of security communities in crisis could evolve around four analytical categories: processes of constituting crisis and power struggles and the temporal aspects of social action concerning situatedness and imaginaries. This move allows IR theory to rethink the dynamics of security communities in crisis beyond the endurance/decay binary and provide for more process-oriented and context-sensitive empirical work. By way of illustrating the empirical saliency of the article, I use examples from the Brexit process.

# Keywords

Crisis; Security Communities; IR theory; International Political Sociology; Europe; Brexit

How do we approach a security community in crisis? Different accounts of crisis have become the modus operandi in discourses about a European integration project threatened both from the outside and the inside, with the United Kingdom's (UK) exit from the European Union (EU) a notable example of threats from within (Riddervold, Trondal and Newsome 2021). Brexit was not only a first major instance of formal disintegration in the EU (Rosamond 2016; Schimmelfennig 2018; Leruth Gänzle and Trondal 2019), but it was also a crisis in and on the European security community (Svendsen and Adler-Nissen 2019; Mitzen 2018; Duke 2019). Addressing the attendees at the 2018 Munich Security Conference, then UK Prime Minister Theresa May urged nations to come together because 'as we look at the world today we are ... facing profound challenges to the global order; to peace, prosperity, to the rules-based system that underpins our very way of life' (May 2018). At the same time, she was engaged in the process of taking her country out of its institutionally binding cooperation with the EU, arguably a necessary feature of a matured and tightly coupled security community (Adler and Barnett 1998). The Brexit process certainly constituted a crisis for the European security community. Yet, few would argue that Europe, including the EU-UK relationship, as the Brexit dust was slowly settling was not a security community characterised by expectations of peaceful solutions to conflicts.

Responding to this observation, the article theorises crisis dynamics in and on security communities. How do security communities evolve during crises? And how can we best approach such crises analytically? The thrust of the argument in the article is the claim that the security community literature lacks concepts for studying community dynamics in crisis. This is due to a tendency to reify the community on the basis of shared norms rather than to use concepts that help in grasping social dynamics and processes that pull in several directions, including towards endurance and/or decay (for notable exceptions see Mattern 2005; Greve 2018). Attending to this problem, I develop an international political sociology approach to the study of security communities in crisis that emphasise four analytical categories: processes of constituting crisis and power struggles, and the temporal aspects of social action concerning situatedness and imaginaries. Drawing on insights from the field of International Political Sociology (IPS), the article approaches security-community dynamics in times of crisis in a way that is sensitive to relations and processes that unfold within the social structure of a tightly knit community.

The remainder of the article will proceed in three steps. I first discuss the security community literature and its treatment of crisis. In doing so I focus specifically on the community of practice literature within the practice turn, evaluating pitfalls and promises in its theorisation of order and crisis at the intersection between constructivism and poststructuralism. Here, I find that in as much as the literature is situated in social theory, we need to move our understanding of security community dynamics further if we want to understand their crisis dynamics. Second, responding to the limitations in the existing literature, I develop an analytical model where the dynamics of security communities in crisis play out across four analytical categories. Methodologically open yet conceptually clarified, these analytical categories can account for a wide range of processes operationalised for future work on security communities in crisis.

### **SECURITY COMMUNITIES AND CRISIS DYNAMICS**

This first section engages the literature on security communities and considers how it conceptualises their dynamics in crisis. The concept of security community was initially brought into IR by Karl Deutsch and his colleagues (Deutsch, Burrell, Kann, Lee, et al. 1957), and re-introduced by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett in the 1990s (Adler and Barnett 1998). Their hypothesis was that there existed community among states in the international system in how they came to share a sense of 'we-ness'. Their focus then was on shared identity in how 'values, norms, and symbols … provide a social identity … that reflect long-term interest, diffuse reciprocity, and trust' (Adler and Barnett 1998: 3).

Haugevik (2014: 37) has noted how their definition concerns the *why* and *how* security communities emerge and the potential for inter-state friendship that emerge as they mature. Adler and Barnett's development of the concept thus had a positive take on community dynamics geared towards order, or prospects for stable peace. Koschut (2016: 2), the prime theorist of security community *disintegration*, notes how Adler and Barnett's only remark on counter forces within communities would be the antithesis to their own; namely that what builds them up can also break them down.

The groundwork made by Adler and Barnett was well situated within IR constructivism in how their work concerned the role of common identity (sense of 'we-ness') as a variable determining the possibility for peaceful change. However, the security community agenda was quickly picked up in the evolution of the practice turn that in its treatment of security communities came to be situated somewhat in between North American norm-centred constructivism and the poststructuralist tradition with its basis in European philosophy (Pouliot 2004). Turning to thinking about security communities in practice meant expecting peaceful change not as a function of shared identity and a sense of 'we-ness', but in how state representatives and diplomats - in the (micro)sociological sense - secured peaceful change in and through how they 'did' international diplomacy in the everyday (Pouliot 2008; Adler 2008). Central to this reconceptualisation of security communities towards the community of practice literature (see Wenger 1998) was Adler's former student in Toronto, Vincent Pouliot (2010, 2008, 2007). Developing a logic of practicality, Pouliot took interest in the mundane operation of social life and how the social world is acted in and on in a pre-reflexive manner, prior to the logics of consequence, appropriateness and arguing. When the way of solving problems peacefully constituted the modus operandi of the daily operation of diplomacy then, security community existed. As such, the diplomatic institution in world politics came to stand for peace.

Despite these insights, or perhaps because of the specific social constructivist route that the security community literature has taken, there is a striking scarcity of studies on security communities in crisis. Surely, this is partly an effect of the normative preferences embodied in intellectual efforts to study security communities. Included in this is a theoretical propensity to privilege order over disorder. Consider the above-mentioned practice turn in studies of security communities: Its proponents have had a central focus on ordering through the engagement with the work of Pierre Bourdieu and on how repeated action that is considered socially meaningful structure social life at large (Adler and Pouliot 2011). Pouliot has been claiming to be theorising inductively before abstracting away (Pouliot 2010, 2007), making practice theory part of the current stream of micromoves in IR theory (Solomon and Steele 2017). In terms of security communities, Adler 'theorised security communities as forming through a bottom-up process, where citizens from different countries came to realise that their values and hence their destinies were shared' (Adler 1997, quoted in Buzan and Hansen 2009: 198). It is perhaps this 'progressive bias' (Koschut 2016: viii), well situated in the liberal tradition and the optimism of the 1990s, that has complicated the practice theorists' relationship with international order as a condition and function in and of security communities.

Practice theorists are interested in the mundane, everyday doings that structure social life. In approaching practices then, Bueger and Mireanu (2015: 119) argue that scholars in security studies are engaged in 'a project of proximity and close engagement with the flow and the infrastructures of the everyday and the mundane, and those discriminated by security practices.' However, at the same time they 'emphasize situated understanding and unmask the apparent stability of social systems' (Adler-Nissen 2016: 92). Unmasking this apparent stability is perhaps what Pouliot (2014: 238) refers to when claiming that practices can 'be abstracted away from local contexts in the form of social mechanisms that can travel across cases'. It is on this basis that despite the lack of such accounts, practice approaches to security communities sell their potential to provide different, thicker, descriptions (see Geertz 1973) of dynamics in micro-practices, including within security communities. Practice theorists explore how security communities emerge, exist

and endure in and through *practice* (see Pouliot 2010; Mérand and Rayroux 2016; Kavalski 2007; Græger 2016; Bremberg 2015; Bremberg, Sonnsjö and Mobjörk 2019; Bicchi 2011; Bicchi and Bremberg 2016). It is on this basis that I would argue that scholars of security communities of practice have a troubled relationship with the question of order; it predetermines the object of analysis, it arguably stems from the preoccupation with mundane everyday activities (mostly of diplomats or other elites), neglect of struggles over legitimate claims to authority, as well as the structural conditions within which these struggles take place (Martin-Mazé 2017).

Another challenge is linked to the endurance/decay binary in security communities. Adler and Barnett's take on security communities and the practice orientation of the 2000s finds the root of community in different mechanisms (identity and practice) but they share a focus on the centripetal, i.e. what makes communities emerge and endure. What lacks is a way of engaging security community dynamics in crisis that brings our attention to social forces that push and pull. Adler-Nissen (2015) has distinguished between 'ordering' and 'disordering' practices. 'Ordering' 'focuses on how practices become organizing of social life, it is interested in how people and groups of people become recognized as more or less competent than others through particular classifications, distinctions and categories of understanding'. On the contrary, the 'disordering' perspective 'does not require recognition of competent behaviour or social capital' and 'focuses on subordinate and ordinary people and their experiences of broader power relationships' (Adler-Nissen 2016: 92-93). However, security communities are ontologically speaking fluid social facts that are emergent and they may or may not change over time. In crisis, processes are driven by both logics of integration and logics of fragmentation (Goddard and Nexon 2016: 5). As such, what holds international orders together or not is determined by processes of ordering and disordering practices, and their interaction. Together, they are the determinants of security community dynamics in times of crisis and their relational and processual interaction in social struggles determine whether they endure or wane.

Patricia Greve (2018: 831), combining the security community literature with ontological security, argues that we should consider ontological security in security communities in terms of a 'process of routinization as an ongoing, political process that is characterized by struggles for recognition'. In the spirit of Hirschman's exit, voice and loyalty, she argues that responses in struggles for recognition of distinctiveness may be adoption, reform, recalcitrance/denial or exit. This orientation moves us closer to appreciating the dynamics of security communities in crisis. Yet a political sociology of security communities in crisis responds to the normative bias and reification of community on a basis of reflexivity – with a view to recognize the practice of constituting security community crisis as a practical and scholarly endeavour.

Security communities are not static, but constantly evolving and negotiated social facts (Koschut 2016). As such, they are collective achievements. This is well established in the literature, but the article advances an approach to security communities in crisis highlighting how shared norms and practices are not placeholders for very real, political struggles between the states that constitute the community. Consequently, preserving security communities is dependent on ordering practices that can only be grasped if theoretical concepts are sensitive to them. These dynamics of security communities extend well beyond Brexit, but it is a paradigmatic case to illustrate the critical promise in considering security communities in this particular way. In fact, security communities are always in a state of struggle.

#### TOWARDS A POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY OF SECURITY COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

International Political Sociology (IPS) has been emergent in IR for some time as materialised with the 2007 establishment of a section and journal associated with the International Studies Association (ISA) in addition to sub-field specific handbooks (Guillaume and Bilgin 2016; Bigo and Walker 2007; Basaran et. al. 2017). Common to IPS approaches is an ontological commitment to relations and processes with a common aim towards:

avoiding considering social entities or concepts as substances, ... epistemologically avoiding reifying social entities or phenomena into static units and, on the contrary, integrating the idea of change throughout one's conceptualisation of the social world (Guillaume 2007: 742).<sup>1</sup>

As such, ontologically speaking, everything is in flux. Orders are indeterminate, but they are nonetheless orders, socially produced and reproduced (Cox 1981). The same goes for security communities. The use of concepts like international order, security community and crisis needs to acknowledge the openness of social facts to avoid reifying them. In IPS, this is tied to reflexivity in how static, theoretically derived concepts becomes part of the very constitution of power relations through the reification of concepts, often due to lack of reflexivity (Levine 2016). As such, security communities should not be approached in terms of a snapshot at any point in time, but it needs to be carved out through historisation and denaturalisation of the constitution of things (Guzzini 2016; Guillaume 2007). Approaching the dynamics of security communities in crisis requires recognizing that 'processes of exclusion are intrinsic to international society' (Adler-Nissen 2011: 327). Borders delineating social in- or outsiderness are not apprehended in their fixity, but in how practices of bordering make possible different forms of dynamics (Hofius 2016). Importantly, the relational and process-oriented ontology of IPS does not disqualify the study of security communities. Rather, it approaches them with a sensitivity towards the considerations above. What are the centrifugal and centripetal forces that make or undo specific security communities that are in crisis and how do these forces interact? And how can reflexivity be built into the way in which answers to these questions are pursued?

With a particular view to the 'complex assemblage of the big and the small in international politics', de Goede argues that IPS is characterised by:

1) a focus on practice, including mundane routines and little technicalities that are no longer understood as mere detail, but that are granted constitutive power; (2) an attentiveness to temporality by emphasizing the shifting and the mobile (over the ordered and the continuous); and (3) an attitude of critique. (de Goede 2016: 356-357)

Two studies that are close to providing fully fledged IPS approaches to security community crisis should be mentioned here. One is Janice Bailly Mattern's (2005) study of identity and 'representational force' in the 1956 Suez Crisis. The other is Trine Villumsen Berling's (2015) study of the reconfiguration of the European field of security following the collapse of the Soviet Union. She draws exclusively on Bourdieu but admits that her study 'sides with a more classically sociologically oriented take on already existing structures and the limits to constructing entirely novel realities that these social structures may entail', labelling it Luhmaninan in how she 'studies different systems clashing and creating irritation in the codes that structure the systems' (Berling 2015: 5).

How, then, do we approach security communities in crisis on the basis of the limitations presented above and the possibilities provided with an IPS approach? I will in the following develop an analytical model by using illustrations from the Brexit process. What social forces demand attention in understanding the dynamics of security community crisis? How can we move towards approaching them in a way that is relational and process-oriented, reflexive and avoids reifying community? I suggest that we take those steps by

approaching security community in dynamics in crisis through the constitution of the crisis itself, power political struggles, and the temporality of social action. The former two regards the very constitution of crisis and its interaction with power politics. The second pertains to how agency and practices stem from shared and situated ways of being and how such historically situated structures manifest themselves as imaginaries of the future.

### **Constituting Crisis**

The first element in the analytical model is perhaps banal, but no less important: crises are constituted in and through practice. An international political sociology approach to crisis dynamics would ask how crisis becomes constituted in the first place. Here, the Copenhagen School and its securitisation theory is relevant. Within this school of thought, the constitution of crisis would be tied to 'speech acts', i.e. words *do* things in the world. They make worlds and crises through how 'who can "do" or "speak" security successfully, on what issues, under what conditions, and with what effects' (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998: 27) structures social reality at large. Other modes of constituting crisis in practice would include actions of a material nature, such as establishing a crisis management team within an organisation to handle the crisis.

In the Brexit crisis, national narratives were central in the constitution of the crisis, especially from Europe (the EU27). The narrative was not one of nationalism, rather a postmodern critique against the potential disaster a hard or no-deal Brexit would be for the UK who were accused of turning in on itself and what had been but ended years ago. The constitution of Brexit as crisis in and of itself as such had an important temporal aspect: the EU claimed to be representing the future and any subversive moves from the UK in the direction of 'old empire' would worsen the crisis.

When an issue is securitised, 'states are able to move them outside the remit of democratic decision-making and into the realm of emergency powers, all in the name of survival itself' (Ahmed 2011: 350). The Brexit crisis furthermore saw a double constitution of crisis. For one, it was the pan-European discourse in which the very exiting of the UK itself posed a threat to the stability to the European order. Of all the parts of the EU and UK relationship, security was also one where the need to cooperate in the face of mutual threats and interest was most prominent. This legitimated an approach to the negotiations that diverted from the 'hard' stance of the Leave-supporters in the UK. What is more, the Brexit related conversation and debate about the security community drew on the external 'belt of insecurity' that was surrounding Europe with the instability in the south and east and an increasingly assertive Russia.<sup>2</sup> As such, the constitution of the Brexit crisis saw references both to the Brexit in and of itself and the external environment beyond the borders of Europe, the UK included. Importantly, both securitisations called for measures to secure the endurance of the security community, despite the institutional integration that was inevitably going to happen.

Furthermore, the way in which Brexit was initiated domestically has been interpreted both as how a politically opportunist elite were able to constitute the community as a crisis of sovereignty and as how the referendum allowed the masses speak out against the crisis of neoliberalism and its contribution to alienation and increasing inequalities. In relation to all the examples above, we may sum up that an IPS approach to security community crisis does not objectify a crisis as such, but rather ask how it is constituted, by whom, and with what legitimisation. What follows from this, is an attention to the power political struggles over meaning between agents as the crisis is being constituted and enacted upon.

#### **Power Struggles**

A concern with relations of power lies at the heart of the inquiry in IPS. This is pivotal considering the relational ontology from which such studies depart, and the attitude of critique already mentioned. In relation to security communities, Mattern (2005a, 2001)

has shown how power operates within those communities in the form of representational force. Representational force refers to 'a nonphysical but nevertheless coercive form of power that is exercised through language' (Mattern 2005b). In her study, representational force among other things pertained to the United States disciplining of its friend and ally UK during the Suez crisis. A central implication is that one should not naively adopt definitions of community from its everyday use. Rather, we acknowledge that security communities are infused with power relations that structure their dynamics in times of crisis, and this is intimately tied to the struggles that go into constituting and managing crises in security communities.

In a conciliatory outreach to the IR discipline, Goddard and Nexon (2016: 4) has called for a turn to 'the politics of collective mobilization in the context of the struggle for influence among political communities'. This sits neatly in the IPS approach to the dynamics of security communities in crisis. Their research program draws on three key arguments: First, 'it treats the centrality of states to power politics as variable' (Goddard and Nexon 2016: 5). This is also the case with security communities. The scope for inquiry and the decisive dynamics when they are in crisis are empirical and not limited to the state as such, but states are the constitutive actors of them and primary actors within them. Goddard and Nexon (2016: 5) also argue that 'non-military instruments matter a great deal for power politics'. Security community dynamics (remember they are non-war communities) are in fact cases where there is absence of force, except for representational force, or other symbolically existing forms of power and domination (see Barnett and Duvall 2005; Adler-Nissen 2013). Rather, the socially embedded and processual element of the kind of crisis we are theorising call for wider definitions of power, often in connection to language and symbolic power that produce identities and social practices. Finally, they reject that anarchy is the key driver of power politics (Goddard and Nexon 2016: 6). Instead, power political mobilisation among polities constructs, re-produces and challenges the community over time.

The Brexit crisis in the European security was certainly defined by struggles, both domestically and in Europe. The UK process to find nationally acceptable compromises was very much a power political struggle, and so was also the negotiations that took place between the UK and the EU between 2017 and 2020 (Martill and Staiger 2021). Understanding the apparent 'orderliness' of the practice that unfolded in the negotiations and how contestation played out and agreement was found requires taking serious the collective mobilisation among the parties involved in the crisis, namely polities struggling from within the security community to constitute the 'proper' Brexit (the crisis) in order to produce desired outcomes (see Svendsen 2020). The power struggles to constitute crises plays out against a context however, and the next sections turn to the temporal aspects of situatedness and imaginaries in and on these struggles.

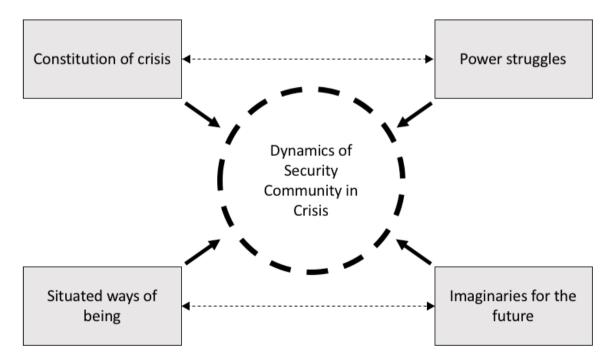
#### **Situatedness**

Both researchers of and practitioners in security communities are situated. Feminist IR scholars have been influential in bringing to the fore the situatedness of science and knowledge production (Haraway 1988). They have done so because 'International relations (IR) scholarship is situated in a theoretical, academic, and global context in which power is both visible and invisible, often concealed by the structures that normalize potentially oppressive practices and values' (Ackerly and True 2008: 693). These insights are important, and they are more often than not underscored by researchers approaching international politics from an IPS perspective. Simultaneously, these insights should not be turned only upon ourselves. Practitioners of international relations, i.e. the agents of world politics from state representatives to indigenous people, are situated in ways that structure their view of the world and their actions. Thus, reflexivity in IPS is not only self-referential, but with an aim to produce knowledge about the social relations and processes that make up international relations.

How then, do practitioners' situatedness come into play when security communities are in crisis? For one, situatedness is an agential trait, something in which every single human in any particular field is enmeshed, but it is also something that streamlines and forms the basis for intersubjectively shared forms of knowledge that disposes communities to appear homogeneous, including the naturalization of the very notion of community itself. In a security community in crisis, everyone with stakes in it are at the outset situated inside of it. Consider how, in the early days after the Brexit referendum, European federalist Guy Verhofstadt and UK Prime Minister Theresa May engaged the security aspect of Brexit in remarkably a similar way. They represented two poles in the process, the UK with its desire to get out of the Union's sovereignty-strangling grip and the vision of something of a European federal state, but their comments on European security in relation to Brexit were strikingly similar (Verhofstadt 2017; May 2017). Despite the apparent distance between the two, emphasising their situatedness brings to the fore how May's representations were situated a more nationally oriented discourse, but in terms of managing the security order, they were both referring to Europe as one polity that were more capable of providing security in a context were no country alone could provide security for themselves (May 2018; EU 2016, 2003). As such, understanding the apparent 'orderliness' of the security community crisis demands asking about who speaks, where they speak from and to what audiences.

The spatial boundary between May and Verhofstadt, London and Brussels, was also one of ambiguity because as much as both May and Brexiteers in rural England shared their British nationality, May was situated also in a multilateral space where isolation was unthinkable as was evident with the 'Global Britain' policy of her administration. IPS approaches to security community crisis thus cannot overlook the dynamics of transnational diplomatic fields of struggle (Svendsen 2020). As such, asking questions about situatedness allows questioning of 'from where' agents with stakes in the security community speak when they, in this particular case, engage in boundary-drawing and ordering of the security community during crisis. This furthermore allows for analysis and explanation when crisis does not lead to fragmentation, or even disintegration.

Figure 1: Dynamics of security community in crisis



The situatedness of agents in and on security communities in crisis is also a structuring force in the temporal sense: people have socio-cultural backgrounds that form their very

being as subjects and determine their scope conditions for action and practices. This is also a structural issue. In the context of a 'Brussels-bubble' around Rond-point Schuman it might be understandable that the British discourse of sovereignty in the Brexit debate and negotiations were considered reactionary and backwards. However, considering the British discourses of national identity and historical narrative one would not be surprised to see the British government's position on Brexit. This is only one example, but it shows how the positions and visions of actors in security community crises is structured by how and where they are situated. Based on these dispositional considerations regarding social agency and practice, we can now move to the other temporal aspect in our theorisation of security community dynamics during crisis: the role of imaginaries.

#### **Imaginaries**

In connection to the situated and dispositional ways in which human agency is premised, so does ideas and representations of the future, individually and collectively shared, by drawing people towards certain ends. As such, we have seen in IR a move towards theories of time (Solomon, 2014; Hutchings, 2008; Hom and Steele, 2010; Berenskoetter, 2011) in addition to operationalisation of how to study the 'time factor' (Neumann and Øverland, 2004; Meyer, 2011; Ekengren, 2010).

Berenskoetter (2011) has argued that the future plays an important role in drawing people towards certain ends and suggested that we turn our attention towards *dystopian* and *utopian* visions. The latter point should not be totalised in IPS as there is no need to close off methodologies, but he was right when claiming the neglect of the future in IR theory is a 'sloppy habit permeating much of IR, namely the tendency to conflate the impossibility of knowing what others currently think, or social contingency, and the impossibility of knowing the future as such, or temporal contingency' (Berenskoetter 2011: 650). The way that the future takes centre stage in international politics should not be considered lightly and understanding the dynamics of security communities in crisis involves inquiring into what futures agents involved in the crisis envision the future.

It is not the imaginary and the dispositional in binary opposition that constitute the temporality of agency. Rather, it is the ontologically indivisible relationship between them that is of interest in an IPS account of security community dynamics in times of crisis. This is well established in sociology, where agency is thought of as a:

temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment). (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 963)

As such, IPS approaches to security communities in crisis asks questions about the how representations of the future are conditioned by particular pasts, or dispositions, and how these temporal elements of social life play into the constitution of crisis.

The Brexit crisis saw the future as the primary rationalising category at the forefront of the debate. In essence, the negotiation of Brexit was always about envisioning particular futures and coming to terms with one that all parties could meaningfully envision. In terms of the European security community, one of practical existence and transnationally established material security and defence structures, the process saw few envisioning disorder or the waning of the security community. If anything, the visions expressed in the UK position paper on the future partnership between the EU and the UK in security and defence cooperation (UK Government 2017) had striking similarities to the European Commission's own visionary white paper on the same issue on behalf of the EU at 27 (European Commission 2017). In the broader Brexit process, the constant threat of a cliff

edge hard Brexit was mobilised in order to reach an agreement, which eventually was found, limiting the potentially devastating effects that Brexit could have for the European security community.

#### **CONCLUSION**

This article has developed an approach to study security communities in crisis. In doing so, I have suggested a focus on four analytical categories: processes of constituting crisis and power struggles, and the temporal aspects of social action concerning situatedness and imaginaries. The benefit of so doing is that it allows for an appreciation of security communities in a process-oriented and context sensitive way. This possibly enables future empirical work that can account for the intertwined relationship between ordering and disordering practices as security communities encounter situations that calls into question their stability. Importantly, the article has illustrated how the international political sociology approach and the four categories developed here fulfils the social theoretical promises of the security community literature, relying on the practices that unfold as a crisis emerges rather than by a pre-determined adherence to (also pre-determined) norms.

Importantly, the dimensions developed herein are broad enough not to close down the object of study methodologically, whilst preserving some general features of an IPS approach to community dynamics during crisis. The ideal-typical nature of the analytical categories does not insinuate boundary drawing. Rather, they should be considered open avenues towards which IPS approaches can explore different ordering and disordering processes in the context of security communities in crisis. The main aim of the article has been to develop the methodological typology, and the Brexit case was used mainly to illustrate the empirical saliency of the categories. Yet, by way of conclusion the model contributes to an understanding of the process that explains Brexit as unfolding against a struggle between national and international discourses, and shared dispositional structures and imaginaries for the future. In terms of outcome, the Brexit crisis weakened some of the institutional and practical structures of the European security community, whereas others were continued with the new agreement and a continually stated need for a good future relationship after Brexit. Coming to that conclusion require an open-ended and process-oriented approach.

The European security community is part of a complex set of relations of which the EU is one component. The community is indeed an empirically established social fact, and as such we cannot understand its existence as fixed. This is also the value of an IPS take on security communities in crisis as we approach it in and through social processes of struggle that structure the path(s) they take. The point that stands and invite further empirical work is that in a constant social process of making, security communities are subject to ordering and disordering forces that become particularly visible during crises and determine the processes that unfold.

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#### **AUTHOR DETAILS**

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#### **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> In fact, the fear of reification of structure, particularly of the state (see Neumann 2004), motivated also Pouliot's theorisation of security communities (Pouliot 2010: 88).

<sup>2</sup> This term was used by an Ambassador to the EU's Political and Security Committee (PSC) during an interview in Brussels in November 2017.

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Research Article

Parties in the 'Twilight Zone': Beyond First and Second-Order Elections in the Spanish 2019 European Parliament Elections

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### **Abstract**

While most research has analysed election-orderness by looking at electoral behaviour, this article looks instead at political parties and political programs in the case of the Spanish 2019 European elections. With the collapse of its two-party system and challenger parties on the rise, this paper analyses how Spanish parties addressed topics in their political programs, using content and political discourse analysis. The article argues that the traditional classification of first and second-order elections is no longer well-equipped to depict the increasingly politicised and Europeanised political parties. This finding indicates a new way of addressing topics in Spain, a 'twilight-zone', in which the division between first and second-order elections may be seen less as a binary distinction and more as part of a continuum.

# Keyword

Challenger Parties; Europeanization; First-order; Second-order; European elections; European Parliament; Politicisation

European Parliament (EP) elections have been generally characterised in the academic literature as national second-order elections - with domestic topics dominating political campaigns and relegating European matters to a secondary position (Reif and Schmitt, 1980: 8; Marsh and Mikhaylov 2010: 18; Marsh 2020: 69). However, the aforementioned categorisation has been called into question in recent years – partially favoured by the rising vote share for anti-establishment parties who viewed the European project from a more critical stance, bringing European issues at the centre of the political agenda (Hobolt and Spoon 2012: 19). Accordingly, with the increasing politicisation of European affairs at the national level, Europeans are witnessing something that is qualitatively different. In this regard, and bearing in mind the greater turnout, the multiplicity of challenges at the European level, and the failure of the 'Eurosceptic backlash' to materialise in the 2014 EP elections, the 2019 EP elections were under even more 'focus' and scrutiny than was the case for the previous elections (Plescia, Wilhelm and Kritzinger 2020: 76).

While most articles analyse EP election-orderness by looking at electoral behaviour (Hobolt and Spoon 2012; Schmitt, Sanz, Braun and Teperoglou 2020), this article will do so by taking a top-down approach, focusing on political parties and their programs (Weber 2007; Kovář 2016). The reason to apply this novel perspective regarding the analysis of election-orderness is that of the direct and powerful impact that political parties have on the political discourse and, ultimately, on the electorate (Slothuus and De Vreese 2010). Our article seeks to reflect on the categorisation of first and second-order elections in the context of the Spanish 2019 European elections, departing from the way in which national political parties treated them. The article is therefore a contribution to the literature on party competition in European elections, as well as on the ongoing transformation of the Spanish party system.

Even if the second-order conceptualisation adequately applied to EP elections up until 2014 (Schmitt and Toygür 2016: 176), the increasing politicisation and relevance of European affairs in nowadays' national politics make it, a priori, hardly intuitive to categorise the 2019 EP elections as strictly second-order (Galpin and Trenz 2019). In this regard, the link between Europeanization and political parties (as the 'identification of a national-supranational nexus regarding authoritative policy decisions') has been a subject matter discussed in academia (Ladrech 2002: 389). However, given that the 2019 EP elections in Spain were held amidst government formation uncertainty, we elaborated two sets of indicators accounting for a more nationalised or a more Europeanised debate to carry out the analysis.

For a long time, Spain had been considered to be one of the exceptions in Europe regarding the emergence of Eurosceptic radical right parties with parliamentary representation. However, Spanish exceptionalism came to an abrupt end when the Eurosceptic radical right-wing party Vox entered parliament in 2018 (Vidal 2018: 261), a few years after the populist left-wing Unidas Podemos (UP) emerged in 2014 during the EP elections. Ever since, these challenger parties have been gaining electoral support until becoming serious political competitors to the mainstream parties. Not only did Vox come third in the last 2019 general elections, but UP is currently a member of the centre-left coalition government in office. The stance of these two Spanish parties concerning the European institutions and policies is more critical than that of the traditional mainstream parties (Ramos and Cornago 2016; Fernández-Albertos and Wilhelm 2020: 221-23). In this context, and bearing in mind that these two challenger parties have become serious competitors capable of affecting the established political order and agenda, the Spanish case appears to be particularly interesting to study.

Using Challengers Party Theory posited by De Vries & Hobolt (2020) and their key concept of topic "innovation" as lenses, this article departs from the following research question: how have Spanish parties addressed topics in their political programs for the 2019

European Parliament elections? This research question is addressed using quantitative and qualitative methodological tools in order to achieve an in-depth assessment of what the dominant discourse in the political programs is -i.e., predominantly European (EP elections as potentially first-order) or predominantly national (EP elections as potentially second-order) in the topics addressed by each of the political parties.

