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## **Unanimity, Consensus and Peripheral Parties as Determinants of EU Policy Coordination in Federal Member States**

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**Abstract** EU scholars have long argued that regions can shape the integration process, but there is no agreement on why this is so. While some authors consider constitutional powers, intergovernmental relations, or differentiated regional elites as independent variables, those interested in Europeanization argue that the ‘transformative power of Europe’ enticed both central and regional governments to adopt consensual policy styles, akin to those prevailing in the EU. Accordingly, new territorial arrangements would have made effective participation in the integration process possible. However, scholars have failed to pay due consideration to a crucial factor: the decision-making rule employed in the coordination mechanisms. In this article, I argue that cooperation among regions actually depends mostly on whether decisions are taken by consensus or unanimity. Common regional positions and impacts on EU decisions become unlikely if peripheral parties increase the levels of conflict. The arguments build on theoretical warrants taken from actor-centered institutionalism.

**Keywords:** European Union; cooperative federalism; peripheral parties; audiovisual policy; cohesion policy; decision-making rules

Since the Maastricht Treaty, EU scholars have fervently discussed whether the process of integration concentrates power at the member state level or grants regions greater autonomy. At the onset of this debate, some authors defended the ‘centralization thesis’, according to which the absence of regions from the Council of the European Union (Bomberg and Peterson, 1998) and the center’s control over implementation increased its influence to the detriment of constituent units

(Bache, 1999). In contrast, other authors argued that *certain* causal factors would enhance the role of regions in shaping EU decisions, to the detriment of the center, because of their contacts with the European Commission (Mazey and Mitchell, 1993; Hooghe, 1995; Hooghe and Marks, 1996; John and McAteer, 1998) and the new sources of revenue, such as the Structural Funds (Marks, 1992; Marks, 1993; John and McAteer, 1998; Bache and Jones, 2000). In both cases, this was a neofunctionalist-inspired response to intergovernmental accounts of the EU that depicted member states' central governments as the masters of the integration process (Milward, 1992; Moravcsik, 1993). Intergovernmentalist, two-level analyses failed to give due consideration to *territorial* interests as formulated by regions (Tatham, 2011).

Pursuing further the question of whether the EU increases the center's grip over domestic politics, Börzel and other authors began to explore the transformation of member states as a result of integration (Risse *et al*, 2001, p. 2; Börzel, 2002; Börzel and Risse, 2006, p. 487). They claim that the EU transforms member states into more cooperative federal systems. Börzel and Risse believe that the renewed territorial structures allow for enhanced regional participation and for a counterbalance to the centralizing tendencies widely considered to be inherent to the integration process. Such a view of Europeanization connected Börzel's point to the centralization thesis and to the question of *when* territorial interests shape EU policies (Tatham, 2011). The Europeanization literature burgeoned in the early years of this century, but it subsequently drew fire from different sides. Critics pointed at the difficulty of identifying instances of EU-induced changes on the polity dimension (Radaelli, 2006, p. 72) and at the neglect of agency and of political conflicts (Mair, 2004; Carter and Pasquier, 2010).

Since 2010, the debate has progressed toward more differentiated answers to the question of whether the EU contributes to making member states more centralized. Some important contributions have been made toward establishing how levels of self-rule versus shared rule bear on regions' responses to integration (Tatham and Bauer, 2014a, b, p. 244), which determine whether membership in the EU leads to more or less centralization in member states. Innovative insights have also resulted from more detailed research on the strategies available to European peripheral parties within multilevel electoral competitions (Elias and Tronconi, 2011; Massetti and Schakel, 2013b) and on the more specific problem of domestic EU policy coordination (Bursens and Deforche, 2008; Bursens *et al*, 2014; Högenauer, 2014b; Jensen *et al*, 2014). However, a large share of the more recent scholarship has dealt with 'unmediated access', or regional attempts to shape EU policies through extra-state channels (Swenden and Bolleyer, 2014a; Tatham, 2014), such as regions' Brussels-based offices (Moore, 2008) and the post-Lisbon Committee of the Regions (Tatham, 2008; Neshkova, 2010, p. 201; Carroll, 2011; Tatham, 2012b; Tatham, 2013), as well as regional associations (Donas and Beyers, 2013). Adopting a different perspective, this article makes only occasional reference to these extra-state channels, whose actual effectiveness depends in any case on regional joint agendas previously defined

domestically (Morcillo Laiz, 2009, pp. 150, 156–157; Högenauer, 2014a, pp. 455, 470). The focus is placed instead on EU domestic policy coordination in federal member states.

