The national coordination of EU policy

Hussein Kassim

Introduction
Upon their accession to the European Union, states become subject to a series of wide-ranging obligations. As well as accepting the primacy of EU law, they become participants in a permanent and constantly evolving collective enterprise, committed to complying with, implementing and enforcing all existing and future EU legislation, to participating in common policies and to sharing decisional authority with EU institutions and with one another. Their participation in EU decision-making has to be organized and prepared. Mechanisms must be put in place to manage their interactions with EU policy actors, and procedures established to handle decisional outputs.

How member states fulfil these requirements of membership is an important domestic issue. EU coordination machinery empowers some actors within governments above others, delimits the scope of executive accountability to parliament, and determines the level of input from civil society and subnational authorities. At the EU level, meanwhile, national arrangements not only affect the speed at which the Council of Ministers can transact business, but determine the capacities of the Union as an administrative system more broadly (Metcalfe 1994; Spanou 1998; Dimitrova 2002). Moreover, how member states manage EU policy is of wider relevance: their adaptation to the demands of EU membership can be seen as part of a general process of Europeanization, the extent to which governments can be held accountable by parliaments for the action at the EU level is relevant to debates on the ‘democratic deficit’ and the role of subnational authorities in national processes is an element of multilevel governance.

For these reasons, national systems of EU policy coordination have attracted considerable scholarly attention. An extensive literature on the ‘older’ member states (see, e.g., Wallace 1973; Lequesne 1993; Metcalfe 1994; Hanf and Soetendorp 1998; Harmsen 1999; Kassim et al. 2000a, 2001; Wessels et al. 2003; Bulmer and Burch 2009; Panke 2010a, 2010b) has been complemented more recently by studies on the countries that joined in 2004 and 2007. The latter group’s initial focus on compliance and transposition in the pre-accession phase (see, e.g., Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Schimmelfennig et al. 2005; Epstein and Sedelmeier 2008; Falkner and Treib 2008; Zubek 2008) was broadened following accession to include policy coordination (Lippert and Umbach 2005; Dimitrova and Toshkov 2009; Steunenberg and...
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Toshkov 2009; Zubek 2011; Batory 2012; Fink-Hafner 2014). A small number of studies have compared countries from both groups (see, e.g., Laffan 2003; Kassim and Dimitrov 2008; Gärtner et al. 2011; Dimitrov and Kassim 2012).

This chapter examines the national coordination of EU policy. It considers the coordinating challenge that confronts EU member states and compares the structures and procedures they have put in place. It reviews the scholarly study of the national coordination of EU policy, highlighting key developments in the literature and critically examining the main theoretical approaches. The chapter concludes with a discussion of possible directions for future research.

The coordinating challenge

Although it brings many advantages, the EU makes exacting demands on its signatory states. Members must communicate with EU institutions, define, transmit and defend their positions in Council negotiations, and implement and enforce EU policies. Government representatives must participate in meetings of the European Council as well as the Council of Ministers. The various formations of the latter at ministerial level are prepared by weekly meetings of COREPER, which in turn draws upon the work of more than 150 working groups. Member states must maintain a permanent representation in Brussels to act (at the least) as a ‘post-box’, a base for delegates from the home ministries and the ‘eyes and ears’ of the national government. These representations must also be able to manage the continuous exchange of information between the delegations involved in negotiations on the front line and the national capital.

The EU does not impose a particular template or organizational model to which its members must conform. However, member states are expected to have in place structures that are competent to carry out the responsibilities associated with membership. The Presidency Conclusions of the 2002 Seville European Council, which in preparation for the Central and Eastern European (CEE) enlargement reported on the review of the Council’s operation, included a general exhortation to governments along these lines (European Council 2002) – an illustration of both the importance of effective national procedures to the working of the Council and the inability of even the EU’s highest political authority to impose more detailed requirements on institutional form. More specific prescriptions do exist in some policy domains. In competition policy, for example, member states are required to have agencies with the capacity to enforce EU rules. In other areas, EU rules impose certain requirements, such as the establishment of regulatory agencies that can act independently of the government. However, the overall design of systems of national EU policy coordination, as well as the level of resources invested in them, are decisions left to individual member states.

Need for coordination

Because EU decision-making processes involve not only the participation of multiple departments and agencies from across government, but action at EU and national levels, the member states need to establish structures and mechanisms that enable them to coordinate the activities of national actors. Additional pressures also arise from the principle of ministerial responsibility (officials must operate with the explicit agreement of ministers within established policy guidelines), from parliamentary accountability (the requirement to keep parliament informed of EU-level developments) and from the need in federal and devolved states to consult subnational governments about EU matters. Additionally, in some member states social partners or other stakeholders may demand the same level of input in national EU policy-making as they enjoy in domestic affairs.
Governments also have strong political incentives to ensure coordination on EU matters. Advantage may be gained when they achieve EU policy outcomes that advance national goals or safeguard the interests of domestic constituencies or expand their opportunities by, for example, exporting national rules that then become Union-wide standards. By contrast, damage may ensue if ministers appear disunited on a European issue. More generally, because public attentiveness to EU issues and the greater scrutiny of EU matters by the press have intensified the pressure on member governments to ‘get it right’, the costs of ‘getting it wrong’ can be high indeed, especially in policy domains that the public consider important.

Although EU membership thus carries the need to coordinate, the structural characteristics of the EU make the job of coordinating especially problematic (Wright 1996; Kassim 2000a, 2003a, 2003b). Its institutional complexity, Byzantine legislative procedures and organizational density make the EU especially difficult to navigate. Added to the near-constant change arising from successive rounds of treaty reform and the EU’s need persistently to respond to new demands, the range and variety of policy-making arenas, the length and variety of the policy agenda and the sheer number of actors involved in decision-making, the challenge confronted by governments is formidable. It is only compounded by the administrative mismatch between EU structures and national ministries, on the one hand, and the rhythms of EU business on the other. For these reasons, the difficulty of coordination, which is already high in routine domestic policy-making, is considerably higher in the case of EU policy-making.