The article is divided into six sections. First, the introduction section outlines the research question, and how it is approached. Second, the theoretical framework focuses mainly on the distinction between first-order and second-order elections, and explains how challenger parties compete in order to have a strategic advantage over mainstream parties. Third, we contextualise the Spanish case amidst the 2019 EP election. Fourth, we present the research design, the hypotheses, the methodology and the data set. Fifth, we present the empirical analysis, and how it relates to the first and second-order elections categorisation. Lastly, the conclusion summarises the research and its findings before providing further avenues for future research.

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ELECTION-ORDERNESS, EUROPEANIZATION AND CHALLENGER PARTIES' THEORY

The characterisation of the European elections as second-order elections was first posited by Reif & Schmitt (1980) in the context of the then-European Economic Community. While first-order elections are those that take place for national parliaments - like national parliamentary elections or presidential elections in France - second-order elections (SOEs) are more determined by first-order concerns or topics than by alternatives originating at the European level or considered more appropriate for it (Reif and Schmitt 1980: 3). Accordingly, there are two political arenas, the 'chief arena' (for first-order elections, i.e., the national political arena) and the second-order arena (EP elections). Nonetheless, the possibility that the former arena may overshadow the latter was addressed by politicians sceptical of the legitimising power that EP elections may have regarding European decision-making (Marsh and Mikhaylov 2010: 18).

Reif & Schmitt (1980: 9) described three main characteristics of second-order elections in comparison to first-order elections: (1) a lower level of participation or turnout; (2) 'brighter prospect[s] for small and new parties' at the expense of larger and traditional ones; and (3) weakening support for the governing parties. Interestingly, regarding the Spanish case, the 2019 EP elections could be closely considered first-order elections since (1) Spain recorded the highest historical turnout it has ever had in EP elections, only 5% less than the national elections of November 2019; (2) smaller and newer parties did not achieve better electoral results than mainstream parties; and (3) the winner of the EP elections was PSOE, precisely the party that wound up heading the coalition government (Simón 2020).

We take stock of the existing literature that mobilises the Second Order Election model to explain voting behaviour in European elections (Hix and Marsh 2007). However, this literature has so far emphasised a bottom-up approach, focusing on the explanation of voter choices, including the lack of participation (Hobolt and Spoon 2012; Schmitt, Sanz, Braun and Teperoglou 2020). Fewer articles have focused on a top-down approach (see Weber 2007), integrating other key actors of the electoral circle: namely, political parties and the media (see also Kovář and Kovář 2013; Kovář 2016). In this article, we integrate the SOE framework to make sense of political parties' strategies, as they are determinant actors in EP elections. They not only stand for the EP elections and create the list of candidates, but also produce the political programs and control the content of the campaigns (Hix and Lord 1997:84). In short, one can hardly 'blame' voters for their electoral choices without considering other key actors (Kovář and Kovář 2013: 715).

Hence, our aim is to emphasise the role of political elites in determining whether European elections are first or second-order elections by analysing how political parties treat these elections.

Studies have shown that the politicisation of European affairs has been increasingly taking place at national election level (Hutter, Grande and Kriesi 2016: 94). Lately, scholars have suggested that the increasing electoral engagement with European issues is partially due to challenger anti-establishment parties who choose to bring EU-related topics 'at the centre of the agenda', forcing mainstream parties to focus on them (Hobolt and Spoon 2012:19; De Vries and Hobolt 2016: 424). Likewise, the process of Europeanization as a term, in the case of political parties, has also been applied to the 'organisation of and elections to the European Parliament' (Ladrech 2002: 393). In order to clarify how Europeanization takes place, Hix and Goetz (2000) explain how the process of European integration impacts domestic systems and how domestic actors at the national level also mobilise at the European level. Potential for change at the domestic level can occur as the European arena provides a new 'structure of opportunities' for domestic actors (Hix and Goetz 2000: 12). In this vein, the increasing politicisation of the EU has given incentives to challenger parties to 'use Europe' (Woll and Jacquot 2010) for domestic political gain. Two key indicators that can evidence the Europeanization of parties are: (1) 'policy/programmatic content' (containing more references to the 'role of EU' and its policies 'as a factor in domestic policy pursuits'); and (2) 'patterns of party competition', referring to parties' willingness to change their strategy as the EU becomes politicised towards a pro or against EU position for electoral gain (Ladrech 2002: 396-98).

By means of drawing an analogy with the manner in which corporations compete, De Vries and Hobolt (2020) explain that political change can occur through challenger parties' ability to introduce new topics – or addressing old ones with a new perspective – to the public debate and mainstream parties' ability to respond to that innovation. The definition of mainstream parties in the present article will be that of 'parties that frequently alternate between government and opposition' (Hobolt and Tilley 2016: 4). Although with different nomenclatures, an academic consensus has been reached defining challenger parties as those that "defy existing patterns of party competition by rejecting the traditional economic dimension of politics and mobilising on new issues or adopting more extreme positions on existing issues" (Hobolt and Tilley 2016: 4). Challenger parties can be located across the political spectrum.

These new 'political entrepreneurs' gain electoral support by means of using topic innovation and an anti-establishment rhetoric (De Vries and Hobolt 2020: 2). Accordingly, 'dominance and innovation' are the two key concepts around which political forces in competition evolve in order to attain political change. Dominance 'concerns the power of the dominant parties in the system to protect their positions', whereas innovation relates to the 'process through which political parties introduce a new or previously ignored issue' while employing an anti-establishment rhetoric capable of undermining mainstream parties' appeal (De Vries and Hobolt 2020: 9).

Topic choice for challenger parties is highly dependent on the parties' perception of the 'appeal to the average voter' (De Vries and Hobolt 2020: 8), its innovative power and their ideology, so that they can have a 'strategic advantage' that can break through the entry barriers that protect the dominant parties. Examples of new topics that could be addressed include immigration, the environment or Euroscepticism. In this regard, the horizontal question of ideology plays an important role. European right-wing populism is usually rooted on identitarianism: nationalism and ethno-centrism (Hainsworth 2008) materialised in the proposal of restrictive policies on asylum and immigration (Mair and Mudde 1998). For its part, left-wing European populism has taken a more socialist approach, opposing liberal austerity measures imposed by the so-called Troika' (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017:

37) and capitalism. Seemingly, in the European context following the 2008 recession, while centre-left and right-wing mainstream parties converged on the EU's austerity and fiscal guidelines, challenger parties offered alternatives that are tantamount to rejections of 'the austerity agenda and are critical of the EU's insistence on reduced government welfare' for the left and a 'desire to reclaim national sovereignty, specifically to control immigration and repatriate powers from the EU', for the right (Hobolt and Tilley 2016: 2).

#### **CONTEXTUALISING THE SPANISH CASE**

The social democratic Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and the conservative Partido Popular (PP) have been the two mainstream parties that have dominated the Spanish political arena since the transition to democracy (Vidal 2018: 261). However, the pre-existing two-party system collapsed in Spain in the aftermath of the Great Recession of 2008 (Vidal 2018: 261), although it was not until the 2015 national election that new challenger parties entered the political spectrum - the first two being Unidas Podemos (UP) and Ciudadanos (C's) - leading to the creation of a multi-party system that substantially reduced mainstream parties' vote share. Together, the two mainstream parties saw a decline from 73.4% in 2011 to 50.7% in 2015 (Orriols and Cordero 2016: 470). Yet, Spanish exceptionalism truly came to an end in December 2018 when the populist radical right Vox entered the Andalusian Parliament (Turnbull-Dugarte 2019).

Before the crisis, one of the reasons to study Euroscepticism in Spain was its relatively low level, as Spain has been considered to be historically pro-European regarding both political and citizens' attitudes (Llamazares and Gramacho 2007: 123; López Gómez 2014). However, following the 2008 crisis, political trust in the European institutions was weakened. 'Economic issues, bailouts, and anti-austerity measures' served as catalysts for populist Eurosceptic parties in Spain (Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro and Plaza-Colodro 2018: 346), as well as EU trade policy, which was widely contested across Europe (Conrad and Oleart 2020; Oleart 2021) and particularly in Spain (Bouza and Oleart 2018).

The current main political parties in Spain and their stance on the EU will be described in the following paragraphs (see Table 1 for a quick review).

Table 1: Main political parties in Spain

	Foundation Date	Ideology	Stance on the EU	EP Group	First time in national government	First time in regional government
PP	1989	Centre-right (Christian Democrat)	Positive	EPP	1996	1989 (in several communities)
PS OE	1879	Centre-left (Social Democrat)	Positive	S&D	1982	1982 (Andalusia)
C's	2006	Liberal	Positive	RE	Never	2019 (in several communities)
Vox	2013	Radical right- wing	Critical	ECR	Never	Never (after Días Ayuso's victory in Madrid, Vox remains formally outside the regional government)
UP	2014	Radical left- wing	Critical	GUE/NGL	2020	2015 (in several communities)

Those parties who ideologically sit at the centre of the political spectrum and share a positive stance on the European project (institutions and policies) will be addressed first in no particular order. To start with, PP was formed in 1989 by the fusion of various parties and movements who at the time were supportive of the Franco era. It is now a centre-right party (Christian Democrat) whose leader is Pablo Casado, and it is affiliated with the European People's Party (EPP) in the EP. Secondly, PSOE was founded in 1879 by Pablo Iglesias. It is a centre-left party (Social Democrat) headed by Pedro Sánchez - current Prime Minister – and affiliated with the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) political group in the EP. Lastly, Citizens – Ciudadanos (C's) – became politically active in Catalonia during 2006 to oppose the Catalan pro-independence parties. However, the challenger party would not run in all Spanish regions until 2015 (Rodríguez Teruel and Barrio 2016: 589-93). Its ideology has been a controversial feature of the party - 'beyond the left and right labels' – although the electorate perception leans more towards the centre-right (Rodríguez Teruel and Barrio 2016: 594-602). C's can be found in the European parliament party group Renew Europe (RE).

Continuing with the Spanish challenger parties who ideologically sit at the extremes of the political spectrum and share a more critical stance on the European Union, we find Vox and UP. Vox was founded in 2013 due to a schism between the PP and Santiago Abascal – Vox's leader since 2014 (Ferreira 2019: 83). It is a radical right populist political party (Turnbull-Dugarte 2019) whose ideology is based on nativism, an authoritarian societal vision, and deep 'law and order' values (Ferreira 2019: 73). In European terms, the party holds an anti-immigration stance, and their main concern is to 'halt further integration', stressing the bilateral essence of international relations and the possibility of withdrawal only in case of conflicts of interest between the Union and Spain (Vox 2019a: 23; Fernández-Albertos & Wilhelm 2020: 223). However, although Vox frames and criticises EU policy-making as being 'cosmopolitan and globalist', it is supportive of Spain's EMU membership and does not make the EU the 'object of its attacks' on a regular basis (Fernández-Albertos & Wilhelm 2020: 221-23). Their political group in the EP is the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR).

On the opposite side of the political spectrum, UP is a radical left populist political party (Figueroa and Thielemann 2015; Rodríguez-Teruel, Barrio and Barberà 2016) founded in 2014 by Pablo Iglesias - now a former Spanish Vice-President. As a challenger party, it gained significant electoral support at its inception and, currently, it is a member of the left-wing coalition government. Their discourse opposes the 'economic and political establishment' (Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro and Plaza-Colodro 2018: 352). The party initially framed its Manichean approach as 'la casta' – an amalgam of corrupt politicians, large companies, mass media, etc. - against the 'true people' that they represent - 'opposing the social majority to the privileged minority' (Ivaldi, Lanzone and Woods 2017: 364). After the EP elections of 2014, UP underwent a platform and 'policy moderation' strategy in order to attract PSOE voters, although this was not perceived as such by the voters (Rodríguez-Teruel, Barrio and Barberà 2016: 574). Concerning their stance on the EU, the party does not oppose European integration per se, but argues for certain reforms (such as changes in the Pact of Stability and Growth, or a rejection of International Free Trade Agreements and austerity measures (Ramos & Cornago 2016). Therefore, the party's position within the EP could be characterised as Eurocritical - neither Euroenthusiastic nor Eurosceptic, but somewhere amongst these two (see Statham et al. 2010; della Porta et al. 2017) - as it opposes certain EU policies but does not attempt to 'dismantle the Union' (Salvati 2020: 15). This is more evident when looking at voting behaviour in the EP. For instance, while UP partially agrees with Eurosceptic parties in the economic and monetary field, it separates itself politically from these parties in domains such as agriculture or the internal market (Salvati 2020), conforming a more constructive opposition. UP is part of the GUE/NGL European parliamentary group.

Prior to analysing the 2019 EP elections in Spain, a contextualisation of the political circumstances taking place before and after (26th of May) is required in order to inform the analysis. The EP election took place almost a month after the general election of April 2019. This was partially the result of a parliamentary motion of no confidence won in June 2018 by the current socialist PM, Pedro Sánchez – with the support of UP, two Catalan pro-independence parties and the Basque Nationalist Party – against the conservative and former PM, Mariano Rajoy (Simón 2020: 3). However, the regional parties rejected the new budget and the leader of the PSOE had to hold a snap election on the 28th of April 2019 (Simón 2020: 11). The polarisation of the campaign was represented by parties on the left (UP and PSOE) plus the abovementioned regional parties, and right-wing parties (PP, C's and Vox), having the 'fear of the far right' and the 'Catalan issue' as the main topics being exploited, respectively (Fernández-Albertos and Wilhelm 2020: 220). The new political scenario following the election was not more promising: PSOE (winner of the election albeit dependent on the support of the regional parties) and UP could not reach an agreement over the form the intended government would take - single-party cabinet or coalition government - and postponed the negotiations until June 2019 (i.e., after the EP election). Ultimately, the negotiations failed again in June, giving rise to another national election in November 2019 and to the subsequent formation of a coalition government headed by the PSOE in January 2020. In this context, the European elections could have been affected by the preceding national election and the political uncertainty that surrounded the government formation by the time the European elections were held (as the coalition government was still being negotiated).

#### RESEARCH DESIGN, HYPOTHESES AND METHODOLOGY

When attempting to categorise if the Spanish 2019 EP elections were first or second-order through political parties lenses, the research question (how have Spanish parties addressed topics in their political programs for the 2019 European Parliament elections?) tries to identify the topics that political parties chose to address during the campaign in their political programs and how they contributed to the Europeanization or the nationalisation of the debate. More specifically, the topics are the different subject matters addressed by the parties in the political programs.

As discussed, we use the challenger parties' framework to make sense of how parties engage in an anti-establishment rhetoric (consistent with their ideology) while politicising topics that provide them with a strategic advantage over mainstream parties. The 2014 EP elections in Spain were certainly second-order; not only was the debate around Europe mostly absent (except for Podemos, who mobilised a strong anti-austerity discourse), but the campaign focused on domestic issues and the end of the two-party system (Schmitt and Teperoglou 2015: 291). In this light, given their more critical stance on the European project, and, in order to be innovative regarding their topics and approach, challenger parties could have made less use of national concerns in their preparation for the 2019 EP elections as to differentiate themselves from other competitors and previous elections. In turn, this would make mainstream parties respond to those innovative topics by also addressing them (in consistence with their ideology) to protect their dominant position (De Vries and Hobolt 2020: 9). Following this logic, a greater utilisation of European topics - in their programmatic content and as a result of party competition (Ladrech 2002: 396-98) - would have led parties to shape public debates towards a more Europeanised discussion, thus potentially contributing to a first-order election. This is what we would call the 'European approach'. Accordingly, the first hypothesis is:

(H1): The European approach constitutes the dominant discourse regarding parties' political programs for the 2019 EP elections in Spain (i.e. parties innovate by addressing

more European topics, thus Europeanising public debates and potentially contributing to a first-order outcome of the EP election).

Despite the increasing politicisation of European affairs, as discussed in the theoretical section, EP elections have been generally characterised as second-order elections dominated by domestic concerns (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Marsh and Mikhaylov 2010). Moreover, the 2019 Spanish EP elections took place amidst two national parliamentary elections held close in time to the European ones. As the government composition was uncertain, this could have prompted parties to innovate less and make use of more national concerns in order to appeal the voter with more domestic and relatable concerns. Accordingly, the 'national approach' is constituted by the parties' intention to innovate less and prioritise domestic politics in the public debate, potentially leading towards a second-order election. In this light, the second hypothesis is:

(H2): The national approach constitutes the dominant discourse regarding parties' political programs for the 2019 EP elections in Spain (i.e. as a consequence of a greater utilisation of national topics, the parties did not sufficiently innovate, and the elections were potentially second-order).

The objective is therefore to analyse whether the main Spanish parties tried to shape the European 2019 EP elections towards a first or a second-order election. In this context, the "vertical dimension of first or second-order" and the "horizontal dimension of left/right ideology" are the two key elements that affect the "position of the party" (i.e., how the parties addressed the topics). The unit of analysis for this study are the topics contained in the publicly available political programs of each of the five parties – mainstream parties (PP and PSOE) and challenger parties (C's, Vox and UP) – for the 2019 European elections, which can be found online in the form of PDFs and in their original language, Spanish.¹ There are three main reasons supporting the analysis of party programs (Kovář 2016: 99): (1) they reflect accurately the official position of the party; (2) the analysis of the process of Europeanization benefits from the use of party programs as these are rigorous sources of information that can be compared between parties and over time; and (3) political programs are tools used by the parties and media to 'shape' public discussion.

Although there is an academic debate about what is the best methodological tool to analyse political manifestos (Merz, Regel and Lewandowski 2016), two of the most widely used are content analysis and political discourse analysis (Zuñiga 2018). These allow for a mix of quantitative and qualitative research techniques that benefits the present research because it allows us to find relevant topics in the manifestos (content analysis) to later analyse each of them using political discourse analysis. Particularly, the benefits derived from using quantitative and qualitative techniques to analyse party programs has already been acknowledged and used in the literature (Kovář 2016: 100). Subsequently, these two methodologies were employed in our analysis to answer the research question and test the hypotheses using the software NVivo.

Content analysis has been used to quantify patterns in the unit of analysis and has been conducted by means of breaking down the text into smaller components or keywords (Ribera Payá 2019). Accordingly, this research technique served the analysis by coding the content of the political programs into topics. After going through the literature on the main challenges facing the EU, the authors found three recurrent topics: "immigration," "integration," and the "Eurozone/EMU" (see also: Dinan, Nugent and Paterson 2017). Nonetheless, as we reviewed the party manifestos, we additionally added topics that emerged in almost all of them ("Environment", "(Un)Employment", "Feminism", "Catalonia" (European Arrest Warrant) and "Gibraltar". It should be noted that these overarching topics were composed of sub-categories (e.g., for environment, associated

words such as "sustainability", "climate" or "biodiversity" were also coded within the same topic) – see Table 2.

Table 2. Words coded using content analysis.

	Words coded with content analysis
Immigration	Immigrants, Asylum, Immigration
Integration	Integration, Federal, Unanimity, Competences
Eurozone-EMU	Euro, Economic, Monetary
(Un)Employment	Employment, Unemployment, Youth
Environment	Sustainability, Climate, Biodiversity, Environment
Feminism	Women, Gender, Feminism
EAW/Catalonia	Catalonia, Arrest, Warrant
Gibraltar	Gibraltar

After systematically identifying what were the topics covered by the main Spanish parties, and inspired by the explanations of Pardo (2012: 7) regarding his work on the Europeanization of political programs, content analysis was supplemented by hand coding longer semantic structures into the already coded topics. Political discourse analysis is a qualitative methodology that 'allows for a deeper insight into the meaning conveyed by the text' (Ribera Payá 2019: 32). This step was crucial as it allowed us to identify whether the dominant discourse for each of the topics addressed by each of the parties had a European or a national focus (see Table 3 for indicators).

Table 3. Indicators for European/national dominant discourse (political discourse analysis).

·			
Indicators for political discourse analysis			
European Dominant Discourse	National Dominant Discourse		
Reference to European policies (or reforms)	Absence or non-consistency of European references		
Reference to European mechanisms (or reforms)	Reference to national general elections' policies		
European issues located at the centre of the discourse	Spain (national issues) located at the center of the discourse		
-	Salient national issue		

Drawing on the theory section (see Ladrech 2002; Reif and Schmitt 1980), the dominant discourse shall be considered European (European approach) if the party addresses European topics and uses references to European policies, mechanisms, institutions or reforms thereof. Conversely, the dominant discourse shall be considered national or domestic (national approach) when the previously stated references to the European project are either absent or non-consistent.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the discourse would be predominantly national in the case that parties choose to place Spain at the centre of their discourse; if the suggestions they offer were already suggested in the previous national elections (as part of their national agenda and not referring to European policies, mechanisms, institutions or reforms thereof), or if they brought a salient national issue (as acknowledged in the theoretical section, most likely using an identitarian focus, for the right, and a rejection of EU neoliberal guidelines, for the left). Once the longer semantic structures were coded into the topics and given the relatively short length of the materials (240 pages in total), we analysed the dominant discourse – with political discourse analysis - manually. This methodology served to test the two hypotheses in the analysis, which will be organised in blocs according to their ideology in the next section

## RESEARCH FINDINGS: THE EUROPEANIZATION OF SPANISH POLITICAL PARTIES

### **Analysis of the Political Programs by Ideological Blocs**

Figure 1 displays an overview of the number of references coded (horizontal axis) regarding the main topics (vertical axis) for all parties' manifestos. Note that other noteworthy topics that shed light on the identification of the dominant discourse were added to the original ones extracted from previous academic research when revising the manifestos.

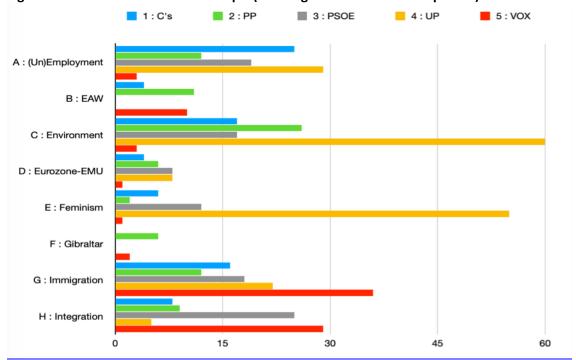


Figure 1. No of references for each topic (challengers and mainstream parties).

Analysis of the Spanish right-wing parties' political programs

As shown in *Figure 1*, the main topics addressed per party within this bloc are immigration, (un)employment, environment, the EAW (Catalonia), and Gibraltar.

A remarkable initial finding is that the dominant right-wing party, PP, makes a greater use of European references than C's and Vox. In this sense, the mainstream party is innovating more than the challenger parties it is competing with. This is well-exemplified through the topic of (un)employment, where the majority of the references used by the mainstream party concern European mechanisms and place European concerns at the centre. For instance, the party is the 'leading negotiator' on the European Social Fund plus (ESF+), being the 'main instrument that the EU will have to develop measures in education, training, employment and social inclusion, during the period 2021-2027' (PP 2019: 23). Nonetheless, the dominance of European references cannot be found in every topic. When addressing immigration or the environment, the party uses references to European mechanisms or concerns while predominantly dealing with them in a generic manner, bringing national issues or locating Spain at the centre of its discourse. What is interesting is that, even if addressing national concerns, the party also innovates in the articulation of its discourse by means of instrumentalising the European dimension. Using the case of immigration as an example, the party bears in mind the Spanish geographical position

while advocating for its demands in most cases. For example, it pushes for greater European economic cooperation with those African countries whose rate of emigration is high, or argues to increase the provision of resources to FRONTEX in order to better protect European borders (PP 2019: 44-5). These examples show how both dimensions, national and European, are intertwined.

Moving towards a more centred position in the political spectrum, a similar phenomenon occurs for the case of C's. The party would not only be innovating because its discourse contains references to European mechanisms, policies or concerns, but also because it inscribes national concerns within the European context. This is also noticeable when analysing immigration, whereby the number of references with a European and national focus is very balanced. However, concerning the references characterised by a more national focus (in this case, primarily locating Spain at the centre of the discourse), C's in the same vein as PP - recurrently uses the European dimension. For instance, when pushing for better support for Spain and other countries situated at Europe's external borders regarding migration management (C's 2019: 2-3). This instrumentalisation is also manifest in other topics. While a priori, less innovation would be found when addressing (un)employment or the environment (since there are fewer references concerning European mechanism, policies or reforms thereof), this assumption is less evident when one analyses the manner in which national concerns are brought to the fore. For instance, as youth unemployment is one of the main issues that must be tackled at national level (Sanchez-Silva 2019), they suggest the creation of a 'Youth Investment Plan of 10 billion euros' (C's 2019: 3).

It is significant to find that the party situated at the extreme of the right-wing bloc, and also the most competitive challenger party to PP - Vox - appears to be innovating less in their discourse when looking at the number of references per topic. Nonetheless, as one analyses the references that indicate a predominant national discourse, it becomes more obvious that the party is innovating more than it would appear at a first glance. This can be illustrated with the topic of integration or immigration. For instance, regarding the latter, 'bringing to Europe the exigence to strengthen Spanish borders, mainly in Ceuta and Melilla', or regarding asylum, they will 'totally oppose any attempt to impose mandatory quotas from Brussels, to the detriment of our security and sovereignty' (Vox 2019b: 11-14).

Another interesting finding coded while carrying out the analysis revealed that two topics representing a purely national concern – being also a salient topic during national elections (Mazo 2020) – were addressed only by right-wing parties: the Catalonian secessionism (with reference to the European Arrest Warrant, EAW) and Gibraltar. These topics are a straightforward example of how parties are using the European level to push for national demands.

Clad with a nationalist rhetoric, for the case of Catalonia the parties are pushing for the modification of the EAW as a consequence of Carles Puigdemont's flight from Spain. PP claims that it is 'inadmissible' that being the EU a community founded on law, 'the Member States do not recognise certain crimes committed against the integrity and sovereignty of other Member States' and thus, urge its reform to include the crimes of rebellion and sedition (PP 2019: 49). For its part, C's, argues for the reform of the EAW so that extradition is 'automatic and more agile' (C's 2019: 1). Finally, Vox, encompasses both of the previous claims made by PP and C's and argues that the EU has been 'insufficient in the defence of Spanish Unity' (Vox 2019b: 6). It demands a "strict prohibition against launching accession talks with any European territory that has proclaimed its independence outside of the constitutionally established procedure" (Vox 2019b: 8). Accordingly, it pushes for the creation of a Directive that expands the list of crimes

encompassed by the scope of the European Arrest Warrant and reduces the 'delivery times from the executing state to the issuing state to the minimum possible' (Vox 2019b: 15).

Last but not least, Gibraltar is addressed by PP and Vox. While the former party affirms its colonial character and urges the EU to have the same view and defend a Spanish veto power in matters that concern the Rock (PP 2019: 58), the latter addresses it in a more radical manner, calling for the "return" of Gibraltar and stating that "it is unacceptable that there is a tax haven on Spanish sovereign soil" (Vox 2019b: 10).

Analysis of the Spanish left-wing parties' political programs

After presenting the research findings belonging to the right-wing parties, this section will contain the findings regarding the left-wing parties – composed of UP and PSOE. The four most discussed topics for both parties are immigration, (un)employment, the environment, and feminism (see *Figure 1*).

Out of the two parties, PSOE is the one innovating the most. The party includes more references to European policies, mechanisms or concerns in every topic except for (un)employment, which is more balanced. At first sight, UP would be innovating less as, overall, there is a greater national focus in the references analysed except for (un)employment and immigration, which are also more balanced.

Hence, PSOE clearly innovates in its references to immigration and environment as it mostly refers to European issues. Some examples include the reform of the Common European Asylum System (the Dublin regulation) so that it rests on principles of 'responsibility and solidarity' or pushing for a socialist group creation of a 'Green Deal' (PSOE 2019: 17). Now, if one looks at those references contained in the topic (un)employment - which was the exception for containing more references to national concerns compared to other topics - we again find that those national concerns are inscribed within a European dimension. For instance, stemming from their national agenda and being a national concern, they propose the establishment of a 'European Minimum Wage' (which passed at national level recently), a youth guarantee program to fight against youth precariousness, and the democratisation of companies at European level (PSOE 2019: 10-3).

Interestingly, UP also harbours a European dimension when addressing concerns of national salience in their manifesto (in some cases even copying word-for-word their national elections program but engraving it within the European context, which would be the innovative element). This is evident when analysing the topic of the environment. Some examples include: 'halving in 2030 the primary energy production based on fossil fuels to reach 100% of the production from renewable sources in 2040' in Europe (UP 2019a: 63), which can be found in UP's national program (2019b: 12); "a cheaper and fairer electricity bill' - but at the European level - (UP 2019a: 65), which can also be literally found in UP (2019b: 12). This is recurrently done through their manifesto. Remarkably, in the topic of (un)employment, UP also innovates while bringing similar concerns as those addressed by PSOE. For instance, they push for a European 'decent' minimum wage (UP 2019a: 18), which was first brought by UP at the national level (UP 2019b: 78), or the democratisation of companies at the European level (UP 2019a: 19), also copied from their national manifesto, changing only its structure (UP 2019b: 61). It is worth mentioning that the rejection of austerity measures and neoliberal guidelines is recurrent throughout all UP's political program. While there is no single reference in PSOE's manifesto regarding the criticism of the austerity measures, there is one reference against neoliberalism when dealing with (un)employment: 'the most conservative and neoliberal currents advocate maintaining an increasingly deregulated globalisation' (PSOE 2019: 20).

Lastly, another topic was added to the coding system as both left-wing parties referred to it transversally in their political programs: feminism. These two parties are the most explicit advocates for feminism at the national level<sup>3</sup> and they innovate in their European manifestos by addressing this issue vis-á-vis the European project. For example, PSOE defends the same application of the gender perspective it pushes at the national level in areas such as the CAP or the cohesion policy, which have a significant budget (PSOE 2019: 14-6). On its part, UP undergoes a similar path when suggesting a European initiative that pursues the 'decommodification and nationalisation' of goods and services necessary to guarantee human rights, and which cannot be provided only within the 'family environment and at the expense of female labour' (UP 2019a: 28). Another example is the defence of a 'sustainable and feminist urbanism', pursued not only at national level, but at European level too (UP 2019a: 82).

### **Towards a Twilight Zone?**

The analysis presented above shows how domestic and European politics are intertwined, as much as the fact that Spanish political parties attempted to Europeanize national politics. Looking at the two indicators extracted from the literature on the Europeanization of parties (Ladrech 2002: 396-98), one can see how the programmatic content indicates a greater utilisation of EU references as 'a factor in domestic policy pursuits'<sup>4</sup> and a change in strategy regarding certain parties that are more critical with the EU. The latter is especially noticeable when one looks at how an initially more Eurosceptic party such as Vox, is now actually calling for an extension of competences of the EU, in this case through the EAW. This finding is also consistent with Hix and Goetz's (2000: 12) work on Europeanization: the potential for change at the national level can occur as the European arena provides a new 'structure of opportunities' that political parties can use. Hence, parties are not only innovating when they address a European mechanism, reform, or concern, but also when they inscribe a national concern, or a salient issue, within the bigger European picture.

