

European Union Public Policy

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Lecture 4

Policy decision-making: institutional analysis

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1. Agenda-setting

- a multitude of E.U. public policy agenda avenues open to policy ‘actors’;

2. Public policy formulation

- a range of policy-making venues within which E.U. public policy is formulated

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STRUCTURE

(in form of institutions)

versus

AGENCY

(in form of role of individuals and groups)

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Analysis of E.U. public policy ‘Agenda-setting’
and policy formulation = ‘bottom up’

- policy networks

+

- role of E.U. institutions
and structures

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Analysis of E.U. public policy decision-making

- focus on structure/institutional element
- focus on European Parliament
 - and its relationship with the Council of Ministers and the national Parliaments of the Member states

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National Parliaments = final policy-making and decision making institutions

European Parliament = slightly different
= considerable/increasing influence over policy-making

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Key issue = what should relationship be between European Parliament and National Member state Parliaments (especially in policy decision-making)?

1. European Parliament should be transformed into an E.U. federal parliament.
2. National Member state parliaments control Member state governments, who then represent the Member states in Council of Ministers

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Challenge = find a mixture of
policy decision-making roles
for all 28 Parliaments (27
Member states Parliaments +
European Parliament)

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E.U. policy-making and decision-making procedures vary considerably across different policy areas

1. Member states ceded policy-making authority to E.U. institutions in areas such as external trade, internal market, and CAP – E.U. legislation binding on Member states

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2. In other policy areas – such as environment, health policy, and regional policies, E.U. legislation is also binding on Member states
 - but in these matters Member states also have legislation of their own and can go further
3. In other policy areas – such as education and culture – the E.U. primarily complements national policy legislation of the Member states and tries to facilitate co-operation among Member states

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4. In other policy areas – such as civil law, income tax, and social-moral issues such as religion and abortion – policy decision-making authority remains with Parliaments of Member states and outside scope of E.U.

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Differences in approach and powers in policy decision-making in different E.U. public policy areas:

- internal market (labour mobility, health and safety in workplace, vocational training, etc.) = authority ceded to E.U.
- health policy, environment policy = subject to binding E.U. legislation, but Member states also have own legislation
- education = E.U. complements national policy of Member states

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Differences in roles and influence of the European Parliament and Member state national parliaments:

- almost all public expenditure and social spending controlled by Member states
- E.U. spends less than 5% of the GDP of whole E.U. area
- Member states spend around 40 to 50% of own GDP on public spending

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European Parliament important in deciding how E.U. spends its money

- as long as it can obtain the necessary majority of members in the European Parliament the E.P. can both change/amend and block (veto) the E.U. budget proposals
- although E.P. powers to amend E.U. budget restricted to non-compulsory expenditure (i.e. excludes CAP) – but E.P. has used its powers to add new budget amounts in policy areas

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e.g., in public policy the E.P. has forced the Council of Ministers to accept increases in funding for education, training, and social and employment policies in recent years

Key change = ‘co-decision procedure’ agreed in Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 (came into operation on 1st May 1999)

- reduced importance of European Commission in policy decision-making

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Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) 'co-decision procedure'

= if E.P. and Council of Ministers agree, then approval of policy decision by the European Commission no longer necessary

- used in most public policy areas, including employment policy, social policy, equal opportunities policy, and broad aspects of environment policy

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- Over past 35 years (since introduction of direct elections in 1989) E.P. become increasingly influential in E.U. public policy decision-making
 - has significant influence over E.U. budget
 - important co-legislator in public policy areas
 - has considerable agenda-setting influence
 - increasingly attractive focus for lobby and interest groups (epistemic communities, policy networks)