How member states have responded: the national coordination of EU policy

In the absence of an imposed template, member states have a free hand – at least externally – in deciding how precisely to meet the need for coordination. Among other issues, it is up the individual states to determine the scale of the coordinating ambition, the level and form of the coordinating activity required of government departments (Metcalfe 1994), how powers and responsibilities between central departments and line ministries are to be shared, in which forums consultation and decision-making will take place, when, how and on what matters parliament must be informed and consulted, and whether – and, if so, when and how – to consult subnational authorities, social partners and other stakeholders.

Signatory states have responded to the demands of EU membership by creating dedicated systems for managing EU business. How four of the larger member states have approached the task is shown in Table 37.1. A broader cross-national comparison indicates that there are several similarities in the arrangements that member states have established. First, heads of government play a central role and, with the strengthening of the European Council, have become increasingly involved in EU policy-making (Johansson and Tallberg 2010). However, it does not follow that their power is unconstrained, still less that they have the authority to make decisions on ‘Europe’ unilaterally (Kassim 2010). Second, foreign ministries remain influential actors in national EU policy-making, but are increasingly overshadowed by prime ministers, challenged by finance ministers and bypassed by the line ministries. Indeed, a number of decades have passed since EU policy was considered foreign policy.

Interdepartmental coordination in EU matters is managed by specialist political or administrative mechanisms – a third similarity. In the UK, the European Affairs Committee plays this role; likewise, there is the European Committee of the Council of Ministers in Poland, the Committee for the EU in the Czech Republic, the Coordination Council in Estonia and the Inter-ministerial Committee on European Integration in Hungary. Central units for coordination include the UK’s European Secretariat of the Cabinet Office, the Secrétariat général
des affaires européennes (SGAE) in France, the Office of the Committee for European Integration (UKIE) in Poland and the State Secretariat for Integration and External Economic Relations (SSIEER) in Hungary. Fourth, EU policy units have been created to advise on EU policy or to manage or oversee intra-departmental business relating to the EU in line ministries. A permanent representation in Brussels that serves as the main locus for national coordination at the EU level is a fifth common feature. Finally, national parliaments have mechanisms for monitoring EU business. Across the member states, these procedures have been significantly upgraded since the 1980s (Raunio and Hix 2000; Maurer and Wessels 2001a; Maurer 2002; O’Brennan and Raunio 2007; and see Chapter 21).11

However, there are also significant differences. While in some member states (e.g. Denmark, Hungary, Latvia, Portugal, Spain) the foreign ministry is the leading actor, elsewhere it shares responsibility with the economics or finance ministry (e.g. Germany, Greece) or with the office of prime minister (Estonia, Italy, Lithuania).12 In some countries – Poland is an example (Novak-Far 2008) – there is no clean division of labour. Moreover, in France and Lithuania, the prime ministers (PMs) have day-to-day responsibility for central coordination, but presidents may become involved in high-level EU negotiations, arbitrate on dossiers where there are differences of opinion or intervene in areas that are especially salient.

Furthermore, the role, authority and importance of inter-ministerial committees, the status and composition of the central coordinating unit and the part played by line ministries also vary between national systems. In the UK, line ministries take the leading role in initially defining the government’s response, but are obliged to consult other departments with an interest in the matter under discussion. When they do not do so or when interdepartmental differences arise that cannot be resolved, the European Secretariat in the Cabinet Office and ultimately the prime minister may intervene. Elsewhere – Austria perhaps offers the best example – individual ministries not only take the lead, but to a large part decide the negotiating position for the national delegation to adopt in the Council (Müller 2000, 2001).

Variation can additionally be found in the role, responsibilities and influence of the Permanent Representation. At one end of the scale, the UK Permanent Representation (UKREP) is endowed with an expansive set of responsibilities and is highly pro-active. Reflecting the emphasis that the UK places on ensuring that its position is known and understood by relevant actors at an early stage in the EU policy process (Kassim 2001), UK officials posted in the UKREP offices just off the Rond-Pont Schuman are encouraged to cultivate relations with Commission officials and Members of the European Parliament, as well as their counterparts in other member states. Also, UKREP acts as one of three central coordinators – the other two being the European Secretariat Office in the Cabinet Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) – that oversee the line ministries. Other missions have a much more limited role, especially concerning outreach to actors beyond the Council (see, e.g., Spanou 2001 on the Greek Permanent Representation). In terms of influence, the Permanent Representations of Hungary and Lithuania are especially influential within their national systems; Latvia’s representation is far less so within its system of coordination.