After analysing the empirical data, one wonders whether the traditional classification of first and second-order elections is well-equipped to give account of the contemporary politicised context. If the references related to the two indicator sets (dominant European discourse and national dominant discourse) were applied stricto sensu, all the nuanced findings concerning how national concerns are Europeanised would have been lost. Such a finding is confirmed by the existing literature, suggesting a continuum in the electionorderness categorisation (see Hough and Jeffery 2005; Elgie and Fauvelle-Aymar 2012). In this vein, it would appear as if PSOE was the only party who really contributed to the Europeanization of the debate, as it is the only party whose dominant discourse is European. While the other parties sometimes harbour a balanced number of references for some topics, the majority of parties predominantly bring national issues, put Spain at the centre of the discourse or bring suggestions from the national agenda. However, they also innovate when addressing these issues, in most cases, by instrumentalising the European arena to push for their national demands. It is the case for all challenger parties and, to a lesser extent - as it does use a relatively greater number of references to European mechanisms and reforms - for PP.

In this context, while the hypotheses outlined in this article were essential for the authors to guide the research, the main findings point to a different direction. Even if one could have the impression that the 2019 EP elections in Spain were dominated overall by a national approach – thus leading towards a second-order election - this would account for a superficial analysis, as it would ignore how parties intended to Europeanise national issues as a consequence of party competition.

Rather than stating that the national order can be understood isolated from the European, we argue that the intertwining of national and European politics demands a new conceptualisation capable of capturing all the aforementioned nuances. In this regard, we conceived a 'twilight zone' that sits in-between the traditional election-orders classification and is characterised by the synergy of the following elements: (1) a domestic or national concern (contributing to second-orderness) and (2) the intention of the given party to address the said concern using the European arena or making reference to a European mechanism, policy or reform (contributing to first-orderness) for political gain.

Interestingly, our findings also indicate that it is mainstream parties who are leading the way in terms of 'innovation' in their discourse. The Spanish mainstream parties' innovativeness can be explained on the basis of (1) the increased pressure posed by challenger parties after the national elections of April 2019 and (2) the superior innovative capacity that traditional pro-EU parties have on a European political agenda. With the exception of UP, C's and Vox substantially increased their seats in the national parliament during the April elections. Vox particularly increased its share of Members of Parliament (MPs) from 0 in 2016 to 24 in April 2019, which is why one of the main topics exploited by the left for the November 2019 elections' campaign was the 'fear of the far right' (an election in which Vox succeeded to get 52 MPs). In this regard, traditional parties have shown a certain degree of political adaptability. Additionally, it must be noted that over time, Spanish mainstream parties have undergone a process of Europeanization that reflects the positive views of the electorate towards the European project (see, for example, Pardo 2012), rendering them more competitive and able to innovate on European issues.

#### CONCLUSION

The article departed from the following research question: 'how have Spanish parties addressed topics in their political programs for the 2019 European Parliament elections?' Thus, the article aimed at identifying the dominant discourse of the five main Spanish parties in the EU elections.

Our findings indicate that the distinction between a predominantly national or a predominantly European discourse, is not a straightforward exercise. While analysing the discourse of the parties in their European elections' manifestos, we found that most nuances pointing at an intertwining of national and European dimensions would have been unacknowledged if the traditional classification of first and second-order elections was strictly applied. In this sense, we realised that neither of the hypotheses could be verified in isolation, with results indicating an intertwining of indicators in most cases. Excluding the centre-left PSOE and to a lesser extent the centre-right PP (due to their political adaptability and greater innovative capacity on European issues), the vast majority of the analysed references concerning the other parties had a predominant national focus, yet with a European dimension in most cases. The parties were innovating in their discourse as they were instrumentalising the European dimension or arena to push for their national demands. The examples of Catalonia, immigration or Gibraltar for the right, or the European Minimum Wage or feminism, for the left-wing parties, illustrate this intertwining and the intention to Europeanize national concerns. In the current political context, national politics are hardly grasped when isolated from European politics. It is hence necessary to question the traditional classification of election-orderness as to capture the changing dynamics and the Europeanization of political parties. Departing from the analysis of the 2019 EP elections in Spain, we conceive a "twilight zone" where the majority of the references are inscribed. In this way, the distinction between first and second-order elections may be seen less as a binary distinction and more as part of a continuum.

While it is worth noting that future studies could benefit from including the role of the media – as another key actor in the electoral cycle affecting the voter's decisions – in their analysis, the present article underlined the vital importance of taking a top-down approach when analysing election-orderness. The study of political programs and parties offers nuanced findings that can complement and further explain bottom-up results – ultimately, the electoral cycle is mostly driven by political parties' strategies seeking governmental power. Therefore, following up on our research findings, we encourage further research to analyse how Europeanization, innovation and the conceptualisation of the "twilight zone" may also apply to other European country cases in the context of the 2019 EP elections and beyond.

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#### **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Particularly, the manifesto of C's, was available online embedded on their official website, and not in a PDF form. Consequently, we created a PDF comprised of all the available information following the same order displayed on their website.

<sup>2</sup> In this context, note that non-consistent references relate to those references that merely use the word "European" or refer to a mechanism in a generic manner.

<sup>3</sup> The fact that feminism is at the core of UP's national discourse is noticeable when one looks at their name: the adjective "unidas" means "united" but for females, "unidos" would be the word comprising both genders. Additionally, the rejection to austerity measures and neoliberal guidelines is recurrent throughout all the political programs.

<sup>4</sup> Especially in contrast to the 2014 elections, where the European debate was close to absent.

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Research Article

Assessing the Impact of Party Identification in Transnational Election Campaigns: Evidence from the 2019 European Parliament Election

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## **Abstract**

Since the introduction of "Spitzenkandidaten" for the presidency of the European Commission, elections to the European Parliament have been characterised by the dynamic between an increasingly transnational election campaign and a national electoral process. However, the implementation of a European election campaign focusing on transnational top candidates remains controversial because it is still unclear to what extent nationally formed political predispositions such as party identification can serve as heuristics for assessing a transnational election campaign. Though TV duels as miniature campaigns directly open up this antagonism, research at the European level remains limited. Drawing on data from a field study consisting of virtualised real-time-response measurement and survey data of 157 participants, we show that expressive party identification as a heuristic is considerably constrained in transnational debates' reception, while being complemented by instrumental aspects such as candidate orientations and ideological attitudes.

## Keywords

Real-Time-Response Measurement; European Election 2019; Party Identification; Multidimensional Scaling; Structural Equation Model; Televised Debates As a climax of political communication, televised debates provide voters with the opportunity to directly compare persons, parties and programmes in a one-evening-event. While TV debates are largely established in national election campaigns in many European countries, this format of political communication was unprecedented at the European level until the 2014 European Parliament (EP) elections (Maier, Rittberger and Faas 2016). In the run-up to the 2019 elections of the EP, five televised debates took place between Manfred Weber (EPP) and Frans Timmermans (S&D), the transnational 'Spitzenkandidaten' of the two party families who were considered to be most likely to appoint the next President of the European Commission.

While election campaigns for the EP gain an increasingly transnational character, the electoral process remains national. Though TV duels as miniature campaigns (Maier and Faas 2011) open up this antagonism directly, research at the European level remains limited. This seems counterintuitive since televised debates on the European level between the transnational top candidates of the two party families who are supposed to be most likely to appoint the future Commission President are controversially discussed in political science (for example Schmitt, Hobolt and Popa 2015; Hobolt 2014; Gattermann 2015; Christiansen 2016). Comprehensive research on TV debates at the national level has shown that party identification (PID) is a predominant predictor when assessing perception processes and effects of debate reception. Though the level of party identification has declined in a number of developed democracies (Dalton and Wattenberg 2002), studies show that partisanship remains a powerful predictor of political behavior such as vote choice, voter turnout, and electoral campaign activity (Huddy, Mason and Aarøe 2015), stressing its heuristic function for the perception and evaluation of the political world (Brader and Tucker 2012). Whether this heuristic function also remains valid in a transnational context such as EP elections is so far still unclear in political science research. Consequently, we know little about the extent to which nationally formed political predispositions like party identification can serve as a heuristic for assessing a transnational election campaign with pan-European lead candidates. This article aims to contribute to the research filling this gap.

## PARTY IDENTIFICATION AND (EUROPEAN) DEBATE RECEPTION: STATE OF RESEARCH

There is a vast body of literature on the perception and effects of televised debates on the national level (see McKinney and Carlin 2004; Maier, Faas and Maier 2014; Benoit, Hansen and Verser 2003) as well as on methodological issues when implementing real time response measurement (RTR) in the applied research design (Waldvogel 2020; Waldvogel and Metz 2020; Reinemann, Maier, Faas and Maurer 2005; Papastefanou, 2013; Maier, Hampe and Jahn 2016a; Maier, Maurer, Reinemann and Faas 2007). This research on TV debates at the national level has shown that party identification is a predominant predictor when assessing perception processes and effects of debate reception as well as the quality of RTR-data.

In political science research, party identification originally was conceived as an individual's stable affective tie to a political party (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1960). According to the concept of Campbell and colleagues, it emerges through political socialisation, for example by parents, friends or membership in political groups, and substantially shapes the perception and evaluation of the political world. Long-term party identification is supplemented by two short-term influencing factors: the evaluation of candidates and current political issues. The perception of these two variables is largely determined by party identification through the "funnel of causality".

Since the introduction of the concept there remains a lively debate on its nature and origins. In this discussion, two competing views of partisanship complement (Huddy and

Bankert 2017). From an instrumental point of view, which is rooted in the rational choice paradigm and stresses utility maximisation as the driving force behind political decision making and involvement (Fiorina 1981; Downs 1957), party identification is the accumulation of evaluations on party performances, ideological beliefs, one's own issuerelated proximity to a party, as well as the evaluation of candidates. If these evaluations turn out to be negative, partisans may abandon their party preferences if the party no longer complies with these instrumental considerations. In a complementing expressive approach, which is grounded in social identity theory (Huddy, Mason and Aarøe 2015; Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002) party identification is an enduring identity strengthened by social affiliations. This social identity with a party and its associated groups promote an emotional attachment to the party, generate stability over time in party identification and diminish the political influence of short-term effects on party loyalties. These two complementing perspectives also have a direct impact on information processing and the perception of election campaigns such as televised debates. While an expressive model of partisanship provides a motive for biased reasoning which may result in a selective processing of information, an instrumental model contrasts, in which partisans are thought to impartially consider political information (Bankert, Huddy and Rosema 2017).

Thus, PID is of particular interest for the analysis of perceptual processes, effects and methodological issues regarding research on televised debates. As such, it has been demonstrated that political pre-dispositions, for example the strength of party identification moderates to what extent debate reception affects candidate images (for example Maurer and Reinemann 2007, 2003; Maier and Faas 2003), voting intentions (McKinney and Warner 2013; Maier 2007c; Maier, Faas and Maier 2013; Klein and Rosar 2007; Klein and Pötschke 2005; Faas and Maier 2004; Benoit and Hansen 2004), interest in the election campaign and willingness to participate (Range 2017; McKinney, Rill and Gully 2011; Maier, Faas and Maier 2013; Klein 2005; Faas and Maier 2004), political knowledge and efficacy (Range 2017; McKinney and Warner 2013; McKinney, Rill and Gully 2011; Maurer and Reinemann 2006; Maier 2007a; Maier, Faas and Maier 2013; Gottfried, Hardy, Winneg and Jamieson 2014; Faas and Maier 2011; Benoit and Hansen 2004; Benoit Hansen and Verser 2003) as well as candidate preferences (Maier 2007b; Bachl 2013). Hence, research has shown that the impact of party identification on subsequent variables of debate perception and information processing is far reaching.

Party identification is said to substantially influence candidate evaluations and expectations on candidates' appearances before debate reception as well as it moderates the actual assessment of one candidate's performance in the debate and candidate preferences in retrospect. Furthermore, PID significantly shapes real-time reactions of recipients to the debate as it is conceived in the concept of construct validity and defined as 'pronounced associations between the measured RTR scores and party identification' (Maier, Maurer, Reinemann and Faas 2007: 66), which is a major approach to evaluate the validity of real-time-response measurement. Consequently, recipients seem to watch political debates through a coloured lens (Maier 2007b: 108). These findings on the predominant role of party identification in debate reception are in line with the results of 'classical' research on campaigning and party identification: mechanisms of selective exposure and selective information processing usually prevent individuals from receiving information contradicting their views (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet 1955). On the other hand, TV debates are considered more deliberative, since competing candidates are able to present their (contradicting) views and arguments to the audience. Consequently, debate research has demonstrated that candidate orientation and perceived debate performances are substantially shaped by RTR-evaluations meaning that PID preforms political attitudes, candidate preferences and their perception but is neither able to entirely block effects nor to determine perception processes all alone.

The emergence of TV debates at the European level is closely related to the introduction of transnational Spitzenkandidaten of the European party families in 2014. While there is

extensive research on televised debates at the national level, studies on transnational TV discussions regarding the election to the EP are scarce.

Dinter and Weissenbach (2015) deal with the democratic-theoretical effects of the 2014 'Eurovision Debate' and investigate the medium-term impact of debate reception on attitudes and emotions towards the European Union (EU). To this end, they combine quantitative questionnaires in a pre-post design with qualitative data from group discussions for 50 study participants. The authors show that the reception of the Eurovision Debate could positively influence the candidate images as well as the emotions and images of the participants about the EU. Unfortunately, the study does not implement real-time measurement to assess viewers' reactions to the debate second-by-second nor does it provide any information on the role of party identification for the effects observed and the perception of the debate.

Maier, Rittberger and Faas (2016) investigate the effects of the 2014 Eurovision Debate on EU-related attitudes of 110 young German voters and they assess the moderating role of political involvement in their laboratory study. Drawing on real-time response data and a content analysis of the debate, the authors find respondents' reactions to the candidates' statements being positive on average. Additionally, for some respondents and a sub-set of their EU-related attitudes, debate reception caused attitudinal changes resulting in more favorable views towards the EU albeit the direct association of real-time responses to candidates' messages and post-debate attitudes was not as substantial as expected. Furthermore, the authors' regression models do not indicate strong evidence for a moderating effect of political involvement regarding information processing, direct debate effects and the association between RTR and EU-related attitudes.

Expanding the aforementioned experiment to 24 countries, Maier, Faas, Rittberger, Fortin-Rittberger et al. (2018) inquire whether the Eurovision Debate met the expectation to increase political competition in order to improve the electoral connection between citizens and EU legislators and thus the quality of democracy in the EU. Surveying 828 young but eligible voters with their quasi-experimental pre-posttest study design, the authors show that debate reception had a recognisable impact on the participants, indicating strong evidence of higher cognitive and political involvement just as considerably changing EU-related attitudes. Unfortunately, the study could not afford to implement RTR in all countries and no results were reported.

The few present studies provide initial insights into debate reception at the European level. However, they do not analyse party identification as a main factor in debate reception nor implement real-time-response measurement systematically in their studies to track participants' perceptions and evaluations second-by-second. In addition, due to their quasi-experimental study design in laboratory settings, the studies' data also might lack external validity (Maier, Faas, Rittberger, Fortin-Rittberger et al. 2018: 615). To reduce restrictions on the external validity of the measurement, virtualised implementations of RTR have recently been developed. With this novel approach, RTR is implemented as software and study participants use their own mobile input devices as hardware to provide feedback in natural reception situations – for example from home – about their current impression of a TV discussion. This facilitates to abandon physical input devices and conduct field studies outside the laboratory. Methodological research has shown that virtualised RTR provides both valid and reliable data and thus corresponds to established standards of data quality (Waldvogel 2020; Waldvogel and Metz 2020; Maier, Hampe and Jahn 2016).

### **RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES**

This article addresses the guiding research question whether the heuristic function of party identification for the perception and evaluation of televised debates remains valid in a

transnational context such as EP elections. Since we know little about the impact of party identification in transnational contexts we opt for an explorative approach in which we try to inductively derive assumptions from the existing literature relating to our object of research and interest. Considering the two complementary approaches of an instrumental and expressive model of party identification, we conceive three scenarios about the impact of PID in transnational debate reception using the 2019 EP election as an example.

First, characterising an expressive approach, Green, Palmquist and Schickler (2002) interpret party identification as a social identity. Addressing the question on how people define themselves in relation to political groups, they present their concept which focuses 'on identification with social groups. Social identification involves comparing a judgement about oneself with one's perception of a social group'. As people reflect on their political affiliations, 'they call to mind some mental image, or stereotype, of what these sorts of people are like and square these images with their own self-conceptions' (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002: 8). Assuming that this mechanism of 'in-group identification' is also valid in transnational contexts, party identification may exert an impact by recognising common identities of social groups and the translation of existent political leanings across national borders (Finifter and Finifter 1989). By displaying the friend-foe logic of social identity which is at the centre of an expressive partisanship, we can derive our first hypotheses that we should find pronounced differences in average net evaluations of participants by national party identification (H1) while all partisan groups should significantly be distinguishable by their RTR-evaluations (H2).

Second, by referring to an instrumental perspective, party identification could exert such an impact in a transnational context that shared evaluations of the candidates and their performances may lead to an affective attachment to a European party family, emphasising utility maximisation as the driving force behind political behavior (Downs 1957). Therefore, we hypothesise that party identification significantly shapes real-time-responses of the participants (H3) while RTR-evaluations substantially affect candidates' debate performances and preferences in turn even when controlling for other variables of debate reception (H4).

Third, we may further elaborate this notion and take up the critique by Abramowitz and Saunders (2006) that Green, Palmquist and Schickler (2002) neglect the role of ideology in the formation of party identification while claiming that consistency of ideology and party identification has important consequences for political behaviour. As such, it has been shown that political ideology is an important factor when adapting party identification to new political environments (Finifter and Finifter 1989). We can therefore assume that, if PID is characterised by ideology (Fiorina 1981), it should be feasible to translate the nationally formed party identification into a European party environment. Pre-requisites being met for this adaptation process at the micro-sociological level, however, are that at the macro-sociological level the underlying axes represent comparable cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) and span an equivalent coordinate system of political parties within the EU (Reiljan, Kutiyski and Krouwel 2019; McElroy and Benoit 2007; Gabel and Hix 2002). If we further relate this empirical expectation to consistency-theoretical approaches (for example Heider 1958; Festinger 1962), we can assume that in a TV debate those contents are perceived by the recipients that correspond to existing ideological attitudes in order to avoid cognitive dissonances. Consequently, from this perspective of political communication research, the expectation is that partisans and their political allies 'cheer their hero and boo the villain' (Sears and Chaffee 1979: 227) meaning that adherents of a particular party should adopt distinct positions in a common perceptual space of debate perception (H5) while positioning alongside established dimensions of political competition when evaluating candidates of a transnational TV debate (H6).

#### **DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

Stimulus: The final televised debate in the run-up to the 2019 EP election between the top candidates of the two party families who were most likely to appoint the future Commission President took place on the evening of 16 May 2019 in Germany. Ten days before election day, Frans Timmermans (S&D) and Manfred Weber (EPP) discussed the most important issues in a debate that lasted 90 minutes. Around 1.68 million viewers watched the debate which was broadcasted live in Germany (ZDF) and Austria (ORF).<sup>1</sup>

Device and data: In order to measure perception processes and effects of debate reception in real time, we have developed the so-called 'Debat-O-Meter', an application for mobile devices with which users can feedback their impressions about a debate second by second in natural reception situations. The Debat-O-Meter is conceived as a 'virtual laboratory' that extends beyond the functional scope of a physical RTR input device. It is characterised by a modular structure, as it is known from 'traditional' RTR laboratory studies, in order to ensure the standardisation of the survey process and thus the internal validity of the measurement procedure. After a tutorial, users are directed to a pre-survey in which they are asked about their political attitudes, sociodemographic variables and their expectations towards the debate. The study participants then proceed to the core function, the RTR module, with which they transmit their spontaneous impressions. The real-time reactions are gathered by the Debat-O-Meter and stored together with a time stamp and the user pseudonym in a database on a server. The Debat-O-Meter is implemented as a pushbutton system in reset mode, implying that a key must be actively pressed for a value to be sent. Users have the possibility to rate the discussants once every second with double plus (for a very good impression) to double minus (for a very bad impression). For statistical and graphical analysis these inputs are converted to +2 to -2. If no key is pressed, this is considered a neutral impression and corresponds to the value 0. After the debate, the study participants are forwarded to a post survey. At the end, the users receive an overview of their own evaluation behavior for each candidate over the entire debate and for the different topics as well. In addition, the Debat-O-Meter provides a complex security architecture and user monitoring to detect scripts and fend off DDoS attacks.

Sample: During the debate 672 people logged into the Debat-O-Meter. 412 subjects entered the RTR-module by passing the tutorial, completing the pre-survey and gave at least one real-time evaluation whereas about 268 users ran through the entire process, completing the post survey and getting individual results in the VAA-module at the end of the debate. Since our recruitment strategy was based on 'open access' by media cooperation with the aim to engage as many participants as possible, the data selection was confined afterwards to gain an appropriate sample for analysis. Hence, we are focusing on participants who completed the pre-survey at the beginning of the debate, rated the candidates via RTR and filled out the post-survey in a reasonable time span.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, we eliminated cases whose rating behaviour refuted sincere, human participation and who resided outside of Germany.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, we are confident to attain data which structure and quality come close to that of a regular lab setting. After applying our data quality criteria, we remain with 157 cases.

Looking at the demographics, we see a sample characterised by males (65.8 per cent) and older people (62.6 per cent being 40 year or older) with a high degree of formal education (77.4 per cent graduating college or university) and a substantial interest in politics (89.7 per cent). The spatial representation differs considerably and ranges from about 32 per cent in Baden-Württemberg to 1 per cent in Hamburg, although we have reached participants in all federal states. As such, our sample is neither representative for Germany nor for distinct groups of voters. Furthermore, we must acknowledge that the relative small and self-selecting group of respondents is a limited basis for making very strong, broad conclusions. Nevertheless, our design is appropriate to assess whether national formed party identification can serve as a predictor of information processing and effects of a transnational televised debate.

#### **RESULTS**

### **Distinguishing Partisan Groups by RTR Evaluations**

A first approach to examine the extent to which nationally formed party identification can serve as a heuristic to assess a transnational election campaign is to analyse the average net evaluations of participants by partisan attachment (H1). To this end, we calculated the net number of votes cast for each politician for all participants excluding those who had skipped the question on partisanship or who had mentioned 'other' parties which leaves us with 144 cases. If the underlying friend-foe logic of social identity which is at the centre of an expressive partisanship (Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002) is also valid in the context of transnational debate's reception, we can derive the following assumptions about the relationship between RTR-score and PID. Adherents of the SPD and CDU/CSU should clearly evaluate the representative of their own party family positively while the opposing candidate is strongly rejected. A similar logic should apply to the two traditional allies of the two parties. Green adherents favour Timmermans over Weber while this relation should be reversed for FDP adherents. At the same time, support or rejection should be less pronounced than among the candidates' own supporters. Adherents of Die LINKE should also rate Timmermans better than Weber but less clearly than the Greens because a protest attitude rivalry to the Social Democrats is part of the party's DNA. Weber's rejection on the other hand should be more pronounced than among the Greens' adherents since they are ideologically farther away but at the same time should not exceed the negativity of the SPD adherents for whom the friend-foe logic should be more pronounced. Adherents of the AfD should strongly reject both candidates since an anti-EU and antiestablishment attitude is part of the populist nature and founding myth. The rejection of the S&D candidate should be even stronger than for Weber due to the ideological distance of both parties though it should not exceed the opposition between the adherents of the two candidates represented in the TV duel.

As can be seen from Table 1, the expected pattern is generally apparent. A highly opposing evaluation behaviour among adherents of the SPD and CDU/CSU is evident. The contrast is more pronounced for the former while the latter do not clearly reject the opponent. A similar pattern is apparent for the respective traditional allies. For the Greens this pattern is more valid than for FDP supporters. In addition, the assumptions about the association to the adherents of the candidates are mainly met. Interestingly, FDP adherents reject Timmermans more strongly than CDU/CSU supporters albeit this might be explained by a larger ideological distance. Expectations are also largely satisfied with regard to Die LINKE. They rate Timmermans better than Weber although this is less pronounced than among the Greens. In contrast to our expectations however, Weber is less strongly rejected and thus does not exceed the level of rejection by SPD supporters. If we now turn to the adherents of the AfD, we find a negativity towards Timmermans that surpasses all previous evaluations and thus also transcend the rivalry among SPD and CDU/CSU whereas Weber is not clearly rejected by AfD-adherents. While the strong negativity might stem from the large ideological distance between the parties, Timmerman's polarising appearance in the debate and his long biography as an EU politician, Weber's minor dislike could be explained by the fact that it was mainly his party, the CSU, that repeatedly showed interest in the concerns of right-wing populist parties. Although the expected pattern is in principle evident individual assumptions are partially less pronounced than anticipated. In this respect, we cannot completely confirm hypothesis 1. Whether this is an indication that the effect of nationally formed PID fades out when it comes to the reception of a televised debate in a transnational campaign will be examined next.

Table 1: Average net evaluations (SD) for participants by partisan attachment.

	Mean	SPD	Greens	CDU	FDP	AfD	Linke	No PID
Timmermans	38,0	83,7 (69,9)	71,2 (58,4)	16,3 (54,7)	4,2 (38,3)	-138,8 (175,7)	53,8 (65,9)	68,3 (112,5)
Weber	29,1	-5.6 (32,7)	8,9 (51,9)	67,4 (80,1)	57,8 (118,3)	36,4 (84,3)	10,7 (32,2)	74,2 (111,3)

In order to verify whether all groups can in fact be distinguished from each other (H2), we perform Kruskal-Wallis rank sum tests with post-hoc multiple comparisons. Our results show that the distinct partisan groups are only partially distinguishable in the post hoc comparisons at a significance level of 0.05. Regarding the RTR ratings for Timmermans, only eight out of 21 pairwise group differences are significant. While the evaluation behavior of AfD adherents is largely distinct and the distinguishability only to CDU/CSU and FDP adherents fades out (but may be explained by the proximity in the same political camp), the picture for the other parties is more ambiguous. While Greens can additionally be distinguished from FDP and CDU/CSU adherents, this also applies to both partisan groups compared to SPD supporters whereas adherents of Die LINKE do not show any further distinguishability. Looking at the real-time ratings for Weber, a low level of distinctiveness remains and is even more apparent. Only four out of 21 pairwise group differences are significant. Thus, Greens can be distinguished from CDU/CSU adherents while the latter have a distinct evaluation behavior towards Die LINKE and SPD supporters with social democrats, in turn, clearly differing from individuals without a partisanship. It is evident that party identification is not a good predictor to distinguish partisan groups consistently. Regarding Weber's evaluations, only the CDU/CSU-adherents can be clearly distinguished from the center-left camp whereas in most other cases relations not only within but also between the political camps are blurred. A similar pattern applies when we look at the ratings for Timmermans. Within the center-right spectrum only the AfD is consistently distinguishable from all groups of the center-left. Conversely, this also applies to supporters of the SPD and, remarkably, to the Greens when we consider the distinctiveness to adherents of the center-right parties. In all other cases, the differences within and between the political camps fade out. Consequently, we only find weak evidence for hypothesis 2.

### **Connecting Party Identification to Immediate Attitudes of Debate Reception**

As a further approach to assess the role of PID in debate perception, we implement structural equation modeling (SEM). Using this method, we verify whether pronounced associations between PID and the measured RTR scores are present for our data (H3) while suggesting that RTR-evaluations substantially affect candidates' debate performances and preferences in turn even when controlling for further variables of debate reception (H4).

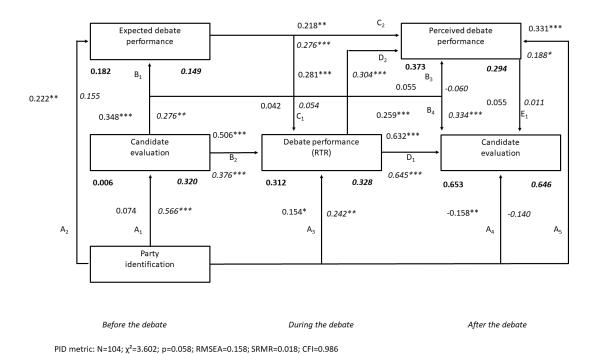
To this end, we follow a model that is established in empirical debate research (Maier 2007b) and has been expanded in recent years (for example Bachl 2013). We have reproduced this model with our data for both candidates in Figures 1 and 2 (for a detailed operationalisation and how the single paths are derived see Bachl 2013). Thereby, candidate evaluation is captured as an overall assessment of the candidate ranging from -2 ('very low') to +2 ('very high'). Accordingly, live debate performance is measured as the mean evaluation during the debate (ranging from -2 for 'very bad' to +2 for 'very good'). The same applies to the expected/perceived debate performance. Party identification was operationalised as a metric variable ranging from -3 to +3, reproducing the political left-right-spectrum in Germany. One may argue that this is inappropriate regarding the categorical nature of PID. Thus, we additionally computed our models with a dummy-variable considering this categorical assumption. We estimated all models with

robust standard errors for each candidate separately. In Figures 1 and 2, we merged the results for the respective candidates. We have to note that neither of the four models passes the likelihood-ratio-test. However, as the test has been shown to regularly reject models with a larger number of cases this seems to be of lesser relevance (see Weiber and Mühlhaus 2014: 204). To take the model structure into account, we rely on 'root mean-square error of approximation' (RMSEA), 'standardized root mean square residual' (SRMR) and 'Comparative Fit Index' (CFI) statistics instead. While the first indicator questions an adequate model fit SRMR and CFI show strong values that meet the common cutoff criteria. The four models presented display both standardised coefficients (arrows) and the associated R² values (boxes; bold) whereby dummy-specifications are in italics.

Turning to the associations between the measured RTR scores and party identification they turn out to be significant (Path  $A_3$ ) even after controlling for candidate preferences and expectations on candidates' performances prior to the debate. Coefficients differ only slightly between the models while the beta-score of Timmermans with the metric PID-specification shows a substantial correlation. Remarkably, the coefficients all remain below the level known from studies on TV duels in national elections (Maier 2007b; Maier, Faas and Maier 2014; Maier Hampe and Jahn 2016). This might be a further indication that the nationally formed party identification loses its impact on the reception of TV debates in transnational election campaigns. As such, PID weakens its function to provide viewers with adequate heuristics for spontaneous evaluation of the discussion. Considering this restraint, we find evidence supporting hypothesis 3 that party identification significantly shapes real-time-responses of the participants without being a substantial factor.

