

European Union Public Policy

Professor John Wilton

Lecture 4

Policy decision-making 1: institutional analysis

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

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

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

STRUCTURE

(in form of institutions)

versus

AGENCY

(in form of role of individuals and groups)

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

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

- policy networks

+

- role of E.U. institutions
and structures

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

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

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

National Parliaments = final policy-making and decision making institutions

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

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

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

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

Challenge = find a mixture of
policy decision-making roles
for all 29 Parliaments (28
Member states Parliaments +
European Parliament)

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

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

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

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
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

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

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.

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

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

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

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

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

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

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

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

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

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

European Union Public Policy

Lecture 4

- Over past 20 years (since introduction of direct elections in 1980s) 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)