Cross-national differences between systems extend beyond the machinery of government. The role played by national parliaments, for example, varies significantly. With regard to control over ministers, one of two models is typically adopted (Küver 2006: 54–7; COSAC 2007: 7–9).13 The mandate-giving system, whereby ministers must seek ex-ante approval from the Europe Committee for the positions they intend to take and are bound by whatever the Europe Committee decides, is based on arrangements in the Danish Folketing. Similar procedures were adopted in a number of the states that joined the EU in 1995 and 2004. By contrast, in the document-based system, developed by the UK House of Commons, legislative proposals from the EU are
### Table 37.1 National coordination of EU policy systems in France, Germany, Poland and the UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political leadership</strong></td>
<td>President, PM, Foreign Minister</td>
<td>Chancellor, Foreign Minister, Minister of the Economy</td>
<td>PM, Foreign Minister</td>
<td>PM, Foreign Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main ministries and administrative actors</strong></td>
<td>- Secrétariat général des affaires européennes (SGAE), responsible to the PM, works within guidelines set down by the President; - Ministry for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>- Ministry for Foreign Affairs; - Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology</td>
<td>- The European Committee of the Council of Ministers (KERM); cabinet chaired by the PM; - Office of Committee on European Integration (UKIE) located in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>- European and Global Issues Secretariat (EGIS) of the Cabinet Office, responsible to the PM (the head of EGIS is the PM’s advisor on Europe); - Foreign and Commonwealth Office UK Permanent Representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination procedure</strong></td>
<td>- The SGAE is responsible for developing the French position. It receives all communications from the Council Secretariat, which it then circulates to the appropriate line ministries. The SGAE adds its assessment to the ministry’s proposed position. It convenes meetings where several ministries are involved, with the aim of agreement on the French position. - Where interdepartmental differences cannot be resolved, the matter passes to the monthly meeting of Secretaries of State for troubleshooting. Full position-forming process is monitored by the EU Coordination Group, part of the EU Coordination Directorate in the Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>- The lead department formulates the position and must inform other departments. The proposed position is discussed by the Directors General, who meet monthly. Where differences cannot be resolved, the matter passes to the monthly meeting of Secretaries of State for troubleshooting. Full position-forming process is monitored by the EU Coordination Group, part of the EU Coordination Directorate in the Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>- The UKIE receives all communications from the Council Secretariat, which are then sent to the relevant ministries. Draft positions are prepared by the ministries and must be approved by the KERM, where interdepartmental differences are also resolved. Instructions are sent to the Polish Permanent Representation by the UKIE after approval by the KERM.</td>
<td>- The lead department consults other interested departments and prepares a draft of the position. - Where more than one department is involved, the European Affairs Committee (a cabinet committee chaired by the Foreign Secretary) decides the UK line. - Weekly/fortnightly meetings of the head of the European and Global Issues Secretariat and the head of the UK Permanent Representation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
resolved, the matter passes to the PM’s cabinet and the private offices of ministers involved. If differences persist, the PM may intervene personally in cabinet committee.

- The SGAE communicates agreed instructions directly to the French Permanent Representation.

- No formal obligation to consult regional or local authorities.

- Bilateral meetings between ministers are a final court of appeal.

- The entire position-forming process is overseen by EGIS, which troubleshoots when necessary.

Role of subnational authorities

- No formal obligation to consult regional or local authorities.

- In policy areas where the Bundesrat previously held the right to legislate, the Länder participate in defining Germany’s line.

- Where the fundamental interests of the Länder are at stake, the Bundesrat appoints Länder representatives to participate alongside the responsible federal ministry in Germany’s delegation in the Council.

- Where an EU proposal concerns a policy domain over which the Länder have exclusive authority, a Länder representative represents Germany.

- No formal obligation to consult regional or local authorities.

Formal consultation within the Joint Ministerial Committee (Europe). Ministers from the Scottish Government can participate in the UK delegation in devolved areas, such as agriculture and fisheries.

Sources: Bulmer et al. (2001); Kassim et al. (2000a); Kassim et al. (2001).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member state</th>
<th>House of Parliament</th>
<th>Name of the committee</th>
<th>Date established</th>
<th>Size and composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Nationalrat</td>
<td>Main Committee on EU Affairs</td>
<td>(1995) 2000</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bundesrat</td>
<td>Standing Subcommittee on EU Affairs</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>16/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EU Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Chambre des représentants and Sénat</td>
<td>Federal Advisory Committee on European Affairs</td>
<td>(1985) 1990</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(10 Senators, 10 members of the Chambre des représentants, 10 Belgian MEPs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Narodno-sabranie</td>
<td>Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Poslanecká snímovna and Sénat</td>
<td>Committee on European Affairs</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Folketinget</td>
<td>European Affairs Committee</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Riigikogu</td>
<td>European Union Affairs Committee</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>≥15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Eduskunta</td>
<td>Grand Committee</td>
<td>(1906) 1995</td>
<td>25 titular members and 13 substitutes with right to attend and speak at meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Assemblée nationale and Sénat</td>
<td>Committee on European Affairs</td>
<td>(1979) 2008</td>
<td>48^2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Bundestag</td>
<td>Committee on the Affairs of the European Union</td>
<td>(1991) 1994</td>
<td>33 MP + 16 German MEPs without voting rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bundestag</td>
<td>Committee on European Union Questions</td>
<td>(1957) 1965</td>
<td>17 (one from each state)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Vouli Ton Ellinon</td>
<td>Special Standing Committee for European Affairs</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Országgyűlés</td>
<td>Committee on European Affairs</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>21^2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann</td>
<td>Joint Committee on European Affairs</td>
<td>(1995) 2011</td>
<td>9 members of the Dáil Éireann and 5 from the Seanad Éireann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Parliament/Assembly</td>
<td>Committee(s)</td>
<td>Formation/Details</td>
<td>Current Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Camera dei Deputati Senato della Repubblica</td>
<td>Committee on EU Policies 14th Standing Committee on EU Policies</td>
<td>(1971) 1990</td>
<td>Currently 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>Saeima</td>
<td>European Affairs Committee</td>
<td>(1995) 2004</td>
<td>Currently 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>Seimas</td>
<td>Committee on European Affairs</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>15–25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>Chambres des députés</td>
<td>Committee for Foreign and European Affairs, for Defence, for Cooperation and for Immigration</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>12²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>Kamra tad-deputati</td>
<td>Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs</td>
<td>(1995) 2003</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Tweede Kamer Eerste Kamer</td>
<td>Committee on European Affairs</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>24³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Committee for European Co-operation Organisations</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Sejm</td>
<td>European Union Affairs Committee</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>≤ 462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senat</td>
<td>European Union Affairs Committee</td>
<td>(1991) 2004</td>
<td>Currently 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Assembleia da Republica</td>
<td>Committee on European Affairs</td>
<td>(1980) 1987</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>Národna rada</td>
<td>Committee on European Affairs</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>11²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Držani zbor</td>
<td>Committee for EU Affairs</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>14²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Držani svet</td>
<td>International Relations and European Affairs Committee</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>11 representatives of interest groups from Slovenian society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Congreso de los Diputados and Senado</td>
<td>Joint Committee for the European Union</td>
<td>(1986) 1994</td>
<td>43 members chosen by joint decision of the two chambers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Riksdag</td>
<td>Committee on EU Affairs</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>17 members and 42 alternates, with representation from all sectoral committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>House of Commons House of Lords</td>
<td>European Scrutiny Committee</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>16²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1 Dates in brackets refer to predecessor committees. 2 Members in proportion to party strength in chamber. 3 All political parties represented.

sent to the European Affairs Committee with an accompanying memorandum that sets out the position the minister intends to take. The committee can question the minister and ask for information to be disclosed, and it may decide to refer the issue for debate. If an issue is debated, a parliamentary resolution may be adopted. Importantly, under this system ministers are not permitted to agree to measures in the Council until they have been scrutinized by parliament (see Table 37.2).