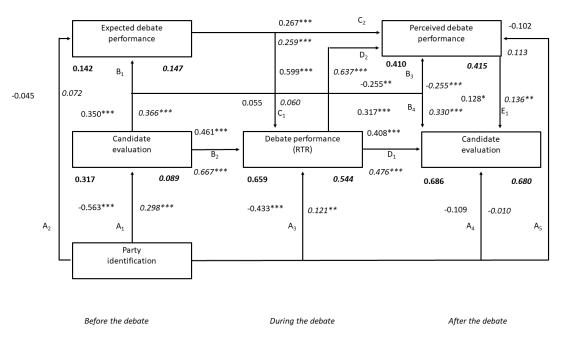
To complete the picture, we can assess the associations of party identification to further variables of debate reception. Thus, party identification largely determines candidate evaluations before the debate while the latter seems to define the expectations of the discussants' performances and absorbs the influence of PID. We must be aware that perception processes in our model are conceived in two ways. The RTR captures the spontaneous impressions of the debate while the question about debate performance in the post-survey is a reflective variation on a similar issue. Both concepts should therefore be empirically correlated. This correlation has been repeatedly proven in research on televised debates at the national level (Reinemann, Maier, Faas and Maurer 2005). If we study our models, we see that 'debate performance (RTR)' and 'perceived debate performance' after the debate are significantly and substantially correlated, even if we control for further variables of debate reception. As such, the reflected perception of the debate after reception is primarily a function of the spontaneous impressions during the debate (RTR) whereby these are preformed by candidate evaluations and expectations before the debate rather than by an expressive party identification. Furthermore, party identification is not able to affect candidate evaluation after the debate. Instead, candidate preference in retrospect is significantly influenced by spontaneous debate reactions (RTR), by candidate evaluation before the debate and the perception of debate performance after the discussion. This might speak for an instrumental approach of partisanship overall. In a way, our results contrast to findings from other studies on televised debates at the national level where expressive party identification indeed influences candidate preferences after the debate (Waldvogel 2020). This may therefore be interpreted as a further indication for present constraints of expressive PID in transnational debates' reception and for an instrumental approach. The findings outlined differ slightly between our models for both candidates whereby the role of expressive party identification on debate perception seems less clear for Weber. Taken together, our findings suggest hypothesis 4 to be valid: RTR-evaluations might substantially affect candidates' debate performances and preferences. However, we require further investigation on the role of expressive and instrumental party identification in debate perception.

Figure 1: Structural equation model - Manfred Weber.



PID-Dummy: N=104; χ²=2.634; p=0.105; RMSEA=0.125; SRMR=0.017; CFI=0.992

Figure 2: Structural equation model - Frans Timmermans.

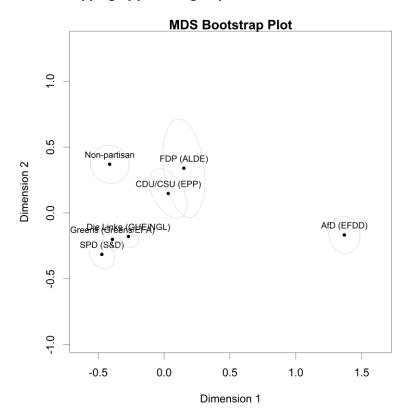


PID metric: N=104;  $\chi^2$ =3.720; p=0.054; RMSEA=0.162; SRMR=0.017; CFI=0.991 PID-Dummy: N=104;  $\chi^2$ =3.478; p=0.062; RMSEA=0.154; SRMR=0.018; CFI=0.992

### Mapping Partisan Groups in a Common Perceptual Space of Debate Reception

To this end, we abandon analysing the aggregated average scores of the real-time responses throughout the debate – as we have done so far – and proceed with a more in depth perspective by examining the reactions to each of the candidates' statements. For this purpose, we implement multidimensional scaling (MDS).<sup>4</sup> To do this we make use of the fact that the RTR data does not only provide information about the relation between participants and candidates. Rather, the data contains information on how (dis-)similar the study participants are to one another in terms of whether they agree in their evaluations to the candidates' statements. With this information, the data can be used to extract and visualise the overall pattern of these (dis-)similarities in evaluation behaviour among the participants. This provides the opportunity to draw a common perceptual space of debate reception of the participants.

Figure 3: MDS with bootstrapping by partisan groups.



Since the representation of all 157 participants prevents a straightforward interpretation and clutters the plot, we have condensed the RTR-data. For each item we have calculated the average rating of a particular group, split by party identification. These form the basis for the positions in the MDS shown in Figure 3. In order to investigate the distinguishability of these positions, we apply a bootstrapping algorithm to the scaling results which makes it possible to obtain confidence intervals for the positions of the single partisan groups (Jacoby and Armstrong 2014).

By implementing MDS on RTR-data we hypothesise that the overall pattern displayed in the MDS-configuration is mainly structured by party identification. We therefore expect the individual partisan groups to be positioned in distinct segments of the MDS-map, reflecting known patterns of the German party system. The generated structure of the common perceptual space seems valid overall (Figure 3). We see a leftist camp formed by supporters of the SPD, Die LINKE and the Greens. These adherents seem to have perceived the debate in a similar way. As a second group, CDU/CSU and FDP supporters are assorted together. Those who have no party identification come close to the two aforementioned

groups with a somewhat greater proximity to the conservative camp. Adherents of the AfD, on the other hand, are located far apart from all others, reflecting their overall opposition towards the 'established' parties. Assuming that the nationally formed PID can be considered a heuristic for the perception of transnational debates, the individual partisan groups should take distinct positions in the perceptual space. To assess whether this is the case we can refer to the bootstrapping results. If party identification as a filter leads to distinct perceptions, this should also be reflected in clearly distinguishable positions in the MDS; in short, the ellipsoids should not have any intersections. As we see from Figure 3, the MDS configuration clearly separates the political camps. However, we can also observe from the ellipsoids that there are significant overlaps within the political camps. Supporters of the SPD and Die LINKE cannot be clearly distinguished whereas the latter form an intersection with the Greens. The overlap of the ellipsoids is even stronger in the conservative camp where adherents of the CDU/CSU and FDP show very similar perceptions. If we further relate to the 95 per cent confidence intervals (ellipsoids) for the positions of the partisan groups based on the bootstrapping procedure, it can also be stated that people without party identification and AfD-adherents take unique positions in the perceptual space but also oppose each other clearly, since they show the largest distance apart. Against this background, we might have evidence that expressive PID can serve as an adequate heuristic to define perceptions between the political camps but that its effect within these groups clearly loses its impact. Consequently, our findings show no evidence supporting hypothesis 5 as adherents of distinct partisan groups do not adopt distinct positions in the common perceptual space of debate perception (H5).

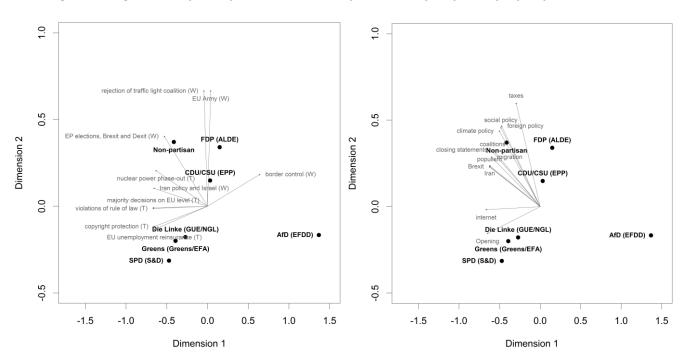
In hypothesis 6 we derived the assumption that partisan groups should be positioned alongside established dimensions of political competition when evaluating candidates of a transnational TV debate. We suggested that for the adaptation process of PID to transnational contexts at the micro-sociological level the pre-requisite has to be met that at the macro-sociological level the underlying axes represent established cleavages of political competition. But how can the dimensions that compose our common perceptual space be interpreted? It is important to note that the dimensions generated are solely products of the statistical method and are extracted in a manner that captures the maximum variation of the data on the interrelations between the single partisan groups. However, they have no inherent meaning. Rather, the meaning has to be reasonable on the basis of the group coordinates on these dimensions. In order to perform this task, one can take advantage of the fact that the raw data contain not only information about the (dis-)similarities between the partisan groups but also information about their positions on the individual candidate statements (items). By regressing the extracted dimensions (with the coordinates as values for the cases) to individual policy items, it is possible to understand how these items are linked to the extracted dimensions (Borg and Groenen 2005). The use of standardised coefficients from these regressions provides for the projection of vectors into the generated perceptual space. These vectors differ in their angle to the axes, depending on their relation to them.

Including all 104 items in the graph would lead to cluttered plots. We have thus chosen two approaches to map the items in a way that allow for an interpretation of the dimensionalities (König and Waldvogel 2018). First, the items with the highest explanatory power (explained variance) for each topic were projected into the configuration (Figure 4A). Second, we project those vectors that represent the topic-specific average vector over all items for each topic, for example taking the average vector from all items of climate policy (Figure 4B).

If we look at Figures 4A and 4B we first notice that the lower right quadrant of the common perception space in which the AfD adherents are located remains totally deserted. This may reflect the issue-related opposition of this group to all others. If we take a closer look at the single items in Figure 4A, we see on the side of the leftist camp topics of civil rights (copyright protection on the internet, violations of rule of law) and welfare state (EU

unemployment reinsurance). These stand in contrast to the demand for stricter control of the EU's external border, a topic that also affects AfD adherents. On the other hand, statements about the expansion of an EU army and the rejection of a coalition in the EP that would bring the opposing candidate into the office of EU-Commission President point in the direction of the conservative camp. Oscillating between left-wing and conservative camps are claims on Iran policy, calling for Israel's interests to be taken into account, statements which take a positive view of the nuclear phase-out and which point to the risks of a Brexit while rejecting a 'Dexit' for Germany. These statements can thus be regarded as fairly uncontroversial between the established political camps and for those without party identification but are in strong opposition to the concerns of AfD adherents. Turning to the topic-specific average vectors displayed in Figure 4B, we can verify the oscillating character of most issues between the established political camps that point in the direction of people without a party affiliation. As such, the perceptual space seems to be less confined by the controversy over single issues and statements between these two established camps but rather defined in a general opposition to AfD-adherents. Summarising our observations from both figures, it seems that it is less issue-related positions that define the dimensionality of the perceptual space but rather ideological stances on pro- versus anti-EU which leads to a complex structure of left and conservative camps, participants without PID and the more distant AfD adherents. We can relate this finding with our prior observations on a decline of the impact of party identification in transnational debates' reception. Neither in Figures 4A or 4B are we able to identify traditional cleavages spanning the political space as we would expect them from a sociological perspective (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). The micro-sociological finding on party identification in the previous subsections thus finds its analogy in the macro-sociological consideration of the political perceptual space. Thus, our findings do not indicate support for hypothesis 6 as partisan groups do not position alongside established dimensions of political competition when evaluating candidates of a transnational TV debate.

Figure 4A (left): Perceptual space of debate reception. (A) Selected items as property vectors. Figure 4B (right): Perceptual space of debate reception. (B) Topic-specific property vectors.



#### CONCLUSION

As miniature campaigns, TV duels on the EU level reveal the antagonism of an increasingly transnational election campaign and a national election process. Being climaxes of political communication, televised debates allow a detailed investigation of perception processes and effects on their recipients. Thus, using the TV duel between Frans Timmermans (S&D) and Manfred Weber (EPP) as an example we have examined whether nationally formed party identification can serve as a heuristic for the perception and effect of duel reception in transnational contexts.

Drawing on data from a field study consisting of virtualised real-time-response measurement and survey data of 157 participants we first showed average net evaluations of our participants being systematically shaped by partisan attachment although the assumed patterns about the group relations were less clear than expected. Moreover, we showed party identification to have a fairly consistent effect for the discrimination of the political camps while failing to reveal group differences within the political camps. In a further step, we verified associations between party identification and the measured RTR scores to be present and significant even after controlling for other variables of debate reception. Noticeably, all calculated coefficients remained below the level known from studies on TV duels in national elections which we took as a further indication that the nationally formed party identification loses its heuristic impact for the reception of TV debates in transnational election campaigns. Assessing the impact of party identification on subsequent variables of debate reception we found a consistent pattern which partly confirms the structures of debate perception known from studies on national TV debates with several restrictions on the PID's role in the reception process. As such, party affiliation was neither able to affect candidate evaluation after the debate nor did it predict the individuals' verdicts over the debate's winner after reception which might be interpreted as a further indication to the constraints of party identification in transnational debates' reception. These constraints were also visible in the common perceptual space of debate reception from our participants. As such, party identification failed to discriminate the single parties within the political camps, affirming our aforementioned findings. When interpreting the dimensionalities of our configuration we found the perceptual space to be confined by ideological preferences rather than by issue-related evaluations driven by party identification.

However, our results are confined by a number of limitations. Regarding the use of virtualised forms of RTR measurement there are initial indications that the real-time data collected in field studies are of comparable quality to laboratory studies in terms of reliability and internal validity (for example Maier Hampe and Jahn 2016), while simultaneously improving external validity. Yet virtualisation poses new challenges. While the development of a security architecture to ward off scripts and DDoS attacks is a general IT problem for which various solutions already exist and are also applied in the Debat-O-Meter, the withdrawal from the laboratory also results in specific challenges for real-time-response measurement. For example, we can no longer trace which signal viewers are using to follow the debate. Due to different signal transmission frequencies inter-individual delays can occur (so-called 'playout delays'), which make it difficult to connect media stimulus and real-time response as well as to synchronise the individual RTR data series with each other. However, there are already concepts available based on watermarking, fingerprinting, user feedback and statistical methods such as expectation maximisation that have not yet been systematically tested with regard to real-time response measurements. In addition to these technical constraints, there are also methodological restrictions resulting from our chosen study design. First, the relatively small sample and size of the respective subgroups makes it difficult to generalise our findings beyond the concrete context of the study and to draw broad conclusions. Second, due to the lack of a follow-up survey, we cannot make any statements about the persistence of the effects and perception processes found which are known to be affected

by media and interpersonal follow-up communication (Scheufele, Schünemann and Brosius 2005; Reinemann and Wilke 2007; Maier 2007d; Maier and Faas 2003; Fridkin, Kenney, Gershon and Woodall 2008).

At the end of our analysis, the question needs to be answered to what extent the nationally formed party identification can serve as heuristic for transnational duels' reception (Brader and Tucker 2012). Our study shows that the antagonism between a national electoral process and a transnational election campaign has a considerable impact on party identification as a predictor of perceptual processes and effects in debate reception. If we refer to the approaches of instrumental and expressive party identification, we find that the affective attachment to a party in a transnational context suffers limitations in its heuristic function. It merely permits a consistent discrimination between the political camps but fails to uncover difference within these camps. In the transnational context however, this indifference seems to be compensated by instrumental perspectives such as ideological attitudes and candidate orientation. This is a strong argument for hosting TV debates in transnational contexts like elections to the EP, even when the concept of Spitzenkandidaten is contested. In this respect, we reject an opposing view of the instrumental and expressive approaches and advocate a complementary interpretation. We therefore agree that 'partisanship likely is a mix of both instrumental and expressive factors, and the conditions under which one or the other model holds sway is worth future research investigation' (Huddy and Bankert 2017). Additionally, ideological preferences must be considered (Abramowitz and Saunders 2006) when assessing the impact of party identification in transnational election campaigns.

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#### **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup>http://www.quotenmeter.de/n/109543/erschreckend-geringes-interesse-an-tv-sendungen-zur-europawahl.

<sup>2</sup>The maximum was set to 23:59.

<sup>3</sup>A multilevel security architecture is embedded within the Debat-O-Meter to ward off manipulation. Without risking compromising the system we can give away the detail that it uses not only measures such as Captchas to distinguish human users from automated scripts but also monitors user behaviour in real time to spot suspicious incidents.

<sup>4</sup>As this is, to our knowledge, the first time that MDS is applied for the analysis of RTR and is not yet an established approach in debate research, we provide a brief description of the basic principles of the method and our implementation in the online appendix 1.<sup>i</sup>

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#### **APPENDIX 1: THE BASIC PRINCIPLE OF MDS**

As this is, to our knowledge, the first time that MDS is applied for the analysis of RTR and is not yet an established approach in debate research, we briefly explain the basic principles of the method hereafter.

The basic principle of MDS is that it extracts the relational structure between entities on the basis of information about their similarities and dissimilarities in a spatial representation, without requiring prior knowledge of the dimensions and their configuration. In this sense, it is a structure-identifying, inductive method and particularly suitable for explorative analyses, since it quantifies and visually displays (dis-)similarities of objects or characteristics.

The RTR data does not only provide information about the relation between participants and candidates. Rather the data also contain information on how (dis-)similar the study participants are to one another in terms of whether they agree in their evaluations to the statements by the candidates. With this information, the data can be used to extract and visualise the overall pattern of these (dis-)similarities in evaluation behaviour among the participants. This provides the opportunity to draw a common perceptual space of debate reception of the participants. The MDS is a convenient method to perform this analytical task. As such, we use metric multidimensional scaling that uses interval-scaled data and thus preserves the information about the size of intervals in the original dissimilarities in the generated distances. The procedure translates the raw (dis-)similarities for all pairwise comparisons between objects into spatial distances that can then be visualised in a lowdimensional space (Borg, Groenen and Mair 2012). The variation in the data is condensed in a way that the object scores on the extracted dimensions capture most of the original variance in the data. The lower the number of dimensions the greater is the information loss because more information has to be condensed. Ideally, the data can be summarised with only two dimensions that allow for a straightforward visual interpretation. This is more likely to be viable if the participants vary systematically regarding their RTR-evaluations. In that case, there is a larger pattern in the commonalities and contrasts between the participants that can be broken down to a few dimensions. Exactly this kind of patterning can be assumed to exist in political communication and competition where we hypothesise to find systematic ideological differences shaped by party identification. It is important to note that the dimensions that are extracted in the scaling analysis are merely products of the statistical procedure. They are extracted in such a way that they capture as much variation in the data as possible. They do, however, not have any inherent meaning.

In order to create the needed policy items for analysis, we dissected the debate into slices representing the respective candidates' speaking phases. Each phase ended five seconds after the person had ceased to speak in order to allow for slower votes to accumulate. All in all, we ended up with 48 speaking phases for Manfred Weber and 56 for Frans Timmermans. We then proceeded by summing up positive and negative votes a participant had cast within a given interval for the single statement of the respective candidate. These participant-by-item tables form the basis to compute our MDS-configuration.

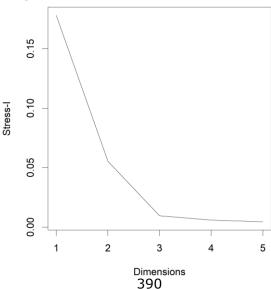
When performing the MDS, we opt for a two-dimensional representation. We are confident that this configuration is adequate: First, the stress-I turns out to be very small. This value indicates the extent of information loss, but also allows for a straightforward and easily interpretable visual inspection using scree-plots. These graphs display the stress values for different numbers of dimensions that are used to represent the data to verify whether there is a leap in the loss of information when the number of dimensions is successively reduced (so called inverse-scree-test). As can be seen from the scree plot (Appendix 2) there is a clear elbow at two and three dimensions respectively. Considering the low stress-I-value and the simpler interpretation with a two-dimensional spatial representation, we regard this as an appropriate visualisation of the data. Additionally, the minimum criterion

is met, according to which stress-I must be considerably below that for random proximities (Borg 2010). The employed metric MDS uses interval-scaled information and thus requires that not just the ordering but also the size of all dissimilarities is taken into account when translating them into spatial distances (Borg, Groenen and Mair 2012).

Since the representation of all 157 participants prevents a straightforward interpretation and clutters the plot, we have condensed the RTR-data. For each item, we have calculated the average rating of a particular group, split by party identification. These form the basis for the positions in the MDS shown in figure 3. In order to investigate the more general reliability and distinguishability of these positions, we apply a bootstrapping algorithm to the scaling results, which makes it possible to obtain confidence intervals for the positions of the single partisan groups (Jacoby and Armstrong, 2014). In this procedure, the items that form the basis for the scaling are varied by random drawing with replacement n=104 from the 104 items. This was performed with 1000 repetitions, resulting in reliability estimates for the positions in the form of confidence intervals (ellipsoids in a two-dimensional space).

The interpretation of the generated dimensions is a general challenge of the inductive scaling approach via MDS. It is important to note that the dimensions generated are solely products of the statistical method and are extracted in a manner that captures the maximum variation of the data on the interrelations between the single partisan groups with dimension 1 explaining most of the variation and dimension 2 the second largest. However, they have no inherent meaning, and it is important to note that they do not form scales in the sense of dimensions derived from item inter-correlations. Rather, the meaning has to be reasonable on the basis of the group coordinates on these dimensions. Beyond that it is to be considered that the displayed main axes cannot always be interpreted directly. Instead, the dimension system can be rotated arbitrarily and inclined dimensions can span the space leading to a better interpretation of the solution than the main axes. This interpretation is facilitated by the familiarity with the visualised objects. In addition, one can take advantage of the fact that the raw data contain not only information about the (dis-)similarities between the partisan groups, but also information about their positions on the individual policy items. This original information can be used to determine the significance of the dimensions generated. By regressing the extracted dimensions (with the coordinates as values for the cases) to individual policy items, it is possible to understand how these items are linked to the extracted dimensions (Borg and Groenen 2005). The use of standardised coefficients from these regressions provides for the projection of vectors into the generated perceptual space. These vectors differ in their angle to the axes, depending on their relation to them.

### **APPENDIX 2: SCREE-PLOT**



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Research Article

The Difficulty in Engaging the Engaged: Administrative Adaptation to the Early Warning System within the UK Houses of Parliament

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## **Abstract**

This article applies a mixed-methods approach through semi-structured interviews and document analysis to provide a comprehensive account of administrative and behavioural adaptation within the UK Houses of Parliament (HoP) to the EU's subsidiarity monitoring mechanism, the Early Warning System (EWS). The article also tests theoretical assumptions regarding the adaptation and use of the EWS on this basis, confirming that Eurosceptic MPs bolster the use of the EWS and finding that the HoP are an outlier among bicameral legislatures, as the lower chamber was the primary user of the EWS. Overall, results demonstrate that both the House of Commons and the House of Lords treated the EWS as an optional bolt-on when adapting to the mechanism. Furthermore, the EWS did not encourage the HoP to increase engagement with UK devolved legislatures, but the mechanism contributed to the mainstreaming of EU scrutiny in the case of the Welsh and Scottish legislatures.

## Keywords

United Kingdom; Early Warning System; Subsidiarity; National parliaments; EU scrutiny; Administrative adaptation; Behavioural change; Devolution; Scotland; Wales

Due to the growing complexity of European multi-level governance, some national parliaments (NPs) across the EU are seeking pathways to increase their influence over supranational EU decision-making processes. In this spirit, the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 introduced a raft of changes to address these demands. Pre-eminently, the introduction of the Early Warning System (EWS, also known as the 'reasoned opinion procedure') gave NPs the right to submit reasoned opinions concerning draft EU legislation in areas of shared competence that might violate the principle of subsidiarity. The UK Houses of Parliament (HoP) were one of the main advocates for introducing such a mechanism prior to the Treaty of Lisbon (Wintour 2003; Granat 2018). After 2009, the HoP also became relatively prolific users of the reasoned opinions procedure (Malang et al. 2017: Table I; Cygan et al. 2020: 1609) and contributed to debates about further developing the EWS (House of Lords 2013a; Cooper 2016). Although the United Kingdom (UK) left formal EU interparliamentary cooperation frameworks due to Brexit, the UK HoP experience with adapting to the EWS holds relevant insights for the post-Brexit HoP as well as EU NPs.

Although the HoP's use of the mechanism received academic attention (Huff and Smith 2015: 322), little is known about the details of administrative and behavioural changes stemming from the EWS within the UK legislature. Undertaking this examination can produce novel insights regarding the HoP's approaches to EU scrutiny in the immediate run-up to the 2016 referendum. Furthermore, adaptation to the EWS was the last major change to HoP EU scrutiny frameworks before the 2016 referendum (Cygan et al. 2020). Therefore, the process of the adaptation to the EWS can produce clues regarding the future trajectory of post-Brexit HoP engagement with scrutinising EU legislation. Lastly, as subnational legislatures also received the right to participate in the EWS through their national legislatures (Högenauer 2019), adaptation to the EWS might have also resulted in administrative and behavioural change within the devolved legislatures of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Although a limited range of studies touch on this matter in the context of the UK (Högenauer 2017; Borońska-Hryniewiecka 2017), further studies can reveal if this change resulted in more devolved EU scrutiny activities and enabled the expansion of legislative networks between (sub)national NPs and UK devolved administrations. In the context of the burgeoning Scottish independence movement (Johns et al. 2020), these changes might also have an impact in terms of preparing for EU scrutiny as a future independent member state of the EU.

Understanding the role and potential of the EWS also remains important in the context of the EU. Despite early scepticism about the utility of the EWS (Raunio 2010; de Wilde 2012), the mechanism plays important role in informing the European Commission (EC) about the viability of draft legislative proposals (van Gruisen and Huysmans 2020). In addition, the mechanism can act as a significant incentive for NPs to increase their general engagement with EU scrutiny. The EWS reconfigures perceptions of NP MPs regarding the importance of EU scrutiny, as participating in EU affairs is now a legal obligation for them due to the Treaty of Lisbon. Furthermore, the EWS widened the access of NPs to EU documentation, providing further incentives for more substantial involvement (Miklin 2017). Therefore, evaluating expectations which relate to behavioural aspects of adaptation to the EWS within NPs in general remains a salient matter.

In this manner, this article considers whether EWS-related adaptation led to an increase in the speed and scope of or resources invested in EU scrutiny within the HoP and if upper chambers tend to make more use of the EWS than lower chambers (Huysmans 2019). Furthermore, reviewing administrative adaptation to the reasoned opinions procedure in the context of the HoP can provide further information on whether Eurosceptic MPs tend to increase the use of the EWS (Huysmans 2019). It can also provide further information on the EWS acting as an incentive for networking amongst NPs (Cooper 2018, 2015). The article also discusses administrative change triggered by the EWS within the three devolved legislatures of the UK and whether it led to the further development of their capacities to conduct EU scrutiny.

To examine these issues and to provide a comprehensive overview of the EWS administrative adaptation process within the HoP, this article applies a mixed-methods approach. On one hand, parliamentary documentation from the HoP and UK devolved administrations, figures and statistics on the EWS made public through the EC and other institutions are taken into consideration. On the other hand, to enable the better triangulation of results, the discussion utilises novel interview data from HoP members and staff to gain a deeper insight into administrative and behavioural change (Appendix). The article specifically focuses on the period between the Treaty of Lisbon entering force and the Brexit referendum (23 June 2016). This is because the role of the EWS within the HoP became marginal after the referendum on EU membership (House of Commons 2017: Ch. 3). This significantly limited the interest of, and contributions made by contacted potential interviewees to the research project regarding developments after 2016. Furthermore, as the exploration of this matter is beyond the scope of this article, it considers HoP approaches to the mechanism of Political Dialogue, a participatory mechanism linking the EC and NPs (Rasmussen and Dionigi 2018), only from a contextual perspective.

Results demonstrate that the EWS only had a limited range of effects on the EU scrutiny frameworks of the HoP. To a large extent, this is due to the pre-existing systemic approach of the HoP to European scrutiny (House of Lords 2013b; House of Commons 2015a). Therefore, the EWS was integrated into HoP working procedures as a bolt-on, without an increase in the scope of and resources invested in EU scrutiny. Although reasoned opinions were subjected to expedited parliamentary procedures, administrative adaptation to the EWS did not change the general speed of EU scrutiny processes within the HoP. Although the House of Commons made large use of the mechanism compared to other NPs, this might be mostly due to a spike in the numbers of Eurosceptic MPs after the 2010 general election. This is in line with previous findings regarding the intervening effect of Euroscepticism on the EWS (Huysmans 2019). At the same time, the House of Lords perceived the EWS as a primarily legalistic mechanism and preferred the use of the Political Dialogue to contribute to EU policymaking in an upstream manner. For this reason, the chamber runs counter to theoretical expectations on bicameral legislatures and the EWS (Huysmans 2019), as in the case of the HoP, the lower chamber was the primary utiliser of the EWS.

Furthermore, the EWS had little impact on interparliamentary networks of the HoP. This also applies to cooperation between the HoP and the UK's devolved legislatures. No formal cooperation structures were created to accommodate cooperation on the EWS between the HoP and these legislatures. Given the lack of these links and reliance on the HoP to take up these initiatives, only Wales issued reasoned opinions through the EWS (Högenauer 2017: Table 12.1). There is also little evidence of an increase in networking between UK devolved legislatures and (sub)national NPs. However, the EWS did encourage the mainstreaming and reinforcement of EU scrutiny processes in the case of Scottish and Welsh legislatures. Going forward, this might also serve as the basis of EU scrutiny as an independent state in the case of Scotland. Lastly, developments around and after the UK's decision to leave the EU in 2016 (European Council 2016; European Commission 2017b), also demonstrate that meanwhile the EWS represented a significant development regarding the formal empowerment of NPs within the context of the EU, the debate on subsidiarity and NP participation in EU affairs is moving beyond the remits of the EWS.

The structure of this article is as follows. The first section describes and contextualises the EWS in wider debates on NP participation in EU affairs. The second section outlines the methodological approach of the article, which builds on theoretical insights relating to administrative and behavioural change observed within other NPs EWS adaptation processes and utilisation. The third and fourth section undertakes the analysis on this basis, focusing on formal administrative change, the speed and scope of and resources invested in EU scrutiny, differences between the lower and upper chambers as well as

inter-parliamentary relations. The article also discusses the implications of the EWS for UK devolved administrations in this context. At the end, the conclusions are presented.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the Treaty of Lisbon created the EWS, national parliaments (each with two 'votes', which are divided to one per chamber in the case of bicameral legislatures) can pass 'reasoned opinions'. These can concern draft legislative acts in areas of shared competence that might violate the principle of subsidiarity. If more than one third (one quarter regarding justice and home affairs legislation) of NPs issues such an opinion, a 'yellow card' is triggered, and the European Commission must review the draft act. If the majority of NPs issue reasoned opinion regarding a draft, an 'orange card' is triggered, enabling the Council of the EU and the European Parliament to block the proposal with majority voting. (European Union 2007: Protocol 2; Article 7 and 7(2)). Therefore, the EWS provides national parliaments with a tool to influence EU policymaking processes directly. This represents a departure from the traditional model of EU affairs within NPs, which primarily conceptualises legislative involvement through indirect influence, exerted through the scrutiny of the executive (Groen and Christiansen 2015: 45).

The inclusion of NPs into EU decision-making through empowering them to police the principle of subsidiarity emerged as a solution that promises to resolve two persisting issues concerning the relationship of NPs and the EU. First, the increasing use of qualified majority voting (QMV) within the Council of the EU, opaque decision-making procedures, and the lack of access to EU-related information reduced NP's influence over policy areas which are delegated to the EU level. This can be categorised as a process of ongoing 'deparliamentarization' (Rozenberg and Hefftler 2015: 1; Norton 1996; Kassim 2005; Kaczyński 2011; Granat 2018) within the EU. In this context, the EWS is designed to compensate NPs for their loss of competences by entrusting them to uphold the very principle which aims to protect them from unrequired loss of competence in the coming years (Rittberger 2007: 192). Second, a subsidiarity monitoring mechanism of this nature fills an implementation gap regarding subsidiarity without having to create a new institution for NPs within the EU. This approach also upholds the principle of separation between levels of EU multi-level governance at the same time (Groen and Christiansen 2015: 52-54).

