

European Union Public Policy

Professor John Wilton

Lecture 3

Agenda-Setting 1: Role and purpose, EU political process, and the nature of agendas

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Additional Source:

Princen, S. 'Agenda-setting in the E.U.: a theoretical exploration and agenda for research', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 14:1, pp.21-38.

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1. The place of agenda-setting in the policy process – its role and purpose
2. Agenda-setting as a political process – its distinctive aspect in the EU policy process
3. The nature of agendas – the social construction of policy issues

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1. The place of agenda-setting in the policy process

- key difference between EU and individual states
- link between agenda-setting and the EU integration process

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2. Agenda-setting as a political process

a) the identification, determination and clarification of the issue

b) the social and political construction of the issue

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3. The nature of agendas

- differing interpretations of issues, agendas and policies
- danger of different forms of policy outcomes
- negative agenda-setting

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3. The nature of agendas

- The pre-agenda process
 - contending ideas
 - advocacy
 - learning, and knowledge of -
information
 - political debate
 - political difference and/or agreement

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3. The nature of agendas

- first stage of agenda-setting –
social construction of the issue
- additional agenda ‘spillover’
- avoiding conflict between
national interests and EU
interests in agenda-setting

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Summary:

1. The place of agenda-setting in the policy process
 - a) No policy outcomes can be reached without firstly the issue being placed on the EU policy agenda
 - b) Issues reach the policy agenda usually as a result of substantial political mobilisation
 - c) Specific to EU is link between agenda-setting and integration process

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Summary:

1. Agenda-setting as a political process
 - a) Identification, clarification, definition of an issue is open to political self-interest
 - b) Definition of issue will determine which institution and organisation deals with it
 - c) Issues reach EU policy agenda from long-term processes and short-term crisis processes
 - d) EU Commission has initiated large 'bundles' of issues for EU policy agenda

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Summary:

1. The nature of agendas

- a) Issues are open to differing interpretations among 27 Member states
- b) Negative as well as positive agenda-setting
- c) Complex pre-agenda process
- d) Control of ‘social construction’ of issue is key to satisfactory outcome
- e) Avoiding national interest/EU interest conflict assists speedy issue acceptance on to policy agenda