Arrangements for parliamentary oversight – the status and composition of the European Affairs Committee and whether sectoral committees are involved in the scrutiny of EU dossiers – also vary. In Denmark, overlapping membership with sectoral committees enables the European Affairs Committee to benefit from specialist expertise. EU-related documents are circulated to sectoral committees, with which the European Affairs Committee consults if it finds that a proposal violates subsidiarity.14 In Finland, by contrast, the Grand Committee for European Affairs delegates scrutiny to the sectoral committees and reviews the reports that they submit; on the basis of these reports, it decides whether to question ministers or issue a negotiating mandate.

A third approach is taken in the UK House of Commons, where sifting is performed by European Standing Committees, each of which has a particular policy specialization. Further forms of scrutiny are found in the Bundestag (where the European Affairs Committee is responsible for cross-departmental issues but coordinates and deliberates with the relevant sectoral committees), in the Dutch lower house and in both chambers of the French Parliament. In France, the sectoral committees are responsible for scrutinizing EU proposals, but the European Affairs Committee and the European Affairs Delegations assist and coordinate in their respective chambers.

At the same time, their formal powers are not always reliable indicators of the influence that parliaments exercise in practice (Auel and Benz 2005: 388).15 In Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia, for example, parliamentarians frequently choose not to use the powerful sanctions at their disposal, while Danish MPs have developed instruments other than the mandate to exert influence. The informal channels that parliamentarians use (such as interactions within and between parties, relations between the government and the opposition, and connections with MEPs) and the leverage that can be achieved vary across legislatures; by their very nature, the influence exerted through these channels is more difficult to gauge than the use of formal prerogatives.

The involvement of subnational actors is another area in which national coordination systems diverge. Constitutional regions generally have an important presence and play a greater role in national coordination systems than subnational regions that lack statehood status, but even here there are important differences. Although the German Ländere enjoy strong participation rights, have representatives in the German Permanent Representation (as well as their own missions in Brussels) and can influence national EU policy through their presence in the Bundesrat (Derlien 2000: 61–6), the same is not true for the autonomous regions in Spain (Molina 2000: 121–6). In the UK, although responsibility in some policy areas has been devolved to the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly, including areas that fall within EU competence, London has been able to retain its primacy in EU policy-making as part of its lead role in foreign policy (Bulmer et al. 2002; Bulmer et al. 2006; Bulmer and Burch 2009).

Finally, the extent to which social partners and other interest groups are involved in the national coordination of EU policy varies significantly. In Sweden, the Czech Republic and Latvia, consultation with representatives of business and labour is formal and routine. In Slovenia, the European Affairs Committee in the upper house is composed of interest group representatives. In the UK, by contrast, ministries typically ask for the views of stakeholders, but such consultation is ad hoc.
Table 37.3 Comparison of systems for the coordination of EU policy in 25 EU member states in terms of ambition and centralization/decentralization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ambition</th>
<th>Centralized</th>
<th>Decentralized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>Czech Republic(^1)</td>
<td>Austria(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denmark(^2)</td>
<td>Belgium(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>France(^2,4)</td>
<td>Germany(^2,7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hungary(^5)</td>
<td>Greece(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poland(^6)</td>
<td>Italy(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sweden(^2)</td>
<td>Latvia(^8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UK(^2)</td>
<td>Lithuania(^9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Netherlands(^2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Slovakia(^10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>Estonia(^11)</td>
<td>Bulgaria(^10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ireland(^2)</td>
<td>Cyprus(^10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malta(^10)</td>
<td>Romania(^10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Portugal(^2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slovenia(^12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spain(^2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Table does not include Croatia, Finland or Luxembourg.

Source: 1 Kabele (2012); 2 Kassim et al. (2000a); 3 Kassim et al. (2001); 4 Lanceron (2007); 5 Batory (2012); 6 Novak-Far (2008); 7 Bulmer et al. (2001); 8 Rollis (2012); 9 Maniokas and Vilius (2012); 10 Gärtner et al. (2011); 11 Lepassaar (2012); 12 Fink-Hafner

National systems of EU policy coordination differ along many dimensions, but two are fundamental (see Table 37.3). The first is the breadth of the ambition that underlies and informs the systems of coordination. The most ambitious countries are those that attempt to monitor all Commission activity and to intervene on all policy fronts. France and the United Kingdom are examples of member states that take this type of comprehensive approach. At the other end of the spectrum, there are member countries that employ a more selective approach. Ireland and Luxembourg, for example, concentrate only on those policy areas that have particular national importance. National delegations from these countries might not attend certain Council working groups or may ask another member state to defend their interests where necessary.

The second dimension is the extent to which decision-making is concentrated. In highly centralized systems, ultimate authority may rest in a single ministry or office. France and the UK are perhaps the leading examples. Although the French Fifth Republic is a semi-presidential system, the president can in areas of high politics act unilaterally in setting national policy in regard to the EU. The UK prime minister also occupies a powerful position, but cabinet government can impose constraints on the ambitions of even the most apparently powerful incumbents (Kassim 2010). In decentralized systems, by contrast, power is more evenly shared, and there are often several veto players. Belgium and Germany are good examples.