Early assessments of the mechanism were sceptical about the actual effect it can have on the involvement of NPs in the EU. Some argued that the EWS did not remedy already existing problems of NPs regarding engagement with European affairs. The low salience of subsidiarity examinations amongst citizens and the high level of resources required to engage in extensive screening of draft EU legislation might make the use of the EWS unattractive (Raunio 2010: 10). Furthermore, NPs and their respective national political structures are strongly interconnected. As a result, adaptation to the EWS is highly likely to produce highly heterogeneous outcomes across the NPs taking on duties relating to the mechanism. As the EC pre-emptively examines its own draft legislative proposals from a subsidiarity perspective anyway (European Union 2007: Protocol No. 2; Article 5), others argued that the number of issues which might entail concerns about the breach of subsidiarity principle is likely to be low (Fraga 2006). Lastly, if a yellow or orange card procedure is triggered, it is highly likely that the proposal would not pass in the Council anyway as NPs can exert pressure on their respective governments to act against it (Raunio 2010: 10).

However, as the EWS entered into force through the Treaty of Lisbon, assessments of its utilisation suggest that the mechanism produces effects within the governance structures of the EU. Indeed, the yellow card procedure was only triggered three times since the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force and the orange card procedure remains unutilised (European Commission 2019a). Nevertheless, the EWS can incentivise cooperation

amongst NPs on policy issues and it shapes change within affected legislative drafts (Fromage 2016; Cooper 2015). The mechanism also seems to play a significant informational role, as reasoned opinions help the European Commission in assessing support for legislative proposals at the early stages of the decision-making process (van Gruisen and Huysmans 2020). Also, NPs with minority governments can make use of the EWS to represent their stance on the European policymaking process whilst bypassing their executives (van Gruisen and Huysmans 2020). A wide range of studies also consider why the mechanism is used, suggesting factors ranging from Euroscepticism to differences between lower and upper chambers (Williams 2016; van Gruisen and Huyssmans 2020; Huysmans 2019; Gattermann and Hefftler 2015). These also led to behavioural changes amongst parliamentarians, such as through increasing their interest in conducting EU scrutiny in general (Viola 2019; Miklin 2017) It is a mechanism with a legal and political importance, which has led to observable impacts both on NPs and the EU decision-making process.

Before the 2016 Brexit vote, the UK HoP were leading advocates for the creation of a subsidiarity-related mechanism for decades (Wintour 2003; Huff and Smith 2015: 323). Furthermore, the UK legislature was amongst the first NPs to issue reasoned opinions at times where EWS-related coordination amongst legislatures led to change in proposed legislation (Pintz 2015). Indeed, it was one of the most prolific users of the mechanism after its introduction (Malang et al. 2017: Table I.), as the Houses produced a combined 24 reasoned opinions (on 18 legislative drafts) between 2010 and 2016 (House of Lords 2019; House of Commons 2019). As a result, studies on the EWS and the UK HoP touch on categorising the legislature's approach to using the EWS (Cooper 2016: 18, 21-22), consider the impact of the EWS on the relationship between the HoP and devolved parliaments (Borońska-Hryniewiecka 2017: 155-156) as well as discuss the utilisation of the mechanism within the Houses (Huff and Smith 2015: 322).

Indeed, Brexit radically reshaped the context of these discussions and the Houses of Parliament are now outside the 'European parliamentary space' created by the Treaties (Cygan et al. 2020: 1610). However, the closer examination of the UK EWS experience still provides valuable insights for both UK and EU stakeholders. On one hand, adaptation to the EWS constitutes one of the largest changes to the UK's EU scrutiny systems before the Brexit vote. As the HoP and the UK's devolved legislatures embarks on further changes to these structures after the country's withdrawal, the post-EWS HoP scrutiny frameworks serve as the basis for future development (Cygan et al. 2020). In addition, although studies considered the effect of the EWS on UK subnational legislatures (Högenauer 2019, 2017; Borońska-Hryniewiecka 2017), they do not discuss associated administrative adaptation in depth or expand on the implications of these developments regarding the post-Brexit era. Furthermore, existing literature could be augmented by taking policymaker and staff perceptions into account when considering the intervening effects of the EWS within the HoP. Insights of this nature could shed light on behavioural change, learning processes and other indirect effects which exert their effects in the HoP even as the UK leaves the EU (Miklin 2017). Lastly, and regardless of Brexit, the UK's EWS experience can also provide clues regarding alternative ways to promote cooperation and incentivise legislative participation within EU decision-making processes.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The article investigates administrative and behavioural changes within the HoP that are associated with the introduction of the EWS. In this manner, the article reviews debates, processes, and decisions which preceded and facilitated the integration of the EWS into the working procedures of the Houses as well as data on the utilisation of the EWS within the Houses. This information is contrasted against contextual information on matters such as pre-Lisbon EU practices of EU scrutiny and developments in the scope and speed of, and resources invested in associated scrutiny processes. In this context, the ways MPs

and Lords perceive their own role in the scrutiny of EU legislation within the Houses are considered as explanatory factors. This is facilitated by the utilisation of interview data from HoP stakeholders (Appendix). This is due to the fact institutions interpret their competences and roles in the light of what is expected from them. As a result, a shift in underlying norms regulating these expectations could change institutional behaviour as well (March and Olsen 2009: 1-2; Hall and Taylor 1994: 949). For example, as the Treaty of Lisbon created an obligation to 'contribute actively to the good functioning of the Union' for NPs (European Union 2007: Article 12), some legislatures across the EU used the adaptation to the EWS as means to widen their general scrutiny of EU policymaking (Viola 2019; Miklin 2017). Furthermore, the introduction of the EWS enabled MPs across the European Union (EU) to have constant, direct and systemic access to information about EU decision-making processes (European Union 2007: Protocol No. 2; Article 3 and 4). This change could lead to institutional learning, as the 'information pool' that informs the preferences and goals of a given actor expands (Hartlapp 2009: 2-3; paraphrasing Heclo 1974). As a result, new information about EU decision-making might encourage NPs to use their pre-Lisbon competences more extensively (Miklin 2017: 371). Therefore, the article expects that the EWS increased the speed and scope of, and resources invested in EU scrutiny processes within the HoP (Miklin 2017).

Assessing the UK HoP's administrative and behavioural adaptation of the EWS allows also for evaluating assumptions which relate to the EWS and EU scrutiny within legislatures. For example, the bicameral nature of the HoP provides an opportunity to examine claims such as that upper chambers tend to utilise the EWS more frequently compared to lower chambers or that Euroscepticism contributes to the higher use of the EWS (Williams 2016; Huysmans 2019). Adaptation to the EWS might have also increased the number of HoP interactions and networks with other NPs, including subnational legislatures (Pintz 2015; Fromage 2016; Cooper 2015). Therefore, the article investigates communication and coordination between other NPs and the UK HoP to evaluate this expectation. To account for the wider potential effect of the EWS within the system of multi-level governance of the UK, the article also examines HoP documentation as well as regional administrations such as Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. In this manner, the article expects that devolved legislatures developed their internal capacities as well as their engagement with the HoP and other (sub)national parliaments due to EWS adaptation. Lastly, the findings of this article could also provide clues about the future of EU scrutiny within the HoP and EU NPs in a post-Brexit context.

## THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT AND THE EWS: EFFECT ON GENERAL ENGAGEMENT WITH EU ISSUES

Within both Houses of Parliament, the introduction of the EWS resulted in very modest procedural changes to the way EU documents are scrutinised. This is due to the practice of systemic and substantive scrutiny of EU documents in both legislative chambers, which was already in place before the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. Scrutiny procedures take place within both Houses, although EU-related cooperation takes place between the two legislative chambers (Huff and Smith 2015: 321, IntHoC01, IntHoL03) the European Scrutiny Committee (ESC) of the House of Commons and the European Union Select Committee of the House of Lords operate independently from each other (House of Lords 2019; House of Commons 2019). Due to the wide-ranging definition of 'EU documents' within the Standing Orders of the HoP, more than 1,000 EU-related documents are examined by the Houses each year. Thus, the scrutiny of EU documents forms an important part of parliamentary activity in both legislative chambers (House of Lords 2013b: 9; House of Commons 2015a: 9).

Furthermore, the EU scrutiny procedure is reinforced by the government practice of transferring Explanatory Memorandums regarding every EU document examined by the Houses, providing a wide set of information on which the scrutiny process can build on

(Huff and Smith 2015: 315). Importantly, the mechanism of 'scrutiny reserve' (which mandates that the government is not able to take a decision before the scrutiny of a given document is completed) also provides an important incentive for MPs and Lords to take EU scrutiny-related activities seriously (House of Lords 2013b: 15; House of Commons 2015a: 38-39). Indeed, government ministers (especially within the policy area of foreign affairs and security) regularly disregard the scrutiny reserve. However, the UK government must provide an explanation to MPs and Lords in these cases (Munro 2016; House of Lords 2013b: 15). In other words, scrutiny of EU policy within the HoP was a systemic element of their policymaking role even before the introduction of the EWS.

The HoP examined the future role and potential of the EWS in conjunction to the drafting and ratification process of the Treaty of Lisbon. Concerns regarding thresholds associated with activating certain 'cards', the relative scarcity of subsidiarity-related problems in draft EU legislation as well as the preventive nature and limited scope of the mechanism led to conclusions forecasting the low importance of EWS within the operation of the Houses (House of Lords 2008: 244-245; House of Commons 2007: 13, 22-23). Furthermore, the principle of parliamentary sovereignty came into direct conflict with the duty of NPs to contribute to the 'good functioning of the EU'. For example, the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee argued that '[NP involvement in EU affairs is a matter of] of entitlement, not obligation' (2007: 23). This goes in line with the general 'reactive' approach of the House of Commons to the scrutiny of EU legislation, which started to take shape soon after the accession of the UK to the EU (Cygan 2007). For example, scrutiny processes only commence within the House of Commons after the draft legislation was finalised by the EC and only if the ESC deems that an EU document constitutes of 'political or legal importance' (House of Commons 2015a: 12). In this sense, the role expectation on the Commons regarding EU scrutiny is to reactively assess the executive's leadership on draft European legislation.

On this basis, the UK government pressed for changes to the draft treaty, resulting in the removal of the word 'shall' from treaty sections referring to national parliaments (with a few minor exceptions), making the proposed obligation non-enforceable in the EU court system (House of Lords 2008: 244). In any case, pre-Lisbon engagements of the HoP with the EWS and other NP-related treaty changes framed them as developments with little utility for the pre-existing scrutiny structures of the Houses. Furthermore, these assessments repudiated the notion that these changes would shift the current role and way the Houses contribute to and scrutinise EU policy: as a House of Lords report put it, '[the EWS] should not distract attention from scrutiny of policy' (2008: 245). Therefore, the Houses resisted shifting their scrutiny profiles in a more proactive direction in line with the general aim of Lisbon. At the same time, the EWS was conceptualised as a low impact mechanism that is nevertheless complimentary with pre-existing approaches to EU scrutiny within the Houses.

Subsequently, the EWS was integrated into pre-existing procedures as a bolt-on. Administrative staff in the House of Commons and House of Lords engage in the prescreening of all received EU documents and make recommendations to their Scrutiny Committees regarding the extent to which scrutiny should be undertaken (Huff and Smith 2015: 320). In this context, checking subsidiarity-related concerns is just another angle of examination for the staff supporting the scrutiny committees (IntHoC01; IntHoL01; IntHoL02; IntHoL03). As one of the interviewees put it, 'the Committee already scrutinised all [EU] documents and reported on the most important – those subject to [the] yellow card procedure are by definition important' (IntHoC01). Concurrently, interviewees reported no increase in resources or staff due to EWS-related duties or responsibilities (IntHoC01; IntHoL03; IntHoL04), despite the manner reasoned opinions are written within both chambers. These documents 'assumed no prior knowledge' about the legislation on hand (which is not the case within some other NPs, such as the Swedish Riksdag), which increased the comparative workload required for the completion of a reasoned opinion (IntHoL04). Nevertheless, given the reactive nature of the EWS (the 'burglar alarm' of

subsidiarity: IntHoC02), decision-makers, especially beyond the membership of the respective EU scrutiny committees of the Houses, had a very limited range of regular and focused engagement with the mechanism. This had an impact on the associated plenary debates as well. These were usually short, pointing to the overall low salience of the mechanism within the Houses (Huff and Smith 2015: 322).

This phenomenon significantly impeded the potential effect of the EWS on the role expectations felt by decision-makers within the HoP. Mandated by the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Commission engages in in-house subsidiarity checks parallel to the existence of the EWS, reducing the scope of proposals that would qualify for a violation of the subsidiarity principle (Fraga 2006). Furthermore, the number of legislative proposals proceeding through the EU institutional framework shrunk significantly after 2010. Likely influenced by the entrenchment and progress of the EU's Better Regulation Agenda, between 2010 and 2016, the average number of new legislative proposals was 127, less than half for the period between 2003 and 2009 (European Parliament 2017: 26). In other words, the introduction of the mechanism that primarily aimed to reduce the overreach of EU legislation coincided with a time when the quantity of EU legislation was shrinking in any case. This phenomenon contributed to an understanding amongst members of the HoP that the mechanism as such is 'useless'. This perception was prevalent especially within the House of Commons, where EU affairs are much more politicised compared to the non-elected Lords (IntHoCO2; IntHoLO4).

Nevertheless, empirical evidence demonstrates a sharp increase in the number of EU documents referred to debate at the plenary of the House of Commons after 2010 (Munro 2016). However, it is shaped by the generally increasing salience of the EU within the domestic political context of the UK during the past decade (Lynch and Whitaker 2013) rather than the introduction of the EWS. This increase of political salience was accompanied and amplified by the increasing number of Eurosceptic, primarily Conservative Party, MPs within the European Scrutiny Committee of the House of Commons after the 2010 general election (IntHoC02; IntHoL02; IntHoL03; Munro 2016; Huff and Smith 2015: 314). The large presence of Eurosceptic decision-makers within a legislature increases the level of EU-related scrutiny compared to other legislatures where the contestation of EU integration is low (Gattermann and Hefftler 2015). This finding concurs with previous research confirming Eurosceptic parliaments tend to issue more reasoned opinions (Huysmans 2019). In this context, it is unlikely that the uptake in debated EU documents was due to a redefinition (and expansion) of what is considered matters of 'political or legal importance' (House of Commons 2015a: 12) and thus deserving of more extensive scrutiny-related processes. Rather, it is likely that this effect was driven by an increase of demand for additional parliamentary opportunities to communicate general viewpoints about European integration.

The adaptation of the House of Lords to the EWS was extensively conditioned by factors stemming from its unique institutional setup besides the previously discussed issues of adaptation. Articulated through the extensive sub-committee system with 'specific policy remits' supporting the scrutiny of EU documents (House of Lords 2013b: 5), the House of Lords 'take ... a longitudinal interest in the overall direction of EU policy' (Huff and Smith 2015: 323). This more upstream and less reactive approach to EU scrutiny was the main direction of the Lords regarding EU documents since the accession of the UK to the European project (Cygan 2007) and serves complimentary to the more reactive approach of the Commons. The unelected nature of the upper house underpins this approach by reducing demand (and attention paid to) political messaging conducted via the legislative scrutiny of EU legislation within the chamber (IntHoC02; IntHoL03; IntHoL04). Thus, the EWS does not offer an incentive to increase engagement in the context of EU scrutiny within the House of Lords, which utilised the EWS through a 'much more legalistic approach' compared to the relatively more politicised House of Commons (IntHoC02; IntHoL04). As one of the interviewees working in the Commons put it, 'when the Lords

thinks there's a [subsidiarity-related] problem, it is certain that the Commons will agree. However, this is not necessarily true the other way around' (IntHoC2).

Correspondingly, the overall awareness and interest amongst the members of the House of Lords regarding the reasoned opinion procedure was low as well. As one member of the House of Lords put it, 'there was virtually no knowledge of, or interest in [the] EWS in the House of Lords' (IntHoL02), despite the higher overall interest in EU affairs as such within the chamber compared to the House of Commons. This phenomenon explains why the House of Commons passed significantly more reasoned opinions between 2010 and 2016 compared to the activity of the House of Lords (House of Lords 2019; House of Commons 2019). Interestingly, this phenomenon runs counter to findings which identify upper chambers as more likelier issuers of reasoned opinions compared to lower chambers (Williams 2016; Huysmans 2019). In the case of the House of Lords, this might be explained by a mismatch between the self-perceived scrutiny role of the Lords and the opportunities offered by the EWS. Meanwhile the Lords were primarily interested in shaping policy in an upstream manner, subsidiarity checks were perceived as scarce and reactive opportunities to shape EU legislation within the chamber.

## THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT AND THE EWS: EFFECTS BEYOND SAFEGUARDING THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY

After considering the effect of the EWS on the general engagement with EU issues within the HoP, the question emerges: did the adaptation of the EWS induce administrative or behavioural change beyond the realm of subsidiarity issues? To explore this question, the following paragraphs discuss the general effects of the EWS on the utilisation of EU scrutiny structures and opportunities within the HoP. In this context, the impact of the reasoned opinion procedure on inter-parliamentary cooperation with other NPs and UK devolved legislatures are considered, alongside the effect of HoP contributions to wider discourses about NP participation in EU decision-making.

Due to the high salience of EU affairs within the domestic politics of the UK, both Houses were interested in influencing EU policy beyond policing the principle of subsidiarity (House of Lords 2013a; House of Commons 2013). However, changes in terms of learning and information flows due to the EWS were minimal within the Houses. Given the extensive and substantive nature of pre-Lisbon EU scrutiny in both Houses, the EWS did not create an incentive for MPs and Lords to re-evaluate the nature and functioning own scrutiny systems. Correspondingly, the post-Lisbon introduction of direct, systemic flow of information about draft EU legislation from EU institutions had a limited effect on the information pool of the Houses. Even in the pre-Lisbon period, the Houses already received all draft EU legislation and related Explanatory Memorandums from the government (House of Lords 2013b: 8; House of Commons 2015a: 14-16). Furthermore, the Houses have the competence to request further information from the government if necessary (House of Lords 2013b: 8; House of Commons 2015a: 14-16). In any case, evidence from interviews suggest that the introduction of the EWS did result in some changes regarding the speed of the scrutiny process. For example, the government provided information to the Houses much sooner in the case of documents subject to subsidiarity checks compared to other scrutiny procedures. These changes resulted from the Houses putting pressure on the government after initial experiences with the EWS. The lack of timely input from the executive led to the House of Commons running out of the eight-week time limit allowed to draft a given reasoned opinion at least on one occasion (IntHoC01; IntHoL01). Reasoned opinions were scheduled on the agenda of the plenary more promptly than other documents (IntHoC01; IntHoL01). Nevertheless, interviewees did not mention any additional scrutiny processes which commence due to (or after the assessment of) a subsidiarity-related concern (IntHoC01; IntHoL01).

Indeed, the House of Commons did pass reasoned opinions that were potentially motivated by concerns beyond the principle of subsidiarity (IntHoLO3). Given the more political rather than legal approach of the House of Commons to the EWS, the mechanism was utilised primarily to express wider concerns with or wider support of EU legislation and to pursue them publicly within the chamber (IntHoC02; IntHoL03). Considering the relative role of the EWS within the House of Commons scrutiny process and acrimonious debates about the membership of the UK within the EU, it is unlikely that these concerns emerged due to the intervening effect of information flows initiated by EWS-related processes. In the case of the House of Lords, attempts to influence EU decision-making substantively and beyond the scope of subsidiarity concerns primarily took place through the Political Dialogue. A mechanism initiated by the Barroso Commission in 2006, it serves as a way for NPs to 'issue opinions on Commission documents or policy areas' (Rasmussen and Dionigi 2018; European Commission 2019b), in line with the interest of the House of Lords to influence the general direction of EU policy in an upstream, more proactive manner. Thus, while the House of Lords only issued an average 1.16 reasoned opinions per year between 2010 and 2016, the corresponding figure regarding the Political Dialogue is 15.8 (Huff and Smith 2015: 322-323; European Commission 2017a, 2016, 2015).

The limited overall effect of the EWS on the Houses is also observable in the field of interparliamentary cooperation as well. Indeed, the Houses were active working together with other NPs through joint letters to the European Commission and the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC) in the post-Lisbon period (Huff and Smith 2015: 323; COSAC 2012). Furthermore, EWS-related staff level communications with other NPs made the work undertaken by representatives of the Houses in Brussels more prominent within the EU scrutiny processes of the HoP (IntHoC02; IntHoL03; IntHoL04). Nevertheless, interviews suggest that this phenomenon is not due to the EWS. As an interviewee from the House of Lords put it, inter-parliamentary cooperation before Lisbon was 'already seen as important and pursued ... when our work overlapped' (IntHoL01). Although the introduction of the EWS increased the use of the already existing Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange (IPEX), which was upgraded to accommodate information on reasoned opinions, this did not necessitate the use of further resources or the establishment of new networks. Correspondingly, interviewees within the Houses reported no new contacts or information exchange practices on the political level emerging due to the EWS (IntHoC01; IntHoL01).

Nevertheless, the introduction of the EWS did introduce modest change regarding the engagement of devolved legislatures with EU legislation. Although discussions around subsidiarity monitoring evaluated directly involving subnational parliaments, this did not become possible until the Treaty of Lisbon (Högenauer 2019: 194; Granat 2018). Nevertheless, no formal procedure was put in place to coordinate and facilitate EWSrelated discussions between devolved legislatures and the Houses after 2009 (Borońska-Hryniewiecka 2017: 155). Furthermore, as the potential views of devolved legislatures are only passed on to the EU level if a reasoned opinion is passed about the matter by the Houses, the direct effect of the EWS on the EU policy influence of the UK's regional legislatures is negligible (Borońska-Hryniewiecka 2017: 156). However, as the Treaty of Lisbon mandates NPs 'to consult, where appropriate, regional parliaments with legislative powers' regarding the matter of subsidiarity (European Union 2007: Protocol No. 2; Article 6), the Houses indicated their openness to the input of devolved legislatures regarding reasoned opinions (House of Commons 2008: 14). However, this led to very little direct engagement with the EWS amongst UK devolved legislatures. Only Wales passed reasoned opinions on subsidiarity between 2010 and 2016 (Högenauer 2019: 201-204), suggesting that being reliant on the HoP to exercise this power made its utilisation generally unattractive for UK subnational parliaments. The lack of reasoned opinions from these sources also suggests that the EWS had little effect on the formation of additional networks between UK devolved legislatures and other (sub)national parliaments.

In any case, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly implemented reforms to accommodate for and utilise the additional flow of information requiring attention from them. This took shape in the form of appointing specialised liaison personnel to undertake associated duties and the mainstreaming of European affairs amongst committees (Scottish Parliament 2010; Högenauer 2017) as well as the development of specialised and systemic parliamentary processes for subsidiarity monitoring (Welsh Assembly Research Service 2015). At the same time, the Northern Ireland Assembly experienced no change in relation to the mechanism, given the Northern Ireland Executive's reluctance to increase EU-related communications with the Assembly (Borońska-Hryniewiecka 2017: 156). Although the exploration of the matter beyond the scope of this discussion, it is likely that this was accompanied by learning effects within devolved legislatures which decided to expand EU scrutiny activities due to their increased information pool. In the case of Scotland, such adaptations could also serve as the nucleus of legislative EU scrutiny as a member state in the potential case of eventual independence.

The EWS also influenced how the Houses conceptualise the way they would like to extend NP participation in the multi-level system of governance within the EU. Blueprints and discussions within the House of Commons contributed to EU-level talks about creating a subsidiarity-related mechanism for NPs as early as 2003 (Wintour 2003). The EWS and its future was also subject to European Scrutiny Committee inquiries (House of Commons 2015b) and was discussed in a wider House of Lords report on the present and future of NP participation in EU affairs (House of Lords 2013a). The House of Lords was extensively involved in developing and advocating for the idea of a 'green' or 'red card' for NPs (IntHoLO2). The implementation of the former idea would see NPs gain the competence to propose or amend EU legislation, whilst the latter would enable NPs blocking a draft EU legislative proposal (Gostyńska-Jakubowska 2016: 5). These proposals represent the enduring influence of the existing voting framework principle of the EWS within wider thinking about legislative empowerment in the context of EU integration.

However, both ideas encountered serious obstacles. On one hand, it is true that the idea of the red card gained political salience on the EU level, as conclusions of the re-negotiation of UK EU membership included provisions for such a mechanism (European Council 2016: 17). However, the idea (and its promotion) was fundamentally tied to Prime Minister David Cameron's attempt to conduct successful re-negotiations with the EU concerning the UK's membership before the referendum (IntHoCO2; IntHoLO4). In this context, the idea of the red card was primarily underpinning the publicity drive that the Prime Minister and government MPs has achieved something substantial during the re-negotiations (Hagemann et al. 2016). On the other hand, the idea of a 'green card' attracted extensive discussions and associated initiatives, despite that introducing such a mechanism would require treaty change (European Commission 2017b: 12). The House of Lords Select Committee proposed the idea within their report on NP participation within EU affairs (House of Lords 2013a) and became one of the biggest proponents of the proposal alongside the Dutch and Danish NPs (IntHoLO4). However, subsequent attempts to build on these outcomes were not able to attract widespread support due to persisting coordination problems and the EC's reluctance to fully engage with the process (IntHoL04). Although the exploration of this matter is beyond the scope of this article, interviews suggest that another factor at play around the lacklustre progress of the 'green card' concept is that the debate is moving in a new direction. Following the publication of the Report of the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and 'Doing Less More Efficiently' (am evaluation of the EWS initiated by the Juncker Commission: European Commission 2017b), the focus of NPs is turning towards improved, personal, and early-stage interactions with the EC rather than devising new formal systems of interactions (IntHoC02; IntHoL04).

#### **CONCLUSION**

This article examined administrative and behavioural change within the HoP in relation to the EWS through a mixed-methods approach. By complementing document analysis with novel interview data, the article provided a comprehensive overview of how the EWS was integrated into the working procedures of the Houses. In addition, this approach allowed for evaluating expectations which relate to behavioural aspects of adaptation to the EWS. In this manner, the article considered whether EWS-related adaptation led to an increase in the speed and scope of or resources invested in EU scrutiny within the HoP (Miklin 2017). The article also examined expectations stemming from previous research on the EWS, such as that upper chambers tend to make more use of the EWS, that Eurosceptic MPs tend to increase the use of the EWS (Huysmans 2019) and that the EWS encouraged further networking amongst NPs (Pintz 2015; Cooper 2015). The article also discussed administrative change within the three devolved legislatures of the UK and examined if it led to the further development of their capacity to conduct EU scrutiny. Lastly, the article discussed the UK and the EU's perspective before the 2016 referendum on the future of the mechanism.

Overall, the introduction of the EWS did not change the already systemic and substantive nature of EU scrutiny within the Houses. Indeed, the EWS has expedited the parliamentary passage of some EU scrutiny documents, given the short eight-week deadline associated with the mechanism. Nevertheless, administrative adaptation to the EWS did not widen the scope of HoP scrutiny activities. Associated changes also did not result in more resources being dedicated to undertaking the scrutiny of EU legislation or extend the interparliamentary networks of the HoP. These chambers seamlessly integrated the mechanism into their pre-existing scrutiny structures by primarily following the logic of their own political and organisational attributes and priorities. In terms of legislative behaviour on the EWS, the House of Commons primarily used the EWS to voice the wider concerns regarding draft EU legislation and to conduct associated political messaging. Interviews and parliamentary documentation suggest that this phenomenon is significantly shaped by an increase in Eurosceptic MPs within the House of Commons after 2010. This concurs with the expectation that such an increase in NPs is usually accompanied by an increase in the number of reasoned opinions issued (Huysmans 2019). At the same time, the House of Lords largely saw it as another, but mostly ineffective, tool to pursue dialogue with EU institutions concerning substantive EU policy issues. The experience of the House of Lords diverges from trends observed in other NPs. As the EWS was not perceived to be suitable for upstream policy work within the Lords, it issued less reasoned opinions than the House of Commons, contrary to theoretical expectations (Huysmans 2019). In any case, the mechanism was utilised infrequently. To some extent, this is due to the emergence of the EC's Better Regulation Agenda, which significantly reduced the overall number of legislative proposals within the EU decision-making structures.

The mechanism also increased the access of UK subnational legislatures to information on EU policy. This resulted in administrative reforms which increased legislative attention paid to EU affairs in the case of Wales and Scotland. However, these developments did not materialise in increased engagement between the UK HoP and devolved legislatures regarding EU policy or, apart from the case of Wales, result in the issuance of subnational reasoned opinions. This experience exemplifies the high level of discretion commanded by the UK government and the HoP to shape the extent to which coordination and power-sharing takes place between the central government and devolved administrations. This matter that will become increasingly salient as the UK repatriates (and potentially redistributes) EU competences after Brexit. Furthermore, these findings suggest that the EWS had little intervening impact on networking between UK devolved legislatures and other (sub)national legislatures. Nevertheless, the legislatures of Wales and Scotland increased and mainstreamed their EU scrutiny activities to accommodate EWS-related information streams. Going forward, this phenomenon could be very important for a

potentially independent Scotland, as these structures could serve as the basis of developing structures of EU scrutiny as an independent EU member state.

Brexit provides a chance of renewal for the HoP in terms of monitoring and scrutinising EU legislation as well as the activities of the UK executive regarding the UK-EU relationship. Nevertheless, results demonstrate that a focus on reactive scrutiny of executive leadership remains the primary focus of the HoP in EU affairs, especially in the Commons. In turn, this phenomenon might potentially further retrench and reinforce executive dominance and power over the UK's relationship with the EU in the future. In the context of the European parliamentary space, these findings highlight the necessity and difficulty of developing effective participatory strategies for NPs within the complex structures of European multi-level governance. For example, the way in which the Houses refused to interpret or accept the EWS as a legal *obligation* underlines the importance of finding ways through which all NPs can strengthen their respective scrutiny profiles. In any case, political dialogue amongst EU institutions, governments, and NPs themselves about the EWS experience and the future of legislative empowerment in the context of EU integration continues. The salience of NP participation in EU decision-making is here to stay.

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#### **APPENDIX**

The interviewees contributing to this paper were assured that their contribution will remain anonymous. The interviews within the HoP are as follows:

#### **House of Commons**

- IntHoC01: Member of the European Scrutiny Committee staff (26/06/2017)
- IntHoC02: House of Commons Representative; UK National Parliament Office (Brussels) (26/02/2019)

#### **House of Lords**

- IntHoL01: Member of the House of Lords (15/08/2017)
- IntHoL02: Member of the House of Lords (24/04/2018)
- IntHoL03: Former Legal Advisor to the European Union Committee (01/06/2018)
- IntHoL04: House of Lords Representative; UK National Parliament Office (Brussels) (18/03/2019)

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Research Article

Steps Towards a European Fiscal Union. Has the Revised Stability and Growth Pact Delivered So Far?

**Marin Mileusnic** 

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### **Abstract**

Since 2008-09, the European Union (EU) experienced two major economic crises revealing all the flaws of the existing model of economic governance. By leaving the majority of the countries with high levels of deficit and public debt, the two crises have shown that the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) is indeed an unfinished project where the monetary union alone is not sufficient to safeguard the entire EU economy. To strengthen the EMU and to mitigate future risks that could possibly lead to the collapse of the euro-area, many called for a deeper fiscal integration by creating a central fiscal capacity for the EMU or, in other words, a fiscal union. Due to the present political unfeasibility of such an endeavour, however, concrete steps towards a European Fiscal Union (EFU) have been modest and the revised Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) remains its core building block. As the Pact defines supranational and shapes the creation of national fiscal rules, maintaining its credibility continues to be vital. This article analyses the effects of the fiscal rules on the public finances of the member states. It is assumed that by adhering to the supranational and adopting quality domestic fiscal rules, the member states are better equipped in remaining fiscally prudent, thus also affirming the revamped SGP as a solid base for the furthering of the EFU. The two-track evaluation approach defines dynamic panels for the EFU as a whole and for the selected country groups. It finds certain benevolent effects on budgetary performance at the EFU level, as well as for the countries with higher quality of the fiscal rules.