Here I argue that, in federal member states, the ability of regions to define common regional positions and advance them in the Council is caused by domestic explanatory variables. More specifically, my claim is that the ability of a region to counteract the concentration of power at the EU level depends on whether common regional positions are defined by consensus instead of unanimously, on the one hand, and on the relations between statewide and peripheral parties, on the other. This argument emphasizes the decision-making rule and the concept of consensus, defined as a preference for unanimous decisions, even if *de jure* only a majority is required (Scharpf, 1997, p. 144). An implication of my argument is that once regions define common regional positions and advance them in the Council, their chances of shaping EU decisions increase.

While my argument is relevant for all federal member states – that is, those whose regions possess final decision-making powers – I concentrate here on the participation of regions from Germany, Italy and Spain in EU audiovisual and cohesion policy decisions between 1997 and 2001. The 1999 cohesion policy reform has provided evidence for numerous publications on regions in the EU, which makes an examination of this episode almost a necessity for an article that aspires to offer an alternative account. However, the present argument is also tested through an audiovisual policy case study, namely an analysis of the 1997 Television Without Frontiers Directive and the Amsterdam Treaty's Broadcasting Protocol signed in 1997. By combining a regulatory and a redistributive policy, I aim to establish the robustness of my findings under a wide range of conditions. Thus, I look at how regions advance ideal (linguistic and cultural) and material (EU subsidies) interests.

The audiovisual and cohesion policy decisions analyzed here seem particularly appropriate for observing the import sway of peripheral parties to EU policy coordination for three reasons. First, media regulation and regional public broadcasters are not only part of audiovisual policy but also crucial for language policy; language, in its turn, is the most common foundation for national communities (Price, 1995, p. 16; Cormack, 1999). For the study of federalism, self-rule on matters of media – and education – is considered crucial (Erk, 2004, pp. 11, 15). Second, cohesion policy's redistributive effects are spatially localized and thus especially relevant for parties whose potential voters are geographically concentrated. Third, analyzing decisions made more than 10 years ago makes it possible to compare EU policy coordination at two points in time, then and now. As I try to show, widespread ideas about federalism in the EU around the turn of the century are actually misleading and present an obstacle to recent attempts to establish which novelties the 'New Europe' has brought for regions (see the introduction to a recent special issue of *Regional & Federal Studies* and the contributions therein; Swenden and Bolleyer, 2014a). A final merit of this research design is that the case selection

dovetails with both Börzel's (1999, 2002) influential comparison of Europeanization in Germany and Spain at *fin de siècle* and Gualini's (2003, 2004) outstanding research on the Europeanization of Italy's regional policy.

The case selection corresponds to a most similar system design while combining regions that differ with regard to independent variables (Przeworski and Teune, 1970, pp. 33–34; King *et al*, 1994, pp. 140–141). In the EU, six member states – Austria, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and Spain – grant their regions final decision-making powers. This article focuses on the last three, which according to the Index of Regional Authority are similar in terms of self-rule (20.2, 18.2, 19.1), while they differ in terms of shared rule (9.0, 1.3, 3.0) (Hooghe *et al*, 2008, pp. 262–266). Of the utmost importance here is that in terms of shared rule, these three member states differ specifically from the decision-making rule. German regions define common positions by consensus, whereas Italian and Spanish regions do so unanimously.

Around 2000, all regions in the case selection were alike in terms of their GDP, GDP per capita and population, particularly so if compared with other regions in the EU (Morcillo Laiz, 2009, pp. 48–51). By contrast, they differed from a party-political perspective. Here, regions without peripheral parties (Rhineland-Palatinate, Valencia, Tuscany) are compared to the Basque Country, where peripheral parties committed to independence accumulate a large share of votes (Masseti and Schakel, 2013b, p. 805). Such a comparison is not possible in the case of Belgium, where no statewide party exists. The evidence comes from published and unpublished primary sources, including almost 60 semi-structured interviews with employees of federal and regional administrations.

The article first examines the relevant literature on policy coordination, regions and Europeanization. The second section contains a case study on audiovisual policy; the third section explores an alternative hypothesis by drawing on evidence from cohesion policy. The conclusion discusses the implications of the findings for other EU member states and for the literature on the EU and federalism.