Explaining national systems for the coordination of EU policy

The early work conducted in this field was important, but since it invariably took the form of single-country studies, the opportunities for theory-testing were limited. It was only when several countries were compared in the 1990s (Harmsen 1999; Kassim et al. 2000a, 2001) that it became possible to test hypotheses about the factors that shape national coordination systems.
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The functional-institutionalist explanation that emerged from these efforts was later challenged by findings based on research on the countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 (Dimitrova and Toshkov 2007). However, that approach has recently been reasserted and defended in work that compares coordination of EU policy in old and new member states (Dimitrov and Kassim 2012). The terms and the development of the debate are described below.

**Convergence or divergence? A functional-institutionalist account**

In the first systematic comparison of its kind, Kassim et al. (2000a) sought to investigate similarities and differences between ten national systems of EU policy coordination (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom) and to identify the factors that have shaped these national configurations. With respect to the first dimension – the scope of the coordinating ambition – the key factor was political-cultural. The authors found that member states with a comprehensive coordination ambition – Denmark, France and the UK – tended to be the countries that were most cautious about European integration and that favoured a state-centric conception of the EU. Member states that took a more selective approach – Ireland and Spain, for example – generally had a more positive view about ever closer union and were more sanguine about delegating further competencies.

With regard to the second dimension – the extent to which architectures for the national coordination of EU policy are centralized – Kassim et al. (2000a) tested two competing hypotheses: the convergence thesis, which holds that the common external pressures and challenges stemming from EU membership are likely to produce similar responses on the part of national governments, and the divergence thesis, which anticipates variation on the grounds that organizations ‘respond [to external pressures] in their own terms, mobilizing resources they have accumulated over time, and following pre-existing institutional logics’ (Kassim 2000: 237). Although opposing, both of these theses are rooted in theories of the new institutionalism (Kassim 2000). The convergence thesis was largely inspired by DiMaggio and Powell’s theory of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1991), which contends that organizations in the same organizational field that operate subject to the same set of environmental conditions tend to develop similar features over time. This convergence comes about as a result of three mechanisms: coercion, imitation and the spread of common norms. A variant of this concept draws on rational choice institutionalism. Comparing nations to firms competing in the same market, this theory contends that member states within the EU will be ‘driven by a logic of optimization to adopt increasingly similar processes and structures’ (Harmsen 1999: 84). As a result, ‘a gradual convergence of national practices around the most effective solutions’ can be expected (Harmsen 1999: 84).

The divergence thesis, by contrast, was inspired by March and Olsen’s sociological institutionalism. According to this view, organizations interpret external pressures to change in terms of their existing norms and conceptions of legitimate political forms – what March and Olsen term a ‘logic of appropriateness’ (March and Olsen 1989: 21–39, 53–67) – as well as ‘more diffuse values concerning the correct distribution and exercise of public power’ (Harmsen 1999: 85). In the new environment, an organization will attempt to renew its position, identity and status accordingly. Applying this theory to the national coordination of EU policy, it follows that the pressures exerted by EU membership will be ‘mediated through the existing institutional structures and values which characterise each national politico-administrative system’ (Harmsen 1999: 85), and that member state responses can be expected to reflect the ‘pre-existing balance of institutional structures, as well as the broader matrices of values which define the nature of appropriate political forms in the case of each national polity’ (Harmsen 1999: 81).
The country studies revealed a more complex picture than either thesis envisioned (Kassim et al. 2000a). Similarities existed alongside important and apparently enduring differences. Kassim (2000b) argues that the mixture of similarities and differences is best explained in terms of two processes: functional pressures exerted by Union membership (accounting for the similarities) and institutionalist factors (for the differences). Functional pressures are top-down imperatives that stem from the demands of membership. They are general in nature and operate through the obligations they impose on member states. They leave little scope for member state discretion. Although functional pressures are powerful, their reach is limited. They do not directly shape national coordination systems, but do require that member states develop and sustain certain capacities. The case studies show that when member states establish coordination systems, their configuration more or less follows the distribution of power within the wider domestic polity, and thus the institutionalist part of the explanation follows March and Olsen’s logic of appropriateness. Generally speaking, national systems for the coordination of EU policy are shaped by the pre-existing structures and values of the domestic polity, and specifically by the degree to which authority is concentrated, institutionally and politically (see also Kassim 2000b, 2003a).19

In other words, domestic relationships between institutions and actors tend to be reproduced in the national EU policy-making domain, and these relationships determine the extent to which the system for the national coordination of EU policy is likely to be centralized or decentralized. The key institutional dimension is the degree to which the PM is the focus of public administration, the key political dimension is whether governments are single- or multi-party in composition and the key territorial dimension is whether states are unitary or federal. In member countries where an entrenched norm of ministerial autonomy is reinforced by multiparty government and relatively decentralized political parties in the wider political system, centralizing pressures have to some extent been resisted. The principal example in this case is Austria (Müller 2000), where ‘ministerial government at the European level’ (Müller 2001) reproduces the ministerial autonomy that is a salient feature of the domestic polity – a constitutionally entrenched principle that has been reinforced by the practice of multiparty government.

New members, new perspectives: the ‘Eastern enlargement’ and national EU policy coordination

The literature on how the ‘new’ member states coordinate their EU policies is both relatively recent and relatively sparse. Although Fink-Hafner (2007) and Laffan (2003) include some Central and Eastern European states alongside the older member states in their investigation of ‘how the EU is managed from home’, there have only been two major cross-national studies on the coordination of EU policy in the new member states: Dimitrova and Toshkov (2007) and the results of a comparative project, reported by Dimitrov and Kassim (2012).