## Keywords

Fiscal rules; FRI; SGP; Public finances; EMU; Fiscal union

A decade ago, the European Union (EU) experienced two major economic crises – financial and sovereign debt crisis – revealing all the flaws of the existing model of economic governance. The two crises have shown that the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) is indeed an unfinished project where the monetary union alone is not sufficient to safeguard the entire EU economy (Stiglitz 2017; Schneider, Zuleeg and Emmanouilidis 2014; Jones, Kelemen and Meunier 2016; Bongardt and Torres 2017). More precisely, a comprehensive EMU implies the existence of the monetary-fiscal dichotomy.¹ As fiscal policy has not been conferred to the EU as its competence, but has remained under the national domain, the EU capabilities in preventing and/or containing economic shocks have consequently remained limited. To strengthen the EMU and to mitigate future risks that could possibly lead to the collapse of the euro-area, many have called for a deeper fiscal integration (Thirion 2017; Nicoli 2013; Juncker, Tusk, Dijsselbloem, Draghi, et al. 2015; European Fiscal Board 2019; De Grauwe 2013; Dan 2014). Such an institutional architecture would ideally extend beyond the current rule-based framework by taking the form of a central fiscal capacity or, in other words, a fiscal union.

The EMU's fiscal integration has therefore been seen as any attempt to further centralise fiscal policies (Thirion 2017) and as such, it would encompass a gradual, transformative process from a fiscal union based on common rules (i.e. the status quo) to a fully-fledged European Fiscal Union (EFU) with a substantial Eurozone budget, an enabled stabilisation function and an enhanced risk sharing.<sup>2</sup> This final degree of the EFU, also defined in the Five Presidents' Report (Juncker et al. 2015), would entail a significant degree of economic convergence, financial integration, further coordination and pooling of decision making on national budgets, with adequate strengthening of democratic accountability. The conditions for entrenching the monetary into the fiscal union (De Grauwe 2013), however, fall short of appearing as good enough incentives for the institutional (re)construction. Completing the EMU requires the Member States (MS) to give up a part of national sovereignty whilst pursuing a deeper integration and this, for the time being, does not appear politically feasible (European Fiscal Board 2019). Moreover, a higher degree of fiscal integration is not conceivable without the fundamental Treaty changes that are needed for the further pooling of competences to the EU level.

Yet, in the absence of compound, centralised fiscal initiatives, sound foundations for fiscal prudence in the MS remain essential (Dabrowski 2014). The Maastricht Treaty and the subsequent Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) have defined the uniform fiscal rules or the nominal anchors (caps) on deficit and debt for the MS. Whereas these benchmarks had already been violated in the past, the majority of the governments found themselves with high and precarious levels of deficits and public debts in the aftermath of the two crises. The institutional overhaul that followed as a response to the adverse effects of this turmoil strengthened the SGP by adding new layers of harmonised regulation to the framework: 'Six-Pack', 'Two-Pack' and Fiscal compact (Ioannou and Stracca 2014).<sup>3</sup> The new economic governance thus increased the surveillance and coordination of domestic fiscal and economic policies through the European Semester (Savage and Howarth 2018), as well as enforced the Pact's preventive and corrective mechanisms related to the macroeconomic and fiscal imbalances.

Amendments to the supranational fiscal framework have consequently prompted the MS to make adjustments to their national fiscal systems so as to guarantee compliance with the EU rules. As a result, domestic landscapes of fiscal rules have become rather complex and with questionable effectiveness (Pench, Ciobanu, Zogala and Manescu 2019; Gaspar and Amaglobel 2019; European Fiscal Board 2019; Deroose, Carnot, Pench and Mourre 2018; Darvas, Martin and Ragot 2018; Beetsma, Thygesen, Cugnasca, Orseau et al. 2018), leading to believe that the underlying SGP is challenging to comprehend and even more so to implement. Even though a simpler, more transparent and predictable framework is an essential component of the EMU deepening (Beetsma et al. 2018), the revised Pact represents the main building block of the fiscal union (Thirion 2017; Dabrowski 2014) as

it centralises certain aspects of fiscal policy. It is therefore vital that the common fiscal rulebook remains credible.

This article sets out to analyse the effects of the fiscal rules on the public finances of the MS constituting a fiscal union. It is assumed that by adhering to the supranational and adopting quality domestic fiscal rules, the MS are better equipped in remaining fiscally prudent, thus also affirming the revamped SGP as a solid base for the furthering of the EFU. The article is organised as follows. Section two reviews the relevant literature on both supranational and national fiscal rules. The following two sections refer to the empirical analysis on the effects of the fiscal rules on budgetary indicators. The applied two-track methodology approaches the works of Marneffe, van Aarle, van der Wielen and Vereeck (2011) and Bergman, Hutchison and Jensen (2013) in setting-up the panel regressions. In particular, section three reveals the estimates of the EFU's budgetary performance, while section four does the same for the selected countries grouped on the basis of the quality and the quantity of their fiscal rules. The last part of the paper is reserved for the concluding remarks.

#### FISCAL RULES IN THE EUROPEAN FISCAL UNION

In a fiscal union based on common rules (Thirion 2017) such as the E(M)U, the constituting countries must respect the supranational fiscal rules so as to ensure long-term fiscal sustainability and to support countercyclical fiscal policy (Darvas et al. 2018). The MS also define complementary domestic rules in order to be compliant with the EU ones. The challenge lies, however, in the implementation of the rules due to the relative position of the legal acts introduced at the EU level. A fiscal rule stemming from a regulation is expected to be the same in content, format and timing for all MS, thus guaranteeing full convergence. Directives, on the other hand, allow for a relatively wider margin of freedom in transposition, which ultimately leads towards larger variation amongst the countries. On top of the EU law, the MS can introduce additional fiscal rules on their own, or as a result of the obligations stemming from the intergovernmental agreements, in both cases potentially exacerbating diversity. These three types of changes significantly affect the overall quality of the fiscal systems. Additionally, the adherence to the supranational rules remains attainable only if the MS manage to eschew the preventive and corrective mechanisms of the SGP.

#### **Supranational Rules on Public Finances**

A fiscal rule is defined as a permanent constraint on fiscal policy expressed in terms of overall fiscal performance through indicators such as government budget deficit, borrowings and debt, including the key subsets of these aggregates like the government revenues or expenditures (Kopits and Symansky 1998; Darvas et al. 2018). The EU rules on public finances, as laid down in Article 126 and Protocol No. 12 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), demand a budget deficit of less than three per cent of GDP and a public debt below 60 per cent of GDP (or an accelerated approach towards the set limit). The complementing SGP underpins the aforementioned thresholds through its preventive and corrective arm. With a goal of ensuring sound budgetary policies in the MS over the medium term, the preventive arm also defines auxiliary supranational rules. These comprise a country-specific medium-term objective (MTO) expressed in structural terms and an accompanying expenditure benchmark that outlines the net growth rate of government spending at or below a country's medium-term potential economic growth rate in relation to its MTO (European Commission 2020).

Any departure from the MTO, which takes into account the need to achieve sustainable debt levels while securing the governments with enough room for discretion and a safety margin against breaching the deficit and debt caps, triggers the Significant Deviation Procedure (SDP). The procedure, in principal, gives the MS the opportunity to correct a

deviation from their MTO or the adjustment path towards their MTO (i.e. the expenditure benchmark) and to avoid the opening of the corrective proceeding of the Pact (European Commission 2020). The SDP, however, is relatively novel as it stems from the 'Six-Pack' and thus far, it has been activated only for Romania and Hungary in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

The corrective arm or the Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP), on the other hand, has been operational since the Pact's inception and it is a direct indicator of (non)adherence to the nominal anchors enshrined in the TFEU. This practice has been considerably strengthened in 2011 by adding non-compliance with the debt (on top of the deficit criterion) as a criterion for its triggering, and introducing a graduated system of financial sanctions for the euro-area MS (also in the preventive arm). Whereas both nominal benchmarks had already been breached in the past, the financial and sovereign debt crisis led to the majority of MS being placed under the EDP. Even though the main purpose of the procedure has always been to motivate countries in timely correcting the undesired excesses, the EDP's average duration has been between four and five years (European Fiscal Board 2019), therefore often facilitating the postponement of fiscal consolidation in the MS (Darvas et al. 2018).

Yet, the procedure comes with another major flaw which renders the whole mechanism arguably weak (Bongardt and Torres 2017). The effects of the sanctioning mechanisms, whether pre or post overhaul, remain unseen as sanctions for the undesired excesses have never been imposed. The corrective arm continues to be politically driven (European Fiscal Board 2019) and avoiding penalties is often linked with factors like the country's negotiating capacities or the so-called 'unexpected adverse economic events' (Glencross 2018). Despite failing to impose sanctions and thus possibly affecting its credibility, the EDP has indirect effects on the MS. The scrutiny that comes with the procedure can shape perceptions about country's borrowing creditworthiness on the financial markets (Gaspar and Amaglobel 2019), thus potentially limiting its options in financing future deficits.

Since the supranational fiscal rules should demonstrate integrity, their effectiveness has often been assessed. In so doing, an acceptable representation of these rules has been sought and various seminal works relied on the EDP and the EMU membership indicators (Reuter 2019; Ioannou and Stracca 2014; Frankel and Schreger 2013; Bergman et al. 2013). Concerning the latter, the commonly held assumption is that the preparation for the Eurozone membership can significantly influence adherence to the supranational rules. The rationale behind it has its footing in what is commonly known as EU conditionality. This phenomenon tends to highlight the EU's leveraging power paradox (Coman 2017). The EU's position towards countries wanting to accede the EU is perceived as strong: the Union dictates the terms of the accession as it is offering the ultimate prize, which is the EU membership. For the MS, contrariwise, the conditionality mechanism is weak as no incentives to comply with the accession demands persist.

The same reasoning can therefore be applied to the EMU. There, the EU disposes of greater leverage since the non-EMU countries are obliged to adopt the Euro and abide by the accession (Maastricht) criteria (except for Denmark and the UK who had been granted optout clauses). Yet, better fiscal prudence due to the preparation for the euro adoption or, more narrowly, the participation in the Exchange Rate Mechanism II (ERM II)<sup>4</sup> has fallen short of the initial expectations. One group of authors (Bergman et al. 2013) found that the Eurozone membership has no additional effects on primary balance (i.e. ex-post euro adoption), while others obtained similar results by adding that the effects of the EMU membership on primary balance are attainable only before the introduction of the euro (i.e. ex-ante), but not thereafter (Ioannou and Stracca 2014). The latter finding likewise confirms the presence of the conditionality phenomenon.

This power paradox goes hand in hand with considerable disparities in levels of deficit and public debt between the EMU and Non-EMU countries. The statistics show that in the precrises period most of the older EMU members were already in the constant breach of the

SGP provisions. Table 1 shows consolidated fiscal deficit and public debt per country group in the 2007-2017 period. The selected time-frame best captures the movements in governments' public finances while aligning the fiscal consolidation processes with the new requirements stemming from the 'packs'. The distinction between Eurozone (EMU-19) and non-Eurozone (non-EMU-8) countries has been made as significant differences in deficit and debt levels between the two groups are expected. This separation is also convenient from the perspective of the Eurozone's enlargement, as well as the deepening of the integration. Moreover, the EU-28 group reflects the composition of the Union prior Brexit and it will be used as the main reference, while the EU-27 excludes the UK. All the data have been collected from the AMECO database and are weighted according to the MS' GDP in the total EU-28 GDP.

Table 1: Public debt and fiscal deficit per country group in period 2007-2017 (percentage of GDP)

	Fiscal deficit										
Country group	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
EU-28	-0.86	-2.48	-6.62	-6.39	-4.56	-4.24	-3.31	-2.96	-2.38	-1.67	-1.22
EU-27 <sup>1</sup>	-0.49	-2.01	-6.05	-5.89	-4.07	-3.53	-2.93	-2.48	-1.98	-1.44	-1.06
EMU-19	-0.65	-2.16	-6.26	-6.18	-4.23	-3.64	-3.04	-2.56	-2.08	-1.54	-1.12
Non-EMU-8 <sup>1</sup>	0.56	-1.00	-4.58	-3.97	-3.01	-2.81	-2.25	-1.94	-1.32	-0.77	-0.70
				Pı	ıblic del	ot <sup>2</sup>					
Country group	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
EU-28	57.96	62.30	72.59	78.44	81.32	85.19	87.10	87.80	86.27	85.41	83.51
EU-27 <sup>1</sup>	61.32	64.51	73.97	78.91	81.33	85.30	87.37	87.89	85.86	84.86	82.97
EMU-19	64.94	68.57	78.37	84.05	86.77	91.39	93.64	94.19	92.10	91.03	89.27
Non-EMU-8 <sup>1</sup>	36.00	37.61	42.62	44.86	46.16	46.63	47.95	48.12	46.79	46.23	44.56

**Notes:** 1) The UK has been excluded due to the Brexit 2) For consolidation purposes, the public debt figures exclude intergovernmental loans approbated during the crises (periods 2009-2016);

Source: Author's creation based on AMECO data

As visible from Table 1, the biggest shock happened in 2009 after the financial crisis broke out. Deficit levels witnessed a significant surge, surpassing an average of 6.5 per cent of the GDP at the EU-28 level. The Eurozone countries experienced particularly high deficits, while the non-EMU-8 countries performed better by reaching an average deficit of 4.58 per cent of GDP. The economic recovery started the following year and the non-EMU-8 countries reached the Maastricht benchmark already in 2011. The EMU-19, however, approached the critical 3 per cent of GDP two years after and officially satisfied the provision only in 2014 with an average deficit of 2.56 per cent of GDP. The trend captured from the EU-28 figures coincided with the one of the EMU-19 throughout most of the analysed period. Public debt also started to expand in the advent of the financial crisis. The subsequent sovereign debt crisis propelled the debt even further, and some groups of countries reached critical levels. The most indebted group was the one sharing the same currency (EMU-19). The Eurozone's public debt peaked in 2014 reaching 94.19 per cent of GDP. At the same time, the Non-EMU-8 experienced the same trend, but significantly below the Maastricht's 60 per cent of GDP throughout the whole period. Although mild, the decrease in public debt levels is visible for all groups from 2015 onwards.

#### **Fiscal Rules in National Frameworks**

Domestic fiscal rules are complementary to and support compliance with the EU fiscal rules (Pench et al. 2019). When addressing their use, the relative position of the supranational legal acts gathers momentum. The regulations that came with the two 'packs' reinforcing the SGP were immediately applicable at the national level thus limiting fiscal diversity of the MS and ensuring full alignment with the EU rules. Relevant directives and intergovernmental agreements such as the Fiscal Compact, however, required transposition and were the main source of potential discrepancies as they allowed for a fairly high degree of freedom in implementation. This has created additional layers of complexity with regard to consistency between the national and the EU level, and has arguably weakened the effectiveness of the domestic rules (Pench et al. 2019; Deroose et al. 2018).

In particular, the only 'Six-Pack' directive on the requirements for budgetary frameworks of the MS has been presented with a relatively large scope. It calls for, amongst other things,<sup>5</sup> the set-up of medium-term budgetary frameworks (including the MTO), arrangements for independent monitoring and analysis, and country-specific numerical fiscal rules that effectively promote compliance with the obligations deriving from the TFEU and the previously defined MTO (EUR-Lex 2011). The subsequent Fiscal compact, on the other hand, obliged the MS to transpose the rules under the preventive arm (i.e. the debt brake) into their national laws, thus failing to account for the interpretative changes in the Pact's implementation or the flexibility additions (Pench et al. 2019). Equally, the introduced balance budget rule supplemented the existing national rules or even propelled the introduction of the new ones so as to ensure compliance.

The formulation of diverse and rather lax national rules that transpired as a result of the transposition, have also been characterised by countries' aptitude towards cherry-picking between different rules (European Fiscal Board 2019). One example of such a behaviour has to do with the expenditure benchmark being used alongside the structural deficit (encompassed in MTO). Such a condition permits the MS to choose more favourable measures for themselves when formulating domestic rules, which bolsters uneven application of the rules across the MS. Largely, this pick and choose attitude stems from the SGP reforms throughout the years and has a purpose of adapting the fiscal rules to different economic circumstances. The to and fro between the tightening (during the crises) and the loosening of the rules (in the good times), however, incentivised the procyclicality of domestic fiscal policies and has undermined the supranational framework (Beetsma et al. 2018).

Furthermore, the legislative packages 'Six-Pack', 'Two-Pack' and Fiscal Compact called for the establishment of the national independent fiscal institutions (IFIs) to monitor the compliance with fiscal rules. Depending on the role they play, these bodies can be set up as Independent Fiscal Authorities or Fiscal Councils (Jankovics and Sherwood 2017). The former are responsible for setting up the annual budgetary and debt targets, taxation and public expenditure while the latter influence fiscal policy by providing independent analysis, forecasts and advice. Even though the IFIs do not possess any sanctioning powers, which could additionally motivate the MS in maintaining fiscal prudence, their unbiased and realistic macroeconomic and budgetary forecasts can considerably improve the effectiveness of fiscal planning and consequently boost commitment to budgetary discipline, provided they are well designed by the governments (Jankovics and Sherwood 2017). IFIs' views could hence potentially lead to a timely correction of the imbalances, avoiding arguably stricter proceedings or the EDP.

The new economic governance boosted the enactment of the domestic fiscal rules by roughly 65 per cent, jumping from 68 implemented rules prior 'Six-Pack' to 112 in 2017 at the EU-28 level (see Table 2). The EMU countries employed a considerably larger number of rules than the Non-EMU countries. This flourishing of fiscal rules is due to a shift from

the pre-crises period wildly criticised for the continuous accumulation of public debt amongst the Eurozone countries (Baxa and Paulus 2016) and thus the SGP breaches, to a period after the two crises defined by the tightened and relatively improved fiscal frameworks. Moreover, the table includes the IFI count due to the useful role they play in the budgetary processes and their rapid spread throughout the EU in the recent years (Jankovics and Sherwood 2017). It is visible that the tendency of establishing a secondary IFI in order to divide tasks according to the EU legislation, lies predominantly with the EMU countries (i.e. more than 40 per cent of the Eurozone countries have two IFIs, while the Non-EMU have only one or, in case of Poland, none).

Table 2: Number of fiscal rules (FR) and independent fiscal institutions (IFI) per MS

								EM	U co	untri	es									
	BE	DE	Ш	ш	GR	ES	퐀	⊨	≿	2	占	2	Ε	뒬	ΑT	占	S	SK	ᇤ	Σ
FR prior 'Six- Pack'	4	4	3	2	-	3	2	4	1	-	4	2	-	2	2	3	2	4	5	47
FR post 'Six- Pack'	5	1	3	5	3	3	1	9	3	4	6	4	2	9	5	1 0	2	3	8	86
FR in force (2017)	4	5	3	4	2	3	3	7	3	3	5	3	2	5	4	7	1	5	9	78
IFIs	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	27
							١	Non-E	MU	coun	tries									
	BG	CZ	움	关	呈	P	RO	SE	놀											Σ
FR prior 'Six- Pack'	4	-	1	2	2	5	2	3	2											21
FR post 'Six- Pack'	1 8	3	4	1	4	5	3	0	2											40
FR in force (2017)	9	3	3	1	3	4	5	3	3											34
IFIs	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	1											8

**Notes:** 1) Fiscal rules post 'Six-Pack' refers to the period 2011-2017 where some rules could have had a limited duration, but have been counted nonetheless. 2) No shaded fields – IFIs established before 'Six-Pack'; Light-grey shaded fields – at least one IFI created before 'Six-Pack'; Dark-grey shaded fields – IFIs established or reformed after 'Six-Pack';

**Source:** Author's creation based on the European Commission's dataset on FRI (for fiscal rules) and the data from Jankovics and Sharewood (2017) for IFIs

The quantity of the enforced fiscal rules, however, tells very little about their underlying quality. The European Commission has therefore developed several indices to assess the quality of the fiscal rules and the ever-changing national fiscal frameworks. In this article, a special emphasis has been put on the Fiscal Rule Index (FRI) which takes into account four fiscal rules at all government levels in every MS: budget-balanced, expenditure, debt and revenue rule. These rules are measured through a set of sub-indices, the so-called

Fiscal rule strength indices (FRSI), which are ultimately summated so as to construct the FRI. In particular, the FRSI (defined on a scale of 0 to 10) account for the percentage of the government spending per government level (general, central, regional, local or social security), legal base, binding character, correction mechanisms, resilience to shocks and bodies monitoring compliance, and the correction mechanism (European Commission 2019b). The computed FRI can obtain both positive and negative values where higher figures represent a robust quality of the implemented fiscal rules.

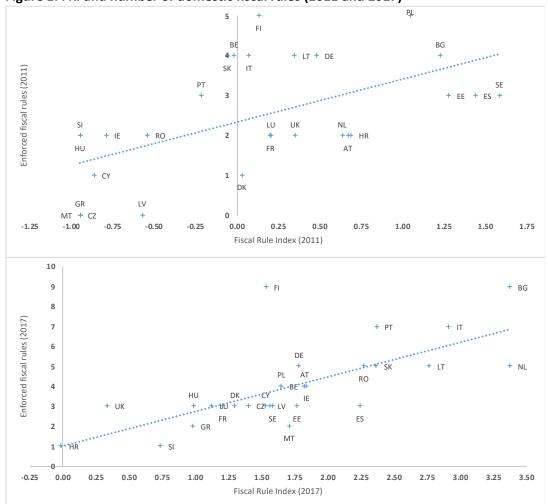


Figure 1: FRI and number of domestic fiscal rules (2011 and 2017)

Source: Author's creation based on the European Commission's dataset on FRI

Since a higher (lower) number of implemented rules does not necessarily suppose a greater (lesser) quality, a trade-off between the two indicators is shown in Figure 1 for all 28 countries in the years 2011 and 2017 or before and after the regulatory overhaul. It is worthwhile noting that all MS, except Croatia, have moved from the left to the right quadrant when contrasting the two years. This indicates that, besides the increased quantity of the national rules in 2017, their quality improved significantly as well. The majority of the MS is concentrated in the middle graph with two to four enforced fiscal rules per country and a FRI that ranges between 1.00 and 2.00 units.

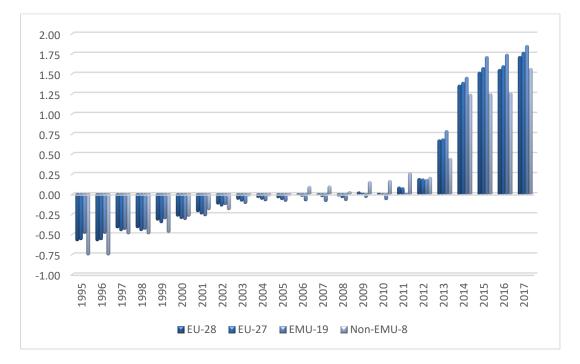


Figure 2: Average FRI per country group in period 1995-2017

Source: Author's creation based on AMECO data

In addition to the aforesaid quantity-quality trade-off, it is also important to show the evolution of the FRI with an expanded timeframe. Hence, Figure 2 displays the arithmetic means of the FRI per country group in the period 1995-2017. The visualisation indicates that there has been an overall positive development in quality of the EU fiscal systems, both individual and consolidated. This corroborates previously mentioned assumptions on the majority of the fiscal rules being introduced after the two crises (and after the regulatory revamp). It also shows that the EMU countries made significant enhancements in enforcing their fiscal structures during and after the overhaul (in 2017, the FRI was 1.86).

#### **Empirical Analysis: Estimating the EFU's Sustainability**

The empirical part of the article explores the link between the enacted fiscal rules and the public policy in the member countries constituting a fiscal union. In particular, it attempts to determine whether the implementation and the adherence to the fiscal rules at both national and supranational level has an impact on the fiscal stance of the EFU. The assessment has been conducted at the aggregate level as opposed to the country level (see next section). To differentiate between the two levels of fiscal rules, the analysis relies on the previously introduced notions of the FRI for the domestic and the EDP and the EMU membership indicators for the supranational rules. The impact of the EU rules stemming from the preventive arm of the Pact have not been considered due to their auxiliary character and limited availability of data concerning the SDP.

The employed econometric approach is close to Marneffe et al. (2011) and Bergman et al. (2013) who also look at the impact of fiscal rules on public finances. Other conventional scholarship (Wawro 2002; Frankel and Schreger 2013; Bun and Sarafidis 2013; Baltagi 2013; Arellano and Bond 1991) has likewise been tracked and the following dynamic panel regression has been estimated:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{i,t} &= \beta_1 + \beta_2 Y_{i,t-1} + \beta_3 X_{i,t} + Z'_{i,t} \beta_4 + \varepsilon_{i,t} \\ \varepsilon_{i,t} &= \mu_i + \lambda_t + \nu_{i,t} , \quad \nu_{i,t} \sim iid \; (0,\sigma_v^2) \end{aligned} \tag{Equation 1}$$

where  $Y_{i,t}$  embodies the dependent variable (cyclically adjusted primary balance (CAPB), primary balance, fiscal deficit or total expenditures),  $Y_{i,t-1}$  is the lagged dependent variable,  $X_{i,t}$  represents the independent variable (FRI),  $Z'_{i,t}$  is the vector of control (lagged FRI, lagged public debt and lagged output gap) and dummy variables for the Eurozone membership and the EDP scrutiny, and  $\varepsilon_{i,t}$  is the error term. The precedence has been however given to the budgetary variables in cyclically adjusted terms (for example cyclically adjusted primary balance) over the actual ones (for example fiscal deficit, primary balance or total expenditures) as they enable direct control over public policy (Bergman et al. 2013). The macroeconomic and fiscal variable explanations are available in Annex 1.

The independent variable or the FRI represents the quality of the national fiscal rules which aim at aiding the MS in complying with the rules introduced at the EU level and maintaining fiscal prudence. A positive (negative) impact on the dependent variables is expected should the FRI increase (decrease). Moreover, to isolate and to account for the effects of the supranational fiscal rules, the econometric model supposes a distinction between the EMU and the non-EMU countries, as well as the countries covered by the EDP within the analysed timeframe. The following dummy variables have therefore been introduced:

$$D_{EURO} = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if a MS} \in \text{of EMU in time } t \\ 0, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$
 
$$D_{EDP} = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if a MS} \in \text{of EDP in time } t \\ 0, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

The EDP dummy is a more straightforward indicator as it divides the panel countries between disobeying and complying in relation to the deficit and debt caps in a given year. With the euro dummy, on the other hand, it has been assumed that the Non-EMU countries are more motivated to abide by the supranational fiscal rules as they approach the adoption of the Euro and thus the ERM II mechanism (as discussed in the previous section). Even though the opt-out countries such as Denmark and the UK (who ultimately departed from the EU) were not expected to join the euro, they were still a part of a fiscal union based on common rules in the given point in time and have been therefore included in the assessment.

All the annual data have been collected from the AMECO and the EC databases for 28 MS in the period 1995-2017. The selected time frame best captures the economic contractions that occurred in the past and the consequent regulatory responses, which affect all variables. These crucial changes in historical values together with a relatively wide timespan and a higher number of case countries justify the employed dynamic assessment. Additionally, the initial regression model contained a third dummy variable so as to differentiate between the years of the traditional SGP and the new economic governance (i.e. the 'packs'), but it was not statistically significant in any of the scenarios and it has therefore been dropped. Even without this distinction, certain overall effects of the strengthened governance on fiscal indicators have been captured and are explained hereunder.

Table 3 shows the results of the unbalanced dynamic panel by employing the Generalised Method of Moments (GMM). The employed first-difference estimation looks at the short run adjustment (i.e. output stabilisation as a fiscal policy objective). It reports the Arellano-Bond one-step estimates with country and period fixed effects (see Equation 2) so as to account for heterogeneity across the MS (country-specific effects that are constant over time and correlated with explanatory variables) and time-specific events that affect all the states. Robust standard errors are also reported (in parentheses) for each estimate. The Sargan test of over-identifying restrictions has been computed and it is displayed as J-statistics.

Table 3: Dynamic panel estimate of the FRI effect on fiscal stance of the EFU's constituencies

Variable	CA	РВ	Primary	balance	Fiscal	deficit	Total expenditures		
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	
DV <sub>(t-1)</sub>	0.568*** (0.039)	0.560*** (0.041)	0.559*** (0.037)	0.550*** (0.039)	0.598*** (0.039)	0.594*** (0.040)	0.608*** (0.037)	0.592*** (0.042)	
FRI <sub>(t-1)</sub>	0.399* (0.235)	0.385 (0.237)	0.144 (0.243)	0.180 (0.244)	0.146 (0.249)	0.168 (0.254)	-0.514* (0.269)	-0.531* (0.273)	
Public debt <sub>(t-1)</sub>	0.031*** (0.009)	0.029*** (0.010)	0.042*** (0.009)	0.047*** (0.009)	0.026*** (0.009)	0.028*** (0.010)		-0.010 (0.011)	
Output gap <sub>(t-1)</sub>		-0.028 (0.042)		0.060 (0.041)		0.027 (0.039)		-0.061 (0.053)	
DEURO(t-1)			1.087* (0.619)	0.979 (0.621)	1.010 (0.620)	0.958 (0.620)			
DEURO(t-2)			-1.033* (0.595)	-0.924 (0.594)	-1.365** (0.623)	-1.315** (0.625)	1.221** (0.513)	1.085** (0.518)	
D <sub>EURO(t-1)</sub> *FRI <sub>(t-1)</sub>					0.319 (0.243)	0.306 (0.246)			
D <sub>EDP(t-1)</sub>	-0.690* (0.393)	-0.712* (0.392)	-0.738* (0.386)	-0.730* (0.385)	-0.717* (0.393)	-0.709* (0.394)	0.886* (0.475)	0.908* (0.482)	
D <sub>EDP(t-2)</sub>	0.829* (0.443)	0.822* (0.447)	0.968** (0.462)	0.986** (0.456)	0.948** (0.472)	0.958** (0.471)	-1.161** (0.535)	-1.145** (0.536)	
DEDP(t-1)*FRI(t-1)							-0.800*** (0.280)	-0.812*** (0.283)	
D <sub>EDP(t-2)</sub> *FRI <sub>(t-1)</sub>	-0.426** (0.208)	-0.414* (0.211)	-0.467** (0.216)	-0.493** (0.214)	-0.438** (0.219)	-0.447** (0.220)	1.145*** (0.309)	1.142*** (0.306)	
J-stat (probability)	0.133	0.120	0.397	0.371	0.319	0.303	0.141	0.071	
Observations	544	544	544	544	544	544	546	544	

**Notes:** \*\*\* significant at 1%; \*\* significant at 5%; \* significant at 10%.

Source: Author's creation

The Sargan test retrieved solid results for all dependent variables used in the model, 6 indicating a relatively high probability of utilising valid instruments in the regressions run. Lagged dependent variable and lagged public debt are always statistically significant at conventional levels for all dependent variables, meaning that the previous year's budgetary balance and the levels of expenditure and debt influence budgetary decisions in the subsequent period. These results are similar to the earlier empirical findings in the scholarship.

