



Bridge over troubled voters?

Coordination between EU governments and European Parliamentarians

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Abstract

The project explores, maps and analyzes the coordination that takes place between national governments of the EU member states and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in parallel with the legislative processes of the EU. Starting from a descriptive section depicting coordination in a broad selection of member states, France, Germany, the UK, Spain, Denmark, Slovakia, and Poland, and their MEPs, the questions are posed: 1) Why do EU member states' governments coordinate with their MEPs in the EU legislative process? 2) Why does coordination vary between the member state governments? 3) How do MEPs perceive and receive the coordination efforts by the governments?

The project assesses the extent to which the efforts by the national governments to coordinate with the MEPs are a direct function of the institutional changes to the EU legislative process that have shifted the balance of power between the Council and the European Parliament. The project then proceeds to seek out the main factors influencing the extent and mode of coordination between the actors, and the reasons member states differ in their approach to coordination. The analysis focuses, in particular, on the sizes and political systems of the member states, as well as on the duration of their EU membership. Finally, MEPs' receptiveness to coordination is investigated, and the effect of national and political affiliation on MEPs' openness to the input they receive from the national governments is analyzed.

Through a qualitative analysis of empirical data gathered from semi-structured interviews with government officials, MEPs and MEP assistants from the selected countries, the project finds that while governments have reacted to the increased relative influence of the European Parliament by seeking to influence legislative negotiations via the MEPs, the development, in several countries, has been less than linear. The duration of states' EU membership and the overall amount of resources the governments allocate to influencing EU negotiations are among the main factors found to affect the governments' level of coordination. The political system of the member states is found to have little influence on the extent or manner of coordination efforts by the governments. In general, MEPs have a positive view of engaging with, and receiving, input of both a political and technical nature from the governments. This positive view largely cuts across the

domestic party political divide and, albeit to a lesser extent, across national lines. It is even found that, among some MEPs, an increased effort by the national governments to engage bilaterally with the MEPs, simultaneously with the formal legislative negotiations between the Council and the European Parliament, would be welcomed.



Jury: Prof. Adrienne Héritier (EUI Emeritus), Prof. Alexander H. Trechsel (EUI), Prof. Dorte Sindbjerg Martinsen (Copenhagen University), Prof. Michael Shackleton, Maastricht (University)

Bio

Rebecca Wolffberg studied European politics and government at the London School of Economics, UK, where she received her MSc in 2008. She also holds a MSc in Public Administration from Roskilde University, Denmark (2009). Prior to commencing her PhD studies at the EUI, Rebecca Wolffberg worked in the Danish Parliament for the European Affairs Committee and the parliamentary delegation to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly.

At the EUI, Rebecca Wolffberg analyzed informal relations between national governments of the EU member states and European Parliamentarians. Rebecca Wolffberg's research interests furthermore include EU public policies, comparative politics, and the legislative processes of the EU.