In their study, Dimitrova and Toshkov (2007) offer an overview of institutional arrangements in the CEE states and test three explanations of how national coordination systems developed following accession, based on functional factors, pre-existing domestic structures and political actors, respectively. The authors find the first two hypotheses wanting: they argue that functional factors cannot offer a persuasive explanation of post-accession developments, because they see no clear link between the change in functional pressures as a state moves from the pre-accession phase to full membership and the organization of national EU policy coordination (see Zubek 2011 for an opposing view). They also argue that domestic structures have little impact; however, the analysis that they present proceeds at an overly general level and is therefore unable to capture
variation in domestic structures at the level at which influence would be exercised – namely, the organization of the government and, in particular, the degree to which executive power is concentrated or dispersed (Kassim 2000b, 2003a).

Dimitrova and Toshkov find the strongest evidence for the third, actor-centred explanation, which they call the ‘politics of institutional choice’ (Dimitrova and Toshkov 2007: 963). Based on rational choice institutionalism, this approach holds that, when making institutional choices, actors are driven by the desire to maximize their exogenously derived preferences. The authors argue that this approach offers a better explanation than accounts based on functional pressures or domestic structures, since the emphasis these latter approaches place on institutional continuity is at odds with the rapid change that they claim has been a feature of the new member states. They hold that these transformations can be traced to changes in governing elites and party control of the executive (for instance after an election), as well as to inter-institutional rivalries and the balance of power between politicians and bureaucrats.

Although individual actors have never featured prominently in the coordination literature, an important weakness of the account presented by Dimitrova and Toshkov (2007) is that it does not undertake a systematic rational choice institutionalist analysis. In other words, it does not test the link between specific configurations of actors and particular institutional choices. Instead, reference is made to isolated examples, drawn mainly from Bulgaria and Romania, which is a somewhat slender basis on which to make the claim that coordination structures are principally shaped by individual action.22

Both the findings and the account offered by Dimitrova and Toshkov (2007) are contested by the second study, which is based on research conducted by a team led by Kassim and Dimitrov.23 Based on the country studies prepared for the project, Dimitrov and Kassim (2012) examine how national coordination systems have changed in seven of the CEE states that joined the EU in 2004, comparing the systems established in the ‘new(er)’ states with those of the older member states and testing three explanations. The first points to functional factors, holding that national systems are moulded by pressures derived from the rules, requirements and routines of the EU. An important implication is that a change in functional pressures – as, for example, in the transition from pre-accession to full membership (Zubek 2011) – can be expected to lead to a change in national coordination institutions, as can pressures stemming from the rotating Council Presidency. The second explanation is institutionalist and follows the sociological variant. It contends that national coordination institutions are shaped by pre-existing domestic structures, which results in cross-national variation in coordination institutions to the extent that there are institutional and political differences between domestic polities. The third is an actor-centred explanation, inspired by the approach advocated by Dimitrova and Toshkov (2007), but made more robust by linking the party composition of government to the choice of executive institutions, following the institutional choice model developed by Hallerberg and von Hagen (1999) (see also Dimitrov et al. 2006; Zubek 2011).24

The Dimitrov–Kassim team test the three explanations using evidence from seven of the new CEE member states over three periods: pre-accession, membership and, where applicable, during the state’s Presidency of the Council. This research design makes it possible to investigate the effects of shifts in functional pressures and the influence of pre-existing domestic institutions on the institutional configuration of national EU policy coordination systems.

Dimitrov and Kassim (2012) report that functional factors have an important influence, notably discernible in the transition from pre- to post-accession status. In the pre-accession period, when the adaptive pressures from the EU were high, the CEE states all developed centralized coordination systems, except for Estonia (Lepassaar 2012). In six of the countries, the coordinating institutions were established around the office of the prime minister. Hungary was the only
country in which the core executive institutions were built around the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). After accession, when functional pressures from the EU declined, three of the EU-7 – Lithuania (Maniokas and Vilmiauskas 2012), Latvia (Rollis 2012: 2) and the Czech Republic (Kabele 2012) – decentralized their coordination systems. Estonia was again in a group of its own, opting to strengthen coordination around the prime minister and the cabinet. Hungary, Poland and Slovenia largely retained their centralized systems, though the role of line ministries increased somewhat in the latter two countries.

Holding the Council Presidency also increased functional pressures, although at a lower level in comparison to the pre-accession period. In the run-up to the Presidency, there was a return to centralization around the prime minister in the Czech Republic. The other three countries that had held the Presidency at the time of the study – Hungary, Poland and Slovenia – already had centralized coordination systems and experienced limited change.

The influence of domestic structures was relatively weak in the pre-accession period. Where national executives had been centralized before the start of the accession negotiations (in Hungary, Slovenia and Poland), centralized systems for EU policy coordination were developed. However, centralized systems were also developed in countries in which national executives had been decentralized before accession negotiations began, i.e. the Czech Republic, Latvia and Lithuania. In the pre-accession period, Estonia was the only country in which domestic structures were more influential than functional pressures.

With the weakening of functional pressures after accession, the impact of domestic structures became more pronounced. In all but one of the seven CEE states, the ‘fit’ between EU policy coordination systems and domestic structures increased considerably after accession, leading to coordinating institutions that were more durable than those of the pre-accession period. In the Czech Republic, Latvia and Lithuania, the centralized EU policy coordination systems unravelled, and the institutions fell into line with the decentralized national structures of government. By contrast, in Hungary, Slovenia and Poland the centralized national executive structures supported the continuation of centralized arrangements for EU policy coordination. Estonia was again an exception: after accession centralized institutions for EU policy coordination were developed around the prime minister and the cabinet, marking a departure from the decentralized patterns that have characterized the national executive since the early years of the country’s independence (Lepassaar 2012).