Lagged FRI returned statistical significance for the CAPB and the total expenditures, but not for the primary balance and the fiscal deficit. The positive coefficient obtained for the CAPB indicates that an increase in FRI will result in lower deficits or, depending, higher surpluses. Moreover, the total expenditures' negative parameter represents a decrease in expenditures, which is likely to materialise in a severer fiscal environment (also measured with the FRI's progression). Largely, the employment of the lagged FRI suggests that these positive outcomes require at least one year to have an effect on the abovementioned fiscal indicators.

Additional effects can be noted when accounting for the EDP scrutiny as the individual lagged and two-period lagged dummies proved to be statistically significant for all dependent variables. With the introduction of the second lag, the parameters obtained tend to change from negative to positive for the CAPB, primary balance and fiscal deficit, and from positive to negative for the total expenditures. This illustrates that the consolidation efforts will initially worsen the fiscal stance of the MS (period t-1) before actually starting to improve (period t-2). A possible explanation for the unfavourable estimates in t-1 could be found in the reversed effects of fiscal consolidation or in a longer waiting period for certain actions to give results. The consolidation processes extensively hinge on the fiscal multipliers (i.e. a measure of the short-term impact of discretionary fiscal policy on output), which were sizeable during the sovereign debt crisis (Blot, Cochard, Creel, Ducoudré et al. 2014; Batini, Eyraud, Forni and Weber 2014). By accounting poorly for multipliers' effects, and due to the synchronised consolidation cycle of the MS, the position of the fiscal indicators deteriorates.

Similar inferences can be made when analysing the interaction between the EDP and the FRI. The used term captures the effects of the supranational fiscal rules and, at the same time, apprehends for the policy changes in the national fiscal systems. Whereas these variables have manifested positive properties on fiscal indicators from an isolated perspective, the interaction (denoted by a negative coefficient for all dependent variables) shows that the fiscal consolidation processes in the MS and the simultaneous EDP scrutiny, do not yield desired budgetary improvements within the first two years. The only exception relates to the total expenditures variable, which portrays an instant restrictive behaviour in the first year. For example, a reaction to the introduced cuts in government spending (as part of the consolidation process). These effects are due to the policy changes that, pressured by the arguably lengthy EDP surveillance, bring about potential (quality) reforms to the existing or introduce new fiscal rules, thus increasing the FRI, but worsening the budgetary performance at the same time (at least in the initial two years).

With the second dummy, a distinction between the EMU and the Non-EMU countries has been made. The results show that the Eurozone membership has an additional effect on the primary balance, fiscal deficit and total expenditures, but proves to be insignificant for the CAPB. In the first year of the membership (period t-1), the only significant variable was the primary balance showing the improved budgetary performance. The positive effect, however, did not persist in the second year (period t-2). The retrieved significant coefficients (negative for the primary balance and fiscal deficit, and positive for total expenditures) reveal that the fiscal stance of the MS started to deteriorate after the first year of the Eurozone membership as deficits (surpluses) and total expenditures started to increase (decrease). The interaction term between the EMU membership and the FRI, on the other hand, did not result statistically significant for any of the budgetary variables.

Nevertheless, these arguably less favourable effects of the EMU membership do not come across as a complete surprise as they are consistent with the earlier scholarship. It has been found that the positive effects on the primary balance are attainable only before the introduction of the euro (Ioannou and Stracca 2014) and are expectantly still tangible in the first year of the membership. Reasons for this performance vary and may be explained through the (de)synchronisation of business cycle cycles,<sup>8</sup> which occurred repeatedly during the sampled period. As the synchronisation appears to be stronger among the countries sharing the same currency (De Grauwe and Ji 2017), the negative spillovers on growth thus get amplified (Blot et al. 2014), making the countries unable to reduce the negative excesses. Another possible cause is the constant rise of debt levels in the MS in past years and therefore a persistent breach of the SGP benchmark that has not been adequately monitored (for example the arguably ineffective EDP or the absence of the European semester prior to the 'Six-Pack').

#### The Impact of Fiscal Rules on Public Finances in Selected EU Countries

The methodological approach from the previous section revealed that the latest dynamics in the European economic governance can have certain benevolent effects on public policy of the member countries constituting a fiscal union at an aggregate level. What remained unclear, however, is whether similar effects can be captured on a state level. The motive for such a valuation has its footing in the heterogeneous character of the MS, which, in part, stems from the diversity of the fiscal rules introduced in the national legislations. To tackle this issue, a complementary analysis evaluating the direct impact of the fiscal rules on public finances in certain groups of countries has been carried out. Opposite findings are expected when differentiating between the country groups with greater and poorer quality of the domestic fiscal rules while considering the (non)adherence to the EU rules.

The first step in the analysis was to define the opposing country groups with respect to the number of the enforced fiscal rules and their underlying quality or the FRI, based on the data from 2017 (see Figure 1). By looking at the two aforesaid measures, Italy, The Netherlands, Lithuania and Bulgaria (Group A) have been identified as countries with a higher quality of the rules, while Greece, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia (Group B)<sup>9</sup>, show fiscal rules of a lesser quality. Countries in the Group A have the FRI ranging from 2.75 to 3.5, whereas the Group B shows FRI variations between -0.01 and 1.

For the two above-mentioned groups, the direct impact on fiscal stance has been estimated by employing the already familiar dynamic method presented in the previous section. The fundamental idea was to approximate the model characteristics used for estimating the EFU's sustainability (see Table 3) to achieve better comparability (global versus country group approach) and to maintain methodological consistency. The results of such a testing are shown in Table 4. Only the estimates regarding the fiscal rules (FRI, EDP and EMU membership) in model one have been discussed in the text for both groups. The remaining two models presented in the table provide evidence of additional examination when accounting for the EDP scrutiny (model two) and the Eurozone membership (model three) individually. Furthermore, the testing was limited to the CAPB as dependent variable since this fiscal indicator corrects for the influence of the economic cycle and thus better reflects the underlying budgetary position (European Central Bank 2012).

Table 4: The effect of fiscal rules on cyclically adjusted primary balance in selected MS

		Group A			Group B	
Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
CAPB <sub>(t-1)</sub>	-0.197** (0.079)	-0.184** (0.080)	-0.174** (0.071)	-0.567 (0.918)	-0.031 (0.241)	-0.086 (0.316)
FRI <sub>(t-1)</sub>	0.550* (0.278)	0.523 (0.417)	0.237 (0.370)	-3.362 (6.177)	-0.523 (1.588)	-0.323 (2.115)
Public debt <sub>(t-1)</sub>	0.102 (0.085)	0.089 (0.101)	0.067 (0.070)	0.662 (1.076)	0.391* (0.195)	0.379* (0.188)
Output gap <sub>(t-1)</sub>	0.036 (0.089)	0.026 (0.070)	-0.143 (0.173)	0.874 (2.085)	0.303 (0.388)	0.392 (0.279)
D <sub>EURO</sub>	-2.052 (2.511)		-5.105 (3.114)	37.740 (87.618)		6.232 (16.458)
Deuro(t-1)			1.806 (2.009)			-3.826 (6.670)
D <sub>EURO(t-1)</sub> *FRI <sub>(t-1)</sub>	-0.271		-1.630 (1.121)	2.227		-0.601

		Group A			Group B	
	(0.772)			(6.687)		(5.445)
D <sub>EDP</sub>	-1.676*** (0.394)	-1.869*** (0.650)		-9.693 (20.309)	-1.351 (2.960)	
DedP(t-1)	2.904** (1.406)	2.884** (1.091)		0.052 (5.818)	-3.713* (1.926)	
DEDP(t-1)*FRI(t-1)	-1.738 (1.173)	-1.687** (0.799)		1.712 (12.493)	-1.579 (3.186)	
J-stat (probability)	0.217	0.549	0.104	0.877	0.050	0.033
Observations	78	78	78	69	69	69

**Notes:** \*\*\* significant at 1%; \*\* significant at 5%; \* significant at 10%.

Source: Author's creation

The employed first-difference, Arellano-Bond one-step estimates of the two unbalanced dynamic panels provided in Table 4 demonstrate that the lagged FRI is statistically significant for the Group A countries. The positive coefficient indicates that the increase in FRI will improve the CAPB by manifesting lower deficits or, depending, higher surpluses. The positive outcome, denoted by the FRI's lag, requires at least one year to affect the abovementioned fiscal indicator. The adherence to the supranational rules initially worsens the budgetary balance before it starts to improve in the second year. The interaction term between the FRI and the EDP did not result significant and neither did the Eurozone membership (isolated or interacted). These findings are also in line with the ones from the global approach. Group B countries, inversely, show that all variables on fiscal rules are statistically insignificant. This outcome was consistent with the initial expectations: lenient fiscal frameworks, defined by a weak FRI and reduced compliance with the supranational rules, have limited or no effects on public finances.

#### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This paper attempted to answer the pressing question on whether the revised SGP has managed to meet the initial expectations in providing a solid framework for fiscal prudence in the MS and thus position itself as the corner stone of the EFU. The employed empirical work estimated the combined effects of the adherence to the supranational and the enacted complementary domestic fiscal rules on several budgetary variables. The assessment has been carried out at both, the EFU and the country level. In particular, the analysis finds that high-quality domestic rules (denoted by a greater FRI) improve the budgetary position of the EFU and of the respective states. The estimated effects are attainable with a one year deferral from the introduction of the fiscal rule(s) in the member countries. Additionally, compliance with the EU rules, measured with the EDP scrutiny, has likewise revealed relatively benevolent effects on all fiscal variables both individually and at the consolidated level. Contrariwise, countries with weaker domestic rules and restricted compliance with the supranational ones show the absence of significant effects on their fiscal stances. This outcome, nevertheless, might be compensated when in a sustainable fiscal union as the MS with arguably superior fiscal systems offset the potentially poorer budgetary performances of those with feebler fiscal rules.

Although these moderately optimistic results come from isolated factors, it was interesting to find that in the cases where the FRI and the EDP indicator were used together (i.e. the interaction term), no positive effects materialised, hence highlighting the limits of the EU fiscal setting. This possibly stems from major domestic policy changes that might trigger

the FRI increase while being under the EDP surveillance, which initially worsens the budgetary performance. Additionally, the majority of MS often chooses compliance with the EU rules over the possibly tighter requirements implied by a strict reading of domestic rules (Deroose et al. 2018). On the other hand, and as far as the effects of the EMU membership on the compliance with the supranational criteria are concerned, the analysis reveals that the said indicator seems to have a positive effect on the budgetary variables prior to the Euro adoption, but not thereafter. This finding is in line with the earlier empirical evidence in the literature.

Other limitations persist as the piloted assessment has not accounted for the synchronisation of business cycles, inflation or specific political developments that influence public finances of the MS. It would be henceforth motivating to accommodate these in the future research. Moreover, it is difficult to distinguish if the positive effects on the fiscal variables have been solely the Pact's merit or has this been due to the positive economic circumstances that transpired in the years after the two crises. With these boundaries in place, determining whether the SGP has delivered so far remains challenging. Nonetheless, the revamped Pact can make the EFU fairly sustainable and any further step towards a deeper EMU could commence with the simplification of the current rules. By streamlining the EU fiscal framework, the national fiscal systems may consequently attain more clarity and become easier to implement.

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#### **ENDNOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> Monetary-fiscal dichotomy refers to the existence and the near independence of the central bank (monetary) and the government (fiscal) in a polity (see Bonam and Lukkezen 2019). In the EU context, there is no European government and thus, one common monetary policy is constantly being coordinated with 19 domestic fiscal policies.
- <sup>2</sup> Thirion's (2017) classification of different building blocks of a fiscal union entail: rules and coordination, (sharing sovereignty), crisis management mechanisms, banking union with common deposit insurance and/or fiscal backstop, fiscal insurance (unemployment insurance, rainy-day funds etc.) and joint debt issuance.

- <sup>3</sup> The Fiscal compact is a part of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union (TSCG). It is an intergovernmental agreement, not the EU law. Out of the 25 Contracting Parties to the TSCG, the Eurozone countries plus Bulgaria, Denmark and Romania are formally bound by the Fiscal Compact (European Commission 2019c).
- <sup>4</sup> ERM II is one of the five criteria a MS needs to fulfil in order to join the EMU. It requires that the MS ties its national currency to Euro and proves stability for minimum two years while maintaining the other criteria stable. The other criteria include having government budget deficit under three per cent of GDP, government public debt under 60 per cent of GDP, inflation under 1.5 per cent in relation to the HICP inflation rates in the 3 EU member states with the lowest HICP inflation, and long-term interest rates under two per cent.
- <sup>5</sup> The directive also defines the set-up of systems of budgetary accounting and statistical reporting, rules and procedures for forecasting of budgetary planning, procedural rules underpinning the budget process at all stages, mechanisms and rules that regulate fiscal relationships between public authorities across sub-sectors of general government (EUR-Lex 2011).
- <sup>6</sup> Only estimates from the model one are discussed in the text. Model two is displayed to provide evidence on the statistical insignificance of the lagged output gap variable. Furthermore, as the effects of FRI on the fiscal stance of the MS are being examined, the lagged FRI is always included in the model (significant or not) for better comparability.
- <sup>7</sup> The EDP stretches on average over two years as the MS have a relatively slower reaction in correcting the imbalances, thus possibly failing to show positive results in t-1 and t-2.
- <sup>8</sup> A business cycle is synchronous when the cyclical component of two countries moves in the same direction at the same time, or when the two output gap values are equal (Gächter, Ried and Ritzberger-Grünwald 2012).
- <sup>9</sup> In the country-specific analysis the UK has been excluded from the selection due to Brexit as opposed to the analysis performed at the aggregate level.

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#### **APPENDIX 1: VARIABLE DESCRIPTION**

Variable	Explanation
Cyclically adjusted primary balance (CAPB)	Cyclically adjusted net lending or net borrowing of the general government expressed as a percentage of potential GDP.
Primary balance	Net lending or net borrowing of the general government, excluding the accumulated interest, expressed as a percentage of GDP.
Fiscal deficit	The difference between total government revenues and total government expenditures, expressed as a percentage of GDP.
Total expenditures	Total general government expenditure is the sum of: intermediate consumption, gross capital formation, compensation of employees payable, other taxes on production payable, subsidies payable, property income payable, current taxes on income and wealth payable, social benefits other than social transfers in kind payable, social transfers in kind related to expenditure on products supplied to households via market producers payable, other current transfers payable, adjustment for the change in the net equity of households on pension funds reserves, capital transfers payable and acquisitions of non-produced non-financial assets. Expressed as percentage of GDP.
Public debt	The total gross debt at nominal value outstanding at the end of the year of the sector of general government, with the exception of those liabilities the corresponding financial assets of which are held by the sector of general government; expressed as a percentage of GDP.
Output gap	The gap between actual and potential GDP, expressed as a percentage of potential GDP.

Source: AMECO

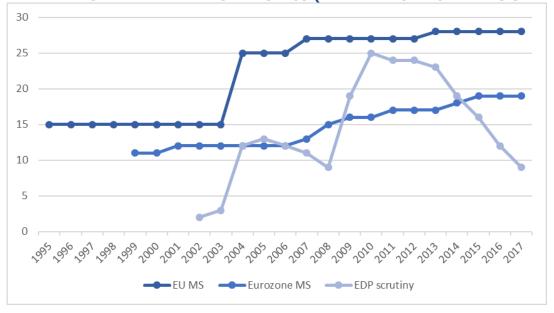
#### **APPENDIX 2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS IN RELATION TO TABLE 3**

	FRI	САРВ	РВ	FD	EXPTOT	PD	GDPGAP
Mean	0.205567	-2.4785	-0.0623	-2.6816	44.75150	56.30596	-0.3920
Median	0.056364	-2.3207	0.085024	-2.6081	44.67560	52.27270	-0.2294
Maximum	3.404152	6.604800	9.569870	6.855226	65.04150	180.8328	13.86441
Minimum	-0.9494	-29.8427	-29.1939	-32.0246	26.27230	3.663600	-15.9011
Std. Dev.	1.016582	3.241703	3.288394	3.481591	6.585120	32.69938	3.301018
Skewness	0.685398	-1.2807	-1.4617	-1.2809	0.098772	0.828948	-0.5659
Kurtosis	2.905300	11.32603	13.19034	11.19213	2.541713	3.946586	6.429239
Jarque-Bera	48.61723	1953.999	2894.019	1897.098	6.413037	93.84962	335.7940
Probability	0.000000	0.000000	0.000000	0.000000	0.040497	0.000000	0.000000
Sum	127.0407	-1531.7360	-38.4725	-1657.2190	27656.43	34797.08	-242.2833
Sum Sq. Dev.	637.6318	6483.829	6671.953	7478.949	26755.47	659727.0	6723.274
Observ.	618	618	618	618	618	618	618

**APPENDIX 3: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS IN RELATION TO TABLE 4** 

	Group A				Group B			
	САРВ	FRI	GDPGAP	PD	CAPB	FRI	GDPGAP	PD
Mean	-1.953227	0.667541 9	-0.569718	59.57123	-4.438872	-0.404339	-1.067135	75.87370 5
Median	-1.5402	0.444586	-0.508324	51.4014	-4.2349	-0.948171	0.052168 1	73.581
Maximu m	2.3319	3.404152	8.414710 5	132.0413	6.2675	1.20611	6.968240 2	180.8328
Minimum	-13.1307	-0.949364	-10.93071	13.031	-14.9492	-0.948171	-15.90114	21.8031
Std. Dev.	2.4321127	1.227229 7	3.026521 8	37.11895	3.622604 2	0.735026 8	4.669729 8	41.20787 6
Skewnes s	-1.326759	0.944204 5	-0.398336	0.508802	0.006927 0	1.089104 8	-1.169880	0.996106 5
Kurtosis	6.8511832	3.037878 6	4.675247 4	1.984463	4.055972 0	2.675862 9	4.742693 1	3.629154 2
Jarque- Bera	81.111510	13.22956 6	12.76089 0	7.664511 8	3.764032 5	16.36761	28.72617 7	14.73102 2
Probabilit y	0	0.001340 4	0.001694 4	0.021660 7	0.152282 8	0.000279 1	5.78E-07	0.000632 7
Sum	-173.8372	59.41122 5	-50.70491	5301.839 9	-359.5486	-32.75149	-86.43796	6145.770 1
Sum Sq. Dev.	520.53516	132.5361 5	806.0654 2	121247.8 8	1049.860 9	43.22115 1	1744.510 1	135847.1 2
Observ.	89	89	89	89	81	81	81	81

#### **APPENDIX 4: DUMMY VARIABLE STATISTICS (IN RELATION TO TABLES 3 AND 4)**



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Research Article

# The Progressive Gendering of the European Union's Economic Governance Architecture

Laura Gomez Urquijo

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## **Abstract**

This study shows the correlation between the European integration process and the progress of gender equality objectives. In particular, it focuses on the effectiveness of economic governance tools to enhance coordination between national policies towards gender equality. The research question pertains to whether the new architecture of economic governance aims to consolidate the market model or correct gender imbalances. This aspect leads us to explore the diverse tools of national monitoring displayed in the recently reinforced governance, particularly the fiscal discipline policy as a conditioning framework, the European Semester as the current significant instrument for coordinating national policies, and the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and its Social Scoreboard annex. The analysis confirms that the potential of governance instruments to enhance gender equality is underused. Meanwhile, these tools set out a policy focused on consolidating the market model of competitiveness and fiscal discipline, rather than tackling gender inequalities.

## Keywords

Gender; EU; Governance; Social policy

From a global perspective, European Union (EU) integration presents the best record as a region in gender indicators related to human development (United Nations 2018) and sustainable development goals (United Nations 2019). Despite this first overview, multiple differences persist between men and women regarding economic independence, equal pay for equal work or participation in decision-making processes(Schmidt and Ständer 2019; European Commission 2019b, 2018a; Eurobarometer 2017). The Gender Equality Index (European Institute for Gender Equality 2017) highlights a slow rhythm of advance in the last decade and even backward movements in certain countries, which, at the same time, provides evidence of significant divergence within the EU. This fact leads to a question about correlation between the European integration process and progress of objectives regarding gender. Kronsell (2005) expressed that the European integration process both affirms and challenges the existing gender relations. Gender equality is deemed a founding aspect of the EU, as reflected in Article 8 of the Treaty of Functioning of the EU and Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The EU commitment to principles of gender equality has been progressively translated into strong contributions to the legal framework, particularly through the action of the European Court of Justice and the provision of directives. These legislative advances connect with the process of economic integration as gendering social policies is primarily focused on fostering the rights of working women in the European Single Market (Egan 1998). Moreover, European gender mainstreaming has attained other issues, thus responding to the idea that joint action taken in various policies is the only means to address gender inequality (European Commission 2015a; Cenzig, Schratzenstaller, Franceschelli and González 2019: 3), Despite its informal and soft character, gender mainstreaming has exerted a transformative impact on the EU gender policy. Furthermore, it has produced significant changes in gender equality policy compared with other EU policies (Jacquot 2015).

However, the subsidiarity of social policies has always strongly marked this process because the main competence on gender equality remains at the national level. Consequently, divergences among EU countries persist. To address this difficulty, we add the traditional submission of social objectives to economic ones. The Lisbon Summit (European Commission 2000) and the Social Agenda (European Commission 2005) opened a new stage with the aim of modernising the social protection systems. Similarly, the introduction of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) set out new possibilities for promoting gender equality. Although the OMC aimed to combine national action plans and the initiatives of the Commission to promote cooperation (O'Connor 2005), progress in terms of gender equality coordination remains limited (Beveridge and Velluti 2008). This result is coherent with the failure of this system to reconcile national diversity with common European objectives (Zeitlin, Pochet and Magnusson 2005). These deficiencies remained even with the economic crisis boosts in 2008 and the display of a new architecture of multilevel relation and socioeconomic coordination (Bekker and Klosse 2013).

Focusing on analysing the new system of governance and the period of 2008–2019, and following Bakker's (1994) idea of the failure to acknowledge the gender consequences of macroeconomic policies, Klatzer (2013) concluded that EU macroeconomic policies are eroding gender equality and women empowerment. In particular, Klatzer (2013) emphasised how the new economic governance contributes to forming power structures that reinforce patriarchal hierarchies. Furthermore, O'Dwyer (2019) highlighted the overwhelming male dominance of expert committees and decision-making positions that define EU economic governance. She noted the manner in which the particularly gendered idea of expertise has served to legitimise the EU economic governance since the boost of the financial crisis. Likewise, Elomäki (2015) has shown how the focus on growth increased the pressures to reframe EU gender policy. According to Elomäki (2015), the analysis requested by the European Commission to its gender experts (Smith and Bettio 2008) outlined a new discourse

on gender equality as a factor for economic success (for example through increases in female participation in the labour market and subsequent contribution to GDP and women's inclusion in the fiscal system). From another angle, Walby (2018) added an interesting contribution on how increasing the EU power as a response to the crisis changes the subsidiarity boundaries and impacts gender. If this change reduces democratic capacity, then it diminishes the prospects for narrowing the gender gap.

Within this framework, this article's analysis examines whether the new economic governance instruments are 'gendered' or merely recommendations referring to gender within the broad growth model promoted. This study builds on the approach of Dawson (2018: 193) on questioning the nature of EU social intervention. The article poses a substantial issue at the core of the new governance: should EU social policy aim to condition the market or facilitate market integration? Other researchers stressed the idea of governance instruments that are intended to consolidate and reinforce the market model (Copeland and Daly 2018). In the same manner, we consider Elomäki's (2015) reasoning on a new market-oriented discourse that aims to understand gender equality as a productive investment rather than a worthwhile social objective that is potentially expensive. In this regard, the following research question is posed: are the new economic governance instruments 'market oriented' or 'market correcting' in terms of gender equality? To answer this, diverse tools of national monitoring displayed in the recently reinforced governance will be explored. First, the fiscal discipline policy as a conditioning framework will be addressed. Second, the European Semester as the current significant instrument for coordinating national policies will be examined. Lastly, a gender analysis will be conducted regarding the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) and its annex Social Scoreboard.

From a methodological point of view, the article draws on relevant literature and used legislative and content analysis techniques to examine the EU's official position on gender in its governance instruments. Similarly, the study analysed the entire Council Recommendations to national governments under the new EU governance structure to assess the weight and nature of gender-related indications. Moreover, the study considered statistical data to verify and contextualise the correlation of such tools with the impact of gender equality.

## FISCAL DISCIPLINE AS A CONDITIONING FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

As a reaction to the crisis, the insertion of social policy coordination through the OMC into the Europe 2020 Strategy consolidated its subordination to macroeconomic objectives (Vanhercke 2013; Pochet and Degryse 2012, Degryse et. al. 2013), As reported by the European Economic and Social Committee (2013), the gender dimension was not specifically addressed in any of the Europe 2020 objectives or flagship initiatives (European Commission 2010). Moreover, the practice of the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance and the so-called Two-Pack and Six-Pack regulations and public expense rules denoted austerity measures that weakened the mechanisms for combating inequality (Hemerijck, Dräbing, Vis, Nelson, et al. 2013; Dhéret and Zuleeg 2010; Cotarelli 2012; Caritas 2015; Armstrong 2013; Alesina and Ardagna 2009). Even the International Monetary Fund (Blanchard 2012) and the European Commission (2013a), which had given their support for rigorous fiscal discipline, admitted with that consolidation measures were negatively affecting the ability of social systems to provide effective and appropriate policies. In particular such measures affected the poorest population segments who suffered the majority of consequences of social expenditure cuts. Notably, in the recent assessment of the 2020 Strategy, the European Commission (2019b: 193) admitted that an excessive focus was directed toward the cost-effectiveness of social protection on fiscal

consolidation as opposed to the role of social services as safety nets and their long-term positive economic returns. The statistical record provides evidence that, during the crisis, women were clearly a vulnerable group (McCracken, Jessoula, Lyberaki, Bartlett et al. 2013; European Commission 2018a).

In the same way, a consensus exists in the academic literature on how European fiscal discipline policies are particularly detrimental for women. For instance, Klatzer (2013) highlights how the impact of reducing public services on women is common to EU and other adjustment programmes. The reduction of national public services to accomplish fiscal discipline shifts the focus of care work to unpaid feminine work because of the gendered division of roles in the European society. Similarly, Walby (2018) stated that the fiscal is gendered because it concerns public expenditure on care services that influence the gender division of labour. The crisis has been gendered as fiscal consolidation has increased gender inequality. On the side of social organisations, diverse analysis (Pavanelli 2018; Gender and Development Network 2018; Donald and Lusiani 2017) have demonstrated that a reduction of public expenditure has economic, political and human rights costs, which are disproportionately shouldered by women. This was particularly highlighted by a report provided at the beginning of the crisis by the Women's Lobby (2012). This analysis evaluates the main effects of the crisis on women and explores the causes of its negative impacts in the following areas: labour market, social services and social benefits, and funding for the promotion of women's rights. Cuts in public sector have also a drastic effect on the drop in the female employment rate (on average, approximately 70 per cent of public sector workers in the EU). As a result, the narrowing difference in gender gap during the crisis was due to the deterioration of employment, not to the improvement of women. In terms of social services, cutbacks in public care and health have led to gendered roles in traditional care, for example the reduction of childcare benefits, parental leave and other family benefits reduced income for women with care responsibilities. Furthermore, cuts in benefits and transfers especially affected women's income because they use public services more than men. Finally, in terms of funding for women's rights and gender equality, an elimination or reduction of gender equality institutions and a restriction of funding for social organisations defending women's rights were observed. Accordingly, social organisations have strongly demanded the reinforcement of gender equality dimension in EU budgeting to protect vital services for women from cuts, to strengthen democratic processes or to ensure no cuts in public funding for women's organisations (Women's Lobby 2012).

Certainly, a high potentiality exists for equality through the institutionalisation of gender balance in fiscal decisions. In light of this evidence, this study agrees with Bruff and Wöhl (2016: 88-89) that the result of applying the fiscal framework is a highly masculinised governance, which is focused on competitiveness and growth, and displaces the effects of the crisis on households. In this vein, Karamessini and Rubery (2014) gathered diverse contributions supporting the placement of gender equality at the centre of any progressive plan for excluding the crisis. Although EU institutions have examined these questions (European Parliament 2015), little real progress has occurred considering the academic analysis of the importance of gendering budget (O'Hagan and Klatzer 2018; Cenzig, Schratzenstaller, Franceschelli and González 2019). Post-crisis fiscal discipline situates women's interests as part of the social policy only rather than deeply entwined with economic policy, as argued by Cavaghan and O'Dwyer (2018: 103).

## ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY

In examining the new economic governance architecture, we highlight the importance of the European Semester procedure launched by EU Regulation 1176/2011 as a key element in the progressive rebalancing of social and economic objectives (Bekker 2014: 6). Its initial function, as a means to monitor the objectives of economic governance, was to confirm the subordination of social cohesion to fiscal aims (Costamagna 2013). Some researchers argue the progressive incorporation of an increasing number of social references in the various phases of its procedure to defend the gradual 'socialisation' of this instrument (Zeitlin and Vanhercke 2018). However, Copeland and Daly (2018) noted the need to explore the content and sense of such social references to assess true socialisation. Furthermore, Dawson (2018: 192) reported that when social actors fight for a more socially conscious Semester, they do so in an institutional structure that tends to reduce social policy to its fiscal impact, thus inducing a 'displacement' of social policy.

Having these perspectives in mind, we assess the weight of gender equality in the European Semester procedure. First, we observe the Annual Growth Surveys (AGS) as the basis for endorsing annual EU and national level priorities by the European Commission and the European Council. Throughout the analysis of AGS from 2011 to 2019, as shown in Table 1, very few references to gender equality are identified. According to the facts described in the previous section, we include references that are clearly connected to gender equality, although this aspect is not expressly mentioned. Such is the case of the provision of affordable childcare as it directly influences women participation in the labour market. We can report an intensification and added clarity in the explicit use of gender equality terms in the priorities of the three most recent European Semesters, which show a promising tendency.

Table 1. Annual Growth Surveys priorities connected to gender equality

Year	EUROPEAN SEMESTER PRIORITIES — AGS
2011	childcare facilities to promote the participation of second earners in
	the work force (no specific reference to women)
2012	equalising the pensionable age between men and women
2013	<ul> <li>childcare facilities to promote the participation of second earners in</li> </ul>
	the work force (no specific reference to women)
2014	addressing the impact of gender pay and activity gaps on women's
	pension
	affordable care services to increase the participation of women in the
	labour market
2015	promotion of childcare facilities (no specific reference to women)
2016	addressing gender pay gap
	improving the work–life balance (no specific reference to women)
	systems free of disincentives for second earners
2017	care services and affordable childcare facilities decreasing care
	obligations frequently affecting women
2018	promoting work–life balance for gender equality
	ensuring access to quality childcare and early education
	taxation systems that do not penalise second earners
	providing suitable family leave and flexible working arrangements

Year	EUROPEAN SEMESTER PRIORITIES — AGS								
2019	<ul> <li>formulating tax and policy incentives that aim to broaden the</li> </ul>								
	participation of women in the labour market								
	<ul> <li>increased access to high-quality care services to ensure increased</li> </ul>								
	opportunities for women								

Source: Elaborated by the author upon European Commission (2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013b, 2014, 2015b, 2016, 2017a, 2018b, 2019c)

Given the general characteristics of these priorities, the manner in which they are concretised in the Country Specific Recommendations (CSR) provided to national governments is worthy of assessment. Following Bekker's approach (2014: 8), all CSRs given from 2011 to 2019 have been carefully analysed to identify explicit references to women or to policies directly connected with gender equality. Over 1,000 recommendations given during this period to diverse member states were examined, with most of them containing indications for macroeconomic balance and labour market implementation. However, social aspects have little weight as per the already mentioned subsidiarity and prominence of economic objectives. For this analysis, general recommendations referred to employment for vulnerable groups (mainly directed to migrants and people at risk of poverty) were not considered. The search was restricted to those recommendations that expressly mention women or to those that are intrinsically connected to gender equality. In this sense, citations to 'second earners' and 'family care' as the feminisation of both roles were noted. Consequently, CSRs in this domain were systematised into the following categories:

- Equality in the labour market: the general recommendations that refer to increasing the labour market participation of women, reducing the gender pay gap, and removing obstacles for equality.
- Affordable childcare: CSRs that encourage women to participate in the labour market through affordable quality childcare facilities. Few recent mentions to long-term care are included in this section as they respond to the female role of family carers.
- Pensions: recommendations regarding the harmonisation of the statutory retirement age between men and women and equitable pensions.
- Second earners: Recommendations in this category enhance participation in the labour market by reducing fiscal disincentives for second-income earners.
- Flexible work: CSRs about women's participation, particularly women wishing to re-enter the labour market, by promoting flexible working arrangements. The only recommendation reported on the flexible use of paternal leave (given to Estonia in 2017) is included in this section.

As per this classification, Table 2 summarises the area of the policy recommendation by country and year of reception.

Table 2. CSRs linked to gender equality received by country: European Semester year of reception

	Equality in the labour market	Affordable childcare	Equality in pension	Second- income earners	Flexible working
Austria	2011 2012 2013 2015	2012 2013 2014 2015	2011 2012 2013 2014	2012	
	2018	2018 2019	2015		
Bulgaria			2014		
Croatia			2014		

	Equality in the labour market	Affordable childcare	Equality in pension	Second- income earners	Flexible working
Czech Republic	2015 2016 2018	2011 2015 2019			2011
Estonia	2015 2016 2017 2018 2019	2015			2017
Germany				2013	
Hungary		2011 2013		2011	
Ireland	2016	2015 2016 2017 2018			
Italy		2012 2013		2012 2013 2014	
Malta		2013			2013
Malta					2014
Netherlands					
Poland	2017	2011 2014			
Romania			2013 2016	2017	
Slovakia		2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018			
Spain		2016 2017 2018			
United Kingdom		2015 2016			

Source: Elaborated by the author upon European Commission (2020)

Despite the importance of including CSRs with reference to gender equality, we highlight their small weight in relation to EU priorities (below six per cent of the total), with the majority of CSRs dedicated to fiscal discipline, labour market and competitiveness. This number of recommendations is directed to only 16 countries out of 28 EU members. However, such data do not indicate that the performance of other countries in these areas is good. A proof of this claim is the record of 'bad performers' in the gender pay gap given by the Social Protection Committee (European Commission 2018c), which indicates that the distribution of CSRs is not fully coherent with national scenarios. The analysis also provides evidence of the most repeated recommendation (33 times) in terms of years and countries: the requirement for implementing affordable childcare (11 countries out of 17 receive this recommendation). This requirement is not only connected to women's participation in the labour market but also to the ageing society and the need to support new births. It is followed by general recommendations (15) given to national governments to increase equality in the labour market. In this case, the recommendations are concentrated in only five countries. The same is true for the category 'second earners'. Only four countries received recommendations in other categories.

Such analysis should be contrasted from the perspective introduced by Dawson (2018), which considers not only the number of CSRs regarding social aspects (in this case, connected with gender) but also the 'nature' of such interventions. In this vein, whether they are conditioning the market or, on the contrary, aiming to facilitate market competitiveness should be considered. In this regard, this study builds on the approach of Copeland and Daly (2018) when classifying CSRs as 'market correcting' (i.e. CSRs consider the issue as a problem that requires increased state engagement despite being involved with market-distorting elements), 'market making' (i.e. reducing barriers to market competition or regulating the labour market) or 'mixed' (i.e. enhancing labour market participation and recommending services or reorganisation for this purpose at the same time). According to this

classification, Copeland and Daly established as typical cases of 'mixed' CSRs those that refer, precisely, to women's access to the labour market. In these recommendations, we identify an element of social protection, but this is secured through labour market participation. They are classified as 'mixed' because they designate a supportive role to the state in terms of enabling women to gain access to the labour market.

We can refine our previous categorisation of CSRs with potential gender impacts as per the Copeland and Daly (2018) classification. As such, 'mixed' are considered those CSRs that pertain to equality in the labour market, affordable childcare, second-income earners and flexible work. Only such recommendations that pertain to equality in pensions could be considered 'market correcting'. They account for 11 per cent of the total CSRs presented in Tables 1 and 2 and represent 0.01 per cent of the total CSRs obtained within the observed period. Such analysis is coherent with Dawson's (2018) contribution on the 'growth-friendly' reading of social policy that can be observed in CSRs. This also coincides with Elomäki's (2015) argument on the discourse of market-oriented gender equality. The prominence of market and its flexibility and competitiveness in most CSRs in relation to women provide evidence of this rationale. O'Dwyer (2018) argued that women are considered a buffer workforce that can enter the market with overall flexibility. Moreover, other questions related to the singularities and requirements of women, such as pay gap, discrimination at work, or participation in decision making, are minimised or silenced. We agree with the concept of 'strategic silences' used by O'Dwyer (2018), and previously by Bakker (1994), to emphasise those aspects. Such omissions represent the lack of real engagement of the European Semester with gender impact and confirm the gender-blind model of economic governance.

This confirms that, as argued by the Economic and Social Committee (2013), the gender dimension should be systematically incorporated in the European Semester and subsequent National Reform Plans (NRPs). However, we insist on the requirement for an incorporation not directed to legitimise the economic model, hiding the feminist criticism on EU economic policy (Elomäki 2015). Therefore, underlining the effectiveness of the process of giving recommendations and supervision itself is necessary. CSRs that call on member states to adjust their NRP should consider the principle of gender equality and this should be followed through to ensure that such recommendations are practiced. The fact that one third of countries receive four times the same recommendations provide an insight into the difficulties of enforcing national governments to change their policy. Similarly, the follow-up of the observance of CSRs by national governments presents important limitations. Although recommendations regarding fiscal policy contain numbered objectives, those referenced to gender equality (and social aspects as a whole) are general exhortations to national governments without precise targets (Aldici and Gros 2014: 18). This difference provides national governments with broad discretion in implementing the suggested measures (Bekker and Klose 2013). The Joint Employment Reports, along with the Annual Growth Surveys of the European Semesters, provide an excessively general evaluation of the implementation of CSRs by country, for example 'Portugal announced that it will put in place in 2019 a quarantee of early childhood education' (European Commission 2017b). No quantification of the progress is carried out except for those referring to the gender pay gap. On the one hand, no control or distinction regarding the time of compliance is specified. On the other hand, most countries receiving CSRs are not recognised as having developed any changes in the manner required (European Commission 2018a, 2018c). We agree with Zeitlin (2014: 65) on the need of an integrated perspective of national reforms and in-depth reviews that incorporate social impact assessment. In fact, the European Semester provides the European Commission with strong legal capabilities in terms of surveillance and coercion to lead changes toward gender equality in a more binding manner than the former OMC (Costamagna 2013: 22).

However, to date, this procedure is under-used in the pursuit of social objectives as widely demanded by social organisations, including Women's Lobby (European Semester Alliance 2015). Recently, the European Commission (2019b) seems to echo these demands. The 2020 Strategy evaluation signals that the European Semester should promote increased coherence between social and economic priorities to save the risk of social recommendations being undermined by macroeconomic priorities. Translating these aspirations into the feminist view, the European Semester should both include gender recommendations in relation to women's participation in the labour market and reflect the singularities, suffering, and needs of women (O'Dwyer 2018).

# CONTRIBUTION OF THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS AND SOCIAL SCOREBOARD TO THE ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRESS IN GENDER EQUALITY

Given the abovementioned limitations of the European Semester, this section examines the potential contribution to gender equality of the last elements integrated into the economic governance architecture. These instruments are contextualised into the reflection on the social dimension of the economic and monetary union after the impact of austerity in citizen disaffection (Juncker 2014; European Commission 2017c). The European Pillar of Social Rights has emerged as a response to lead the EU toward a 'social triple A' and to avoid social fragmentation and social dumping in Europe (European Commission 2017d). The principles of EPSR, particularly regarding gender equality, were present in the acquis of the Union. However, with this declaration, they are reaffirmed and connected to other international recognitions and aims notably with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The EPSR has a remarkable line-up of gender-related questions. Chapter I is dedicated to equal opportunities and access to the labour market, including Principle 2, which is devoted to gender equality. The principle settles that the equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas. Both reserve the right to equal pay for work of equal value. Chapter II contains specific mentions of women in terms of fair working conditions. In particular, Principle 6 proposes that workers have the right to fair wages that provide for a decent standard of living. In the same light, Principle 9 focuses on work-life balance and recognises that parents and people with caring responsibilities have the right to suitable leave, flexible working arrangements, and access to care services. Moreover, Principle 6 argues that women and men should have equal access to special leaves to fulfil their caring responsibilities and be encouraged to use such leaves in a balanced manner. Chapter III on equality is significant for social protection and inclusion because of the perceived impact of the austerity and cutbacks in social protection on women. Within this chapter, we highlight the most transcendent principles for women as per the previously indicated social deficits. Thus, we identify Principle 15 on old-age income and pensions that specifies that women and men shall have equal opportunities to acquire pension rights. Equally, Principle 11 on childcare and support to children provides that children have the right to affordable early childhood education and care of good quality.

It is noteworthy that the 'Social Scoreboard' accompanies the EPSR to monitor its implementation in EU countries. In this manner, the EPSR feeds into the European Semester, thus completing the new governance structure. This set of indicators emerges to measure the social and employment performance of member states regarding the 20 EPSR principles and rights in an objective manner that is understandable to citizens. Furthermore, it aims to assess the social progress of the EU and enables comparison and analysis for decision-making (European Commission 2017e). For this tool to be effective, defining the constructs to be measured and how they are monitored is essential. Concretely, the Scoreboard is composed of 14

headline indicators and 21 secondary indicators classified in 12 areas to measure the trends and performances of European social progress. These expanded indicators were collected in an online tool (European Commission 2019e), which remains open to study and comparison to facilitate policy recommendations. Sabato and Corti (2018) criticised the lack of the relationship between the 35 Scoreboard indicators and 20 EPSR rights and argued that certain principles and rights are not monitored (i.e. Principles 7, 8 and 12). Among principles selected as primarily linked to gender equality, we observed the absence of full coherence, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Principles of EPSR related to gender equality and its correspondence with Social Scoreboard indicators

EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS PRINCIPLES	SOCIAL SCOREBOARD INDICATORS
Principle 2: Gender equality at work	Gender employment gap (percentage points) Gender gap in part-time employment (percentage points)
Principle 6: Equal wages	Gender pay gap in unadjusted form (% of average gross hourly earnings by men)
Principle 9: Work–life balance	
Principle 11: Equal pensions	
Principle 15: Affordable childcare	Children aged less than 3 years in formal childcare %

Source: Elaborated by the author upon European Commission (2017d, 2019d)

All areas monitored, except areas 3 (Inequality and upward mobility) and 5 (Youth), include at least one indicator with gender disaggregation. Several areas, such as the impact of social transfers except for pensions on poverty reduction, are essential to gendered policy planning. However, the study agrees with the European Commission (2019b: 193) in terms of defining targets and indicators in the post-2020 Strategy and that a better disaggregation by sex and increased attention to the evolution of indicators would be desirable.

Recognising the importance of these principles and monitoring, the EPSR remains a mere declaration of rights. Therefore, we question its potential to influence the EU macroeconomic policies toward gender equality. The Communication establishing the Pillar confirms that its observance is a joint responsibility as most of the instruments necessary for compliance with its principles are in the hands of the national, regional and local authorities, as well as of social partners. In particular, the EU and the European Commission contribute to the development of recognised rights by establishing 'the framework' and considering national circumstances. Previously, researchers expressly stated how member states or social partners display primary or exclusive competences in certain matters intrinsic to the Pillar, such as social protection, education, health care or labour law in terms of operating the principle of subsidiarity. Because of this multilevel governance structure, the European Commission (2017d: 7) assumed that, on many occasions, 'the main problem is not the recognition of rights but rather the effective application'.

In the same vein, Cavaghan and O'Dwyer (2018: 104-105) stressed the lack of binding power. In fact, the rights of the Pillar are considered objectives without a legal standing, and governments and markets pay excess attention to the macroeconomic imbalance indicator than to the Social Scoreboard. In this manner, the EU is addressing social goals through aspirational objectives without legal enforcement despite being named 'rights'. Cavaghan and O'Dwyer (2018) underlined how such an imbalance reflects a broader asymmetry within European Integration as it favours market liberalisation over market correction and social regulation.

#### CONCLUSIONS

This study asked whether new economic governance instruments are 'market oriented' or 'market correcting' in relation to gender equality. The analysis confirms the current lack of engagement of economic governance with in-depth transformation toward gender equality. The governance instruments deployed set out a gender policy focused on consolidating the market model of competitiveness and fiscal discipline, rather than tackling gender inequalities. Regarding the fiscal framework, the new architecture has repeated the mistake of subordinating gender equality to economic aims and concretely to fiscal balance requirements, which has led to strong negative impacts. Similarly, it was observed that the potential of the European Semester to enhance multilevel coordination toward gender equality has been underused to date. The correspondence of gender-related recommendations given to national governments is not fully coherent with national situation in terms of gender equality. Moreover, no clear or quantified objectives are given and monitored. What is even more significant is the absolute predominance of recommendations on women's participation in the labour market, which coincides with the market focus on promoting flexibility and competitiveness while omitting other inequalities and demands of women. Finally, the European Pillar of Social Rights confirms the same tendency, as a mere declaration of rights without a binding effect. Its Social Scoreboard annex is limited to providing statistical records without full integration into the cycle of the European Semester to guide the definition of policies.

The persistence of gender inequality in the EU requires the initiative that the traditional commitment of gendering European policies should be decisively extended to economic governance. Moreover, room for improvement exists for the genderfocused implementation of these instruments. A few examples of proposals in this vein are: the gendering of the EU fiscal decisions and budget, full integration of gender indicators of the Social Scoreboard into the cycle of the European Semester to quide the definition of policies, introduction of market-correcting CSRs and incorporation of binding instruments into gender objectives in the case of noncompliance of national governments. Nevertheless, these proposals, along with many others launched by diverse social organisations and researchers, will be insufficient when used to consolidate or even legitimise the current economic framework. Modifying this architecture requires not only increasing the number of mentions and recommendations in relation to women in EU instruments and policy papers but changing the type of those mentions and recommendations. A feminist view of the EU economic governance requires displacing the market-first approach and placing gender justice at its centre. The negative effect of the current framework on women vulnerability during the previous financial crisis can stimulate the avoidance of making the same mistake. Evidently, women are, once more, suffering from the majority of the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

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Commentary

Ahead of the 55th Anniversary of UACES: Where is the Academic Interest in the Association?

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### **Abstract**

UACES is an influential association of European Studies. It is an intellectual platform that allows the co-creating of Europe and defining of the future of European Studies. Nevertheless, it has received surprisingly little scholarly attention as an object of study. Developments in 2020 have proven the dynamism and inclusiveness of UACES and therefore that the association deserves more in-depth attention in its own right.

## Keywords

UACES; European Studies; Self-reflexivity

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The unprecedented implications of COVID-19 sparked my interest in taking a more comprehensive look at the last months and what those tell us about the present and future of European Studies and UACES specifically. A quick search via major academic databases shows a disappointing picture. UACES is not a subject of study. The association is seldomly mentioned in scholarly reflections.

Some discussions revolving around UACES occurred on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the association, which was celebrated in 2017. This commentary is presented with a clear stance that the four interviews organised on this occasion in 2017 offer rather limited insight into the role of this association. Its role in outlining directions of European Studies deserves a more elaborate approach.

On a daily basis, researchers of European Studies seem to be quite preoccupied with a study of phenomena 'out there' that are evolving in the policy-making process. They interview bureaucrats and targeted societal groups, conduct fieldwork and so on. However, there is too little self-reflexivity across the pages of the Journal of Contemporary European Research and other publishing platforms that are widely read among students and scholars of European Studies.

2020 has been unprecedented and thought-provoking year. The subsequent sections elaborate on three topics that arguably might shape the context of the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UACES. The first part credits UACES for keeping European Studies open to various influences. The second part elaborates on the paradox of UACES being itself an understudied topic. The third part outlines that the lack of academic study of UACES and other associations is a loss to the overall understanding of European integration and the evolution of key frameworks set in place by the European Union to promote higher education and research. Conclusions sum up the main points raised about the role researchers and UACES play in defining and framing Europe.

#### **OUTWARD-LOOKING EUROPEAN STUDIES**

In 2020, UACES has demonstrated an outstanding openness towards various intellectual currents. The starting point for this observation is the inaugural workshop of the "Diversity, Inclusion and Multidisciplinarity in European Studies" (DIMES) project convened in a pre-COVID-19, or the usual in-person setting, at the Leiden University. During the concluding months of 2020, several events with an equally welcoming character were hosted virtually, for example, the Virtual Conference 2020 and the Sustainable Futures seminars. This receptiveness to diverse topics and theoretical approaches ensures that European Studies remain dynamic and keep apace with multiple developments across the world. The composition of DIMES panels was the best example of diversity and inclusion. It was mirrored not only in the research projects presented but also in the way some of the speakers elaborated on their own higher education stages and experiences while doing research.

Furthermore, the research projects presented during the first Virtual Conference and Sustainable Futures seminars clearly demonstrate that thanks to UACES European Studies are not suffering from self-inflicted irrelevance caused by intellectual isomorphism towards the geopolitical developments and socioeconomic implications of technological leaps. Be it that Brexit coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> UACES anniversary (David, Bulmer and Haastrup 2017: 1483) or analysts of "post-normal times" in the EU-Africa relations getting their perspective published amidst the unprecedented turbulences caused by COVID-19 (Bourgeois, Mattheis and Kotsopoulos 2020), UACES does not seem to lose an appetite for complex topics and plurality of opinions. It is a great example of how to approach not only the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations,

but also the earlier mentioned and much more distant centenary (David, Bulmer and Haastrup, 2017: 1483; David, Drake and Linnemann, 2017: 1450). The value of UACES is its capacity to gather a wide spectrum of presenters and discussants.

#### **SELF-REFLEXIVITY**

What has been the most surprising observation throughout 2020 is how reluctant researchers tend to be towards studying themselves as the key agents that shape European Studies. Individuals so keen on structuring, dissecting, measuring and ordering various phenomena affecting political and socio-economic currents, policy-making, implementation of various government, non-governmental, and private initiatives have shown rather limited interest in themselves as influential shapers of what Europe and study of Europe are all about. This comment is not expressed with complete ignorance of various facets of the study of epistemic communities. However, UACES itself as an influential association that assembles a vibrant international community has received so little in-depth attention.

Members of the association regularly receive seasonal greetings, listen to the conference opening remarks, and engage in brief interviews on such memorable occasions as the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Additionally, UACES events are referred to as occasions when one or another article published in an academic journal has been discussed (Rosamond and Warleigh-Lack 2013: 552). The existence of UACES is acknowledged in periodicals receptive to European matters (Robert and Vauchez 2010: 26; Rosamond 2007: 235; Jacquot, Mérand and Rozenberg 2015: 48; Pfister 2015). The global course finder of UACES serves as one of the reference points for the project "European Studies in a Global Perspective" (Institute for European Global Studies 2021). The UACES-hosted Journal of Common Market Studies is considered as a benchmark for quality and thematic coverage among certain Chinese scholarly circles (Weber & Tarlea 2021). However, these bits and pieces form far from a coherent and complete picture of the association's activities and value.

So little interest in UACES as an object of study seems rather surprising. One of the longest-standing associations remains a comparatively novel topic for in-depth study within the framework of European Studies. UACES' quest to attract more talent from certain underrepresented domains such as law, economics and sociology (Keeler 2005: 553; Linneman *et al.* 2017: 1455; Usherwood *et al.* 2017: 1492), less studied geographical areas (David, Bulmer and Haastrup 2017: 1480; Linneman *et al.* 2017: 1458), and concerns about being too carried away by descriptive approaches towards specific events (Linneman *et al.* 2017: 1456) is an exciting source of insight into what aspirations are driving the evolution of European Studies. This is an invitation to UACES members to consider offering a more in-depth elaboration on these and other topics.

#### **EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

UACES is not the only association contributing to European Studies. Several other associations shape the thematic contours, agenda, and the overall research output that referred to as European Studies. Thus, there is a vast field of dynamics that has received rather limited attention in the form of concise references made by one or another interviewee (Drake, Shaw and Whitman 2017: 1464; Linneman *et al.* 2017: 1460). There is room for more analytical focus on UACES ahead of its 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This is not an invitation for a friendly rivalry with the Council of European Studies and its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary book of essays (Hawes 2020). There is no need to remind a community well versed in the vast inventory of quantitative and qualitative research methods that an essay or a short commentary, such as this one, are not

the sole modes of how to approach a study of a grouping of people. This commentary aims to work towards raising awareness about the underexamined role of UACES among those early-career scholars who find academia and student circles fascinating topics for research projects.

The well-structured formats in which UACES members have convened in person and are meeting during the COVID-19-shaped 'new normal' demonstrate that there are many forums fit for a study on 'where Europe is made'. It would help to fill the gap in the existing literature about the role of individual academic engagements in strengthening the European identity among younger generations (Cores-Bilbao, Méndez-García and Fonseca-Mora 2020: 16). Students are proponents of European Studies. They are active not only within the institutional confines of their respective universities. However, this is not an invitation for an exponential growth of new appraisals of an association. Looking at the issue in a much more comprehensive manner, the history of European integration and the study of the European Higher Education Area, as well as the European Research Area, would be incomplete without addressing in more extensive scholarly and analytical terms UACES and other key associations of European Studies. Universities have formed an immensely important fabric on which to build the ambitions and ideals of European integration and multilevel governance. UACES and other associations offer key complementary soft infrastructure that offers additional support to the existing core academic structures.

Europe is not made solely 'out there' in public office spaces and conference rooms that host discussions titled 'The Future of Europe' and the like. More importantly, Europe is created or co-created at the university library halls and reading rooms. Most recently, Europe is discussed in personal office spaces established at home. We continue co-creating Europe while sitting in front of a camera adjusted for the necessities of a virtual meeting, workshop, symposium, conference etc. All these episodes are equally important and deserving of more academic attention.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

This commentary is influenced by an ongoing review of academic literature on practice turn (Adler-Nissen 2016), comparative regionalism (Börzel and Risse 2019), science diplomacy (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2021), histories of science and knowledge, circulation of knowledge (Oʻstling et al. 2018) and European Neighbourhood Policy (Schumacher 2018; Olivié and Gracia 2020). Experts of these compartments of scholarly enquiry might trace some bits and pieces of this body of literature in the reasoning captured in the previous sections. UACES is a bundle of practices that shapes European Studies and the way Europe is understood. Researchers are agents who shape intellectual currents. Europe is an internal component of a campus. Europe is not some alien space somewhere beyond the university buildings. These are just some of the episodes captured in this encouragement to somewhat rediscover who, and where, puts Europe into motion and who provides meaning to European Studies.

In the context of the upcoming 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UACES, I encourage you to reflect on the association as a fascinating object of study. UACES is more than a forum that piles up one's mailbox with various promising academic opportunities. This commentary is not prepared to undermine the value of earlier chosen formats for referring to UACES gatherings, activities, and publications discussing UACES. It is presented by an optimistic member who sees great potential in improving the overall awareness among the UACES members, various parts of society, and public authorities about the role UACES plays in defining what European Studies are all about. It is an indispensable, yet so far largely neglected, element of the study of the European integration and multi-level governance captured by the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area. Perhaps an international research

project assembling institutions keen on exploring the role of UACES in greater detail would be a good way forward how to address this gap in the existing body of literature.

In the context of the unpredictable COVID-19 implications, UACES has shown resilience. It gives certainty that the association will reach 2022 in excellent shape and well-equipped to face any potential future disruptions after the celebration of its 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Remarks about Brexit (issued on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary) show that such resilience of an association is built not on purely technological capacity to adjust the practical modalities of certain meetings. It is the mindset and eagerness to keep discussions going and connections alive that ensures the continuity of European Studies and collaboration among those who find Europe an endlessly fascinating topic.

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**Book Review** 

African Europeans: An Untold History

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### **Abstract**

The history of Africans in Europe is unknown to many as it is a history that is not taught in most European schools. The book *African Europeans: An Untold History* educates the reader on this crucial missing aspect by detailing the influences and activities of Blacks in Europe and how they contributed to what Europe is today. The book helps readers to understand how the historical construction of the Negro as a beast of burden, without heritage or culture, contributed to the eradication of Black history in Europe. The author, Olivette Otele, then counters this by setting out the history of the many Black people and Black groups that did ordinary and extraordinary things in Europe. In doing so, Otele deconstructs a dominant narrative in European history that suggests that only exceptional Black people contributed and did so rarely.

### Keywords

Blacks; Europe; Culture; Exceptionalism; Negro

In her book, *African Europeans: An Untold History*, Olivette Otele sheds light on an aspect of history that is unknown to many and perhaps even unbelieved by some. Otele is one of the few historians who unveils and analyses the history of Blacks in Europe. With *African Europeans* Otele makes a timely contribution to the limited but extremely important literature that engages deeply with Black history in Europe (see Olusoga, 2017; Ugarte, 2010; Gilroy, 2008; Van Sertima, 1987; Scobie, 1972).

From the outset, this gripping book dives straight into an account of the enslavement of Africans and the construct of the Negro in a manner that is still applicable today with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests and prominent ongoing conversations around African history, slavery, racism and white supremacy. The BLM movement was founded in 2013 as a response to the acquittal of the killer of Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old Black American student (Black Lives Matter, 2021). The movement has since grown on a global scale and resonates with Black people across the globe including those in countries like South Africa that have not fully healed from apartheid, as well as in Western Europe where countries are being confronted with their colonial past (Contreras, 2020; Dendere, 2020; Hans, 2020). The book explains the construction of race which led to Black lives being undervalued and controlled by others, and the loss of their lives being normalised. For example, Otele cites the historic case of France which, in 1738, passed a law that forbade Blacks from marrying. This was followed by the formation of a special police unit for Black people whose job was to limit the number of Blacks in the country under the assumption that all Blacks were enslaved people. There are similarities here to the kind of contemporary discrimination that led to the founding of the BLM movement: the treatment of Black bodies as dispensable, crime prone, jail deserving and guilty until proven innocent (DuVernay, 2020).

One of the key contributions of *African European* is its critique of the idea of African exceptionalism in the European context. Otele writes "Africans who were valuable enough to be remembered were those who had been deemed exceptional" (2020:3).

Here Otele highlights the problematic use of exceptionalism in the small number of cases of Black Africans' role in European history is acknowledged. Following the work of Hondius (2017), the author describes the five main patterns that shaped the treatment of racial minorities in European history: (1) infantilisation, a belief that Africans and Asians were equivalent to children; (2) paternalization, a belief that Africans and Asians needed to be cared for and protected, even from themselves; (3) exoticism, a fascination with African and Asian bodies, minds and cultures; (4) bestiality, a belief that Africans and Asians were like wild animals, lacking control and prone to violence; and (5) exceptionalism, the understanding that relationships between Africans or Asians and Europeans was extremely rare. By founding the analysis of the book on these five patterns and drawing links between them and historical events, Otele brilliantly illustrates how these patterns are not only reflected in the past but are still applicable today. For example, the book describes an historical narrative of Africans as needing to be domesticated to make the Europeans around them feel safe and/or being kept far away from Europe for the same purpose. Otele notes that similar narratives are not uncommon in discussions about refugees and irregular migrants in Europe today with refugee and migrant testimonies describing how they are viewed as a threat and treated as sub-human (see Adeyinka, Samyn, Zemni & Derluyn, 2021; Gray & Franck, 2019; Oxfam, Belgrade Centre for Human Rights & Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, 2017).

To counter the idea of exceptionalism, Otele underlines the complexity and uniqueness of each 'African European' character discussed in her book. For example, the book describes the life of 'Maurice the African' who eventually became Saint Maurice after he and some of his loyal men were executed by Rome for failing to pay tribute to the god, Jupiter. Historians now suggest the accusation against Saint Maurice was a ruse in Emperor Theodore's political game to discourage usurpers. Alessandro the Duke is another example, Alessandro was the Pope's nephew yet was depicted as a Moor and a slave by

his contemporaries, even though some believed his mother to have been a free African woman. Alessandro was considered a sexually immoral man and was eventually assassinated by his cousin, Lorenzino de Medicini in 1537. These are just two examples of the detailed descriptions of the minor and major roles played by *African Europeans* in the history of the European continent. From the resourcefulness and skills of the Nubites of Kush to the influence of Cairo-based Malmuk warriors of German, Hungarian and Italian descent, to the impact of the political and religious practices of *African Europeans* on the Roman Empire; the book vividly describes how treaties were made, peoples conquered, and elite groups created. In it all, Otele demonstrates the importance of Black African influence on the course of events and, thereby, reminds us that discussing European history without including the role of *African Europeans* is an injustice that results in an incomplete history.

Otele offers such a rich account of the history of African Europeans with reference not only to individuals, people groups and events but also broader issues such as gender equality and the socio-cultural and academic contribution of Black females, a dynamic very rarely discussed in dominant discourses. By detailing these largely untold and normally missing stories, the book raises questions about racism by omission because Black people have not traditionally been considered as part of the national history of European states. Instead, *African Europeans* have been too often forgotten, with 'exceptions' characterised as the ahistorical, cultureless Negro who broke the norm. Otele brings the analysis right through to the present time by demonstrating the contribution of Afro-feminists to ongoing gender discourses and contemporary feminism including in the movement associated with the #MeToo initiative which was created in response to sexual allegations made against the film producer, Harvey Weinstein, and which became a global symbol for denouncing sexual violence against women.

In concluding, Otele highlights the significance of the arts and social media in the more recent history of 'African Europeans'. The author reflects on how Black British artists are impacting Hollywood and the global music industry and thereby forcing a shift in pre-existing boundaries of race and ethnicity in the arts. Otele also reminds us of the crucial role social media has played in exposing recent acts of discrimination and violence against Blacks. While also highlighting how the work of BLM and other campaigns have pressurised institutions into prioritising racial diversity and equal representation in the workplace. Otele finishes *African Europeans* by saying "...the path to equality needs to be facilitated by access to political power and meaningful representation in all disciplines, industries and institutions. It is a path that we must pave together" (2020:224) – a prescient statement for our times.

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

African Europeans: An Untold History

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