Similarly, the effect of the party composition of government on the shape of national EU policy coordination systems was relatively weak compared to functional pressures in the pre-accession period. In that period, both countries with small coalitions organized around a dominant party (Hungary and Slovenia) and those with large coalitions and minority governments (the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) developed centralized coordinating institutions. Only in Estonia did the dynamics of large and relatively short-lived coalitions with intense inter-party rivalries prevent the emergence of core executive institutions around the prime minister (Lepassaar 2012). However, in the post-accession period, as EU affairs became ‘normalized’ the party composition of government become more important. In the Czech Republic, Latvia and Lithuania, the intense inter-party rivalries generated within large coalitions and minority governments contributed to the dismantling of core executive institutions around the prime minister. By contrast, in Hungary and Slovenia the persistent pattern of small coalitions around a party that was more or less always in government – Poland also developed this pattern in the post-accession period, although it has been less stable – reinforced the centralized coordination institutions. Only in Estonia was there a mismatch between the party composition of government, which continued to take the form of large coalitions, and the shift of the coordination system towards centralization.
A comparison of national coordination systems between the seven CEE countries that joined
the EU in 2004 and those of the EU-15 also produced interesting findings (Dimitrov and Kassim
2012). Somewhat contrary to expectations, although there are differences between the new
member states in question and the older member states, they are not systematic. First, functional
pressures were stronger in the CEE states during the pre-accession period due to the unusually
demanding character of the pre-accession process: governments were required to adopt the full
*acquis communautaire* as a pre-condition of membership, and their progress was subject to detailed
scrutiny and supervision. However, once the CEE states became members, these functional
pressures receded, and domestic structures became as influential as they were in the older member
states.

Second, the new member states tend to place a greater emphasis on implementation. In the
EU-15, those member states with historically good implementation records, such as Denmark
and the UK, are generally highly centralized. In the seven CEE states under investigation,
performance does not vary according to the extent to which the state is centralized or
decentralized to the same degree. Implementation was a political priority during accession, and
the mechanisms and associated norms have survived into the post-accession period.

A third difference is that foreign ministries have tended to have a somewhat higher profile
in the national coordination systems of the new member states. As noted above, functional
pressures have led to a decline in the role of MFAs, which have been eclipsed at the centre by
the prime minister’s office and bypassed by officials in line ministries. The prominence of MFAs
in some of the seven CEE states could be a legacy of the period before the start of accession
negotiations, in which the foreign ministries managed relations with the EU as they did with
other international organizations, allowing them to accumulate specialist expertise. Moreover,
the coordination capacities that have been established at the centre of government in some of
the EU-15 (for example in France and in the UK) have not emerged as strongly in the seven
CEE states.

A fourth difference is that the party composition of government has played a more important
role in the newer member states, both in the design and operation of coordination systems and
in triggering change. This may be due to the prevalence of large coalitions and minority
governments in several of the CEE states, and also to the increasing politicization of ‘Europe’
as a domestic issue. Changes in the machinery of old member states – such as those introduced
in France and Germany – may have been political, but it would be hard to interpret them as
the outcome of party competition or partisan action.

A final difference is the greater impact of personality in the newer member states, although
an examination of coordination institutions over time shows that particular individuals have
only affected relatively secondary features of these systems – for example whether the system
is centralized around the prime minister or the ministry of foreign affairs. In Hungary, for example,
the centring of coordination on the MFA rather than the PM can be explained by the political
influence of László Kovács, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1994 to 1998 and from 2002 to
2004, who was simultaneously chairman of the ruling Socialist Party (Batory 2012). Similarly,
in Estonia the shift in 2002 towards a coordination system centralized around the PM could be
explained by the greater political influence of Prime Minister Siim Kallas in comparison to his
fellow Liberal, Foreign Minister Kristiina Ojuland (Lepassaar 2012).

Overall, however, a familiar combination of similarities and differences can be found in the
coordination systems of old and new member states. The functional–institutionalist explanation
developed in Kassim et al. (2000a) and detailed in Dimitrov and Kassim (2012) remains the
most persuasive explanation for the character of national arrangements for coordinating EU policy
in both old and new member countries.
Future research

Despite recent developments in the literature, the possibilities for research on national systems of EU policy coordination have not been exhausted. Among many possibilities, three potential avenues for future investigation are outlined in this section. The first is whether there is a link – a positive correlation or a causal relationship – between an efficient system of national coordination and influence over EU-level outputs. Several scholars have expressed doubt. Derlien, for example, implies that the value of centralized and comprehensive systems such as the British and French models is more symbolic than practical (Derlien 2000: 73). It may be that Germany’s decentralized and somewhat more haphazard system may lead to similar or event greater levels of success, without the considerable operational costs of running a comprehensive, centralized system. Although pondered by Kassim (2000b), investigated by Sepos (2005) and examined by Panke (2010a, 2010b) in relation to small states, the extent to which the efficiency of a state’s coordination system translates into effectiveness in Brussels has yet to be systematically investigated. A similar gap involves the relative importance of domestic machinery as a factor in the position a country adopts on an issue (within the overall distribution of preferences in the Council), the size of its vote and whether it is perceived as a broker.

Second, the impact of parties and party systems has not hitherto been exhaustively examined. Experiences in the new member states shows that party competition can affect the design of national coordination systems and can produce changes in coordination institutions (see, especially, Fink-Hafner 2014). The literature on the older member states, by contrast, tends to emphasize constitutional arrangements and the role of the administration. Systematic investigation of the circumstances under which ‘parties matter’ and political competition ‘matters’ may reveal that ‘politics’ is a more important factor in shaping structures of national EU policy coordination, influencing how they operate or altering the goals sought than has been assumed.

Third, national coordination systems are likely to offer distinctive ‘structures of opportunity’ (Tarrow 1991) and exhibit tendencies towards ‘institutional bias’ (Schattschneider 1960) in the same way as other institutions. Yet few scholars have sought to examine how the particular configuration of coordination systems may affect how domestic constituencies mobilize or organize in order to influence policy. The exceptions are Coen and Richardson (2009), who have noted the potential implications for lobbying on the part of business. There is considerable scope, therefore, for further investigation.

Conclusion

Because the EU has become an authoritative decision-making arena in so many policy domains, the machinery that member states put in place to manage the obligations that arise from membership is important for domestic actors both inside and outside government. Governments need to be able to define, communicate and defend their positions; parliamentarians want to ensure that accountability applies to government action in Brussels; and subnational actors and interest groups are keen to be heard in areas in which their constituents are likely to be affected and want to know that their interests are being effectively represented.

How member states decide to meet this challenge is important for debates about Europeanization, the ‘democratic deficit’ and multilevel governance. How they respond also has significance for EU institutions and the EU as a political system. The coherence of the positions that governments present in the Council and the rapidity with which they respond to EU initiatives have an important impact on that institution’s operation. The administrative and legal
capacities of each member state, meanwhile, directly affect the EU’s reach and effectiveness as a political system.

This chapter has discussed the investigation of member state responses to this formidable organizational challenge, showing that they have defied straightforward expectations of convergence or divergence. Instead, old and new member states alike have responded to cross-pressures from home and from Brussels by establishing systems of national coordination that are designed to meet the requirements of membership, but that have been shaped by pre-existing domestic structures, norms and values. It also shows that, despite the extensive literature that exists, there are still many avenues open for further inquiry.

Notes

1 I have learned a great deal about the subjects explored in this chapter from Guy Peters, Anand Menon and the late Vincent Wright. More recently, collaboration with Vesselin Dimitrov has helped refine my thinking about national coordination and taught me much about the states that joined the EU in 2004. I am deeply indebted to all four. I am also very grateful to the contributors to Kassim et al. (2000a, 2001) and to participants in ‘The National Coordination of EU Policy in the “New” Member States’ for their excellent country studies and for the many valuable insights afforded therein. I should also like to express my gratitude to Libby Kurien at COSAC for helping me locate the data used in Table 36.2.

2 These imperatives are not restricted to EU members. Although members of the European Economic Association do not participate in EU institutions, they must implement and enforce EU legislation and must maintain a physical presence in Brussels. See EEA Review Committee (2012).

3 Sometimes termed ‘the European administration’ (Kassim 2003a).

4 Indeed, there is a significant overlap between literatures on the national coordination of EU policy and the Europeanization of national institutions. Wessels et al. (2003) and Bulmer and Burch (2009) are primarily interested in the latter but also offer important insights into the former.

5 How national governments are held to account for their actions at the EU level is a key concern in this literature.

6 The involvement of subnational authorities in domestic EU policy-making processes is an important consideration in assessing claims regarding the changing territorial balance in Europe, especially the extent to which the EU has brought about multilevel governance by strengthening subnational authorities. See Marks et al. (1996), Le Galès and Lequesne (1998) and Streb (2008).

7 However, the national coordination of EU policy is typically overlooked by textbooks on the EU.

8 For example, membership offers possibilities to influence the economic and political environment in Europe and beyond that would not otherwise be available to national governments. Such possibilities may enable governments to achieve goals that could not be realized through unilateral or bilateral action or through other channels. For an example of how the EU provided such an opportunity to the UK in the aviation sector, see Kassim and Stevens (2010).


11 The Six had rather rudimentary systems of coordination (Sasse 1977: 78). Denmark and the UK granted considerably more power to their parliaments upon their entry to the EEC in 1973.

12 Between 2003 and 2006, Hungary’s MFA coexisted uneasily with a minister without portfolio for EU coordination (Batory 2012).

13 The parliaments of Estonia, Hungary and Lithuania and the Dutch Tweede Kamer combine elements from both models.

14 A similar system applies in the Swedish Riksdag, although sectoral committees follow EU developments independently.

15 For example, in the Danish case the minister only needs to avoid a majority vote against the position he or she proposes. Ninety per cent of the time, the minister has secured his or her desired outcome.

16 The difficulties of undertaking such research in terms of the expertise, resources and access required should not be underestimated.
17 Mény et al. (1996) examined how EU matters were managed in France, Germany and the UK. Although they raised the question of convergence (ibid.: 1), they did not actually compare national systems. Wessels et al. (2003), meanwhile, asked how member states had adapted, but were concerned primarily with the extent to which national administrations had become fused within a wider EU system. They compared individual institutions by type rather than systems of coordination.

18 But see the argument in Johansson and Tallberg (2010) that increased summitry at the EU level has strengthened the PM in national EU policy-making.

19 For similar arguments concerning the adaptation of national parliaments and national administrations to the demands of EU membership, see Dimitrakopoulos (2001) and Dimitrakopoulos and Passas (2003), respectively.

20 This section draws heavily on joint work with Vesselin Dimitrov, to whom I owe many of its insights.

21 The main focus in the considerable literature on relations between the EU and the states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), especially during the pre-accession period, has been on Europeanization and in particular on the extent to which CEE states comply with EU law (see Falkner and Treib 2008: 294).

22 Other authors who highlight the role played by agents make more modest claims. Laffan (2006), for example, argues that informal relations and the influence of EU cadres within national executives are neglected in the literature, but acknowledges the importance of institutionalization.

23 The team included: Agnes Batory, Danica Fink-Hafner, Jiri Kabele, Juhan Leppassar, Klaudjius Maniokas, Artur Novak-Far, Ivo Rollis and Ramunas Vilpisauskas.

24 The institutional choice model captures much of the substance of the Dimitrova and Toshkov (2007) ‘politics of institutional choice’ perspective, but neglects the preferences and influence of specific individuals holding key offices. In situations of ‘shallow’ and transient institutions, such as those in the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, individual motivations and qualities are likely to matter more than in highly institutionalized settings where the properties of the office weigh more heavily on the officeholder (Dimitrov et al. 2006). Though not easily modelled, individual personalities can nevertheless be taken into account in the analysis of the development of national coordination systems.

25 In those countries, the development of centralized coordination systems was prompted by the threat of possible exclusion from EU membership.

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