## **Regions, Coordination Mechanisms and Peripheral Parties**

Within the EU, the powers of regions are at risk of being centralized either at the member state level or in Brussels. Since the integration process implies power transfers from the member states to the European institutions, regions have also had to chip away their competencies (Mazey and Mitchell, 1993, pp. 100–101; Jeffery, 1997, p. 58; Jeffery, 2005). This transfer of regional and federal competencies to the EU prevents regions – but not the center – from shaping their policies. Such is the consequence of most regions being excluded from the Council most of the time (Jeffery, 1997, p. 59; Bomberg and Peterson, 1998) and from policy implementation being controlled by the center (Bache, 1999; Ross and Salvador Crespo, 2003), even if those regions play important roles in certain cases (Borghetto and Franchino,

2010). In view of the intuitive cogency of the arguments underpinning the centralization thesis, it is not surprising that it was widely held during the late 1990s (Bomberg and Peterson, 1998, pp. 221, 234; Bache and Jones, 2000, p. 18; Jeffery, 2000, p. 18). It is only within the past few years that individual authors have made explicit that the centralization thesis was accurate only for certain member state and regions (Jeffery, 2007a).

Since its early formulation, a number of detractors of the centralization thesis had reservations hedged reserves. While they accepted its general import, critics objected that regions could also gain resources – and autonomy – in the European arena (Marks, 1992, pp. 92, 213, 217; Hooghe, 1995; Hooghe and Marks, 1996, 2001, 89, Chapter 5). To sustain this argument, they pointed to contacts between the regions and the Commission and to new resources provided by EU policies such as cohesion that make regions less dependent on the center (Bullmann and Eißel, 1993; Mazey and Mitchell, 1993; Loughlin, 1997; Keating, 1998b, pp. 78, 95). Consequently, these authors claimed that this ‘third level’ had gained influence in the EU within the framework of a wider drive toward multilevel governance (Mazey and Mitchell, 1993; Hooghe, 1995; Hooghe and Marks, 1996, 2001; Marks, 1996; Marks *et al*, 1996; Grande, 2000).

Although these critics of the centralization thesis alleged that the regional leeway in the EU had grown, they provided substantially different explanations. For some, a wide and formal array of constitutionally devolved powers supposedly granted regions improved chances of influencing EU decisions, particularly if they built coalitions (Bomberg and Peterson, 1998, pp. 222, 234; Bache and Jones, 2000, p. 18; Jeffery, 2000, p. 12). Similarly, cohesive regional elites would enable regions to counter the concentration of power at the EU level (Marks *et al*, 1996; Keating, 1997, 1998a, pp. 17–18; Jeffery, 2000; Marks *et al*, 2002). Finally, the importance of intergovernmental relations was sometimes admitted but was considered secondary to constitutional factors (Jeffery, 2000, pp. 14, 17) and was later conflated with the problem of whether these practices were formalized or not (Jeffery, 2007a, p. 6).

As mentioned in the introduction, Europeanization scholars rephrased the question of the concentration of power in Brussels. According to their account, regions effectively participate in EU decisions because the ‘transformative power of the EU’ causes ‘institutional adaptation’ toward a ‘goodness of fit’ (Börzel, 2002, pp. 18–26). Furthermore, the top-down transformation of intergovernmental relations – not the domestic variables – would explain the reduction in the number of conflicts between the center and the regions. An increase in cooperation allegedly happened first in Germany and then in Spain. Even though domestic variables played a role, Börzel 2002 argues that pressure to adapt is born out of the EU’s cooperative style of policymaking, which domestic actors adopt because of institutional isomorphism, eventually generating EU-apt institutions (pp. 3, 6, 23, 25). In other words, EU membership would transform domestic ‘understandings about appropriate behavior’

and enhance regional opportunities to participate in EU decisions (Börzel, 1999, pp. 574–575).

In the last 10 years, the scholarship on Europeanization has been thoroughly questioned. Some detractors were concerned by the emphasis in this literature on the goodness of fit of institutions. Such an emphasis led to a neglect of agency (Radaelli, 2003, pp. 44–46), particularly that of veto players (Menz, 2011, p. 442). Other critics bemoaned the neglect of both political conflict (Mair, 2004), especially territorial conflict (Carter and Smith, 2008, 2010), and informal factors (León and Ferrín Pereira, 2011, p. 529). In the meantime, these pioneers of Europeanization research placed their scholarship within the wider literature on norms diffusion (Börzel and Risse, 2012).

More recently, political and methodological novelties have provided the research on Europeanization and on regions in the EU with renewed momentum. Successive enlargements have brought several non-federal member states into the EU and turned legislative regions into a minority. As a result, an ‘EU-28 of the Regions’ has become even more unlikely than the previous EU-15 (Jeffery, 2007a; Tatham, 2012a). While this could have kept a tight rein on the ‘Europe of the Regions’, the Lisbon Treaty bestowed new powers upon the Committee of the Regions, basically a right to resort to the European Court of Justice, drawing the attention of scholars toward a regional chamber that allegedly is now influential (Neshkova, 2010; Carroll, 2011; Tatham, 2013; Tatham and Thau, 2014).

A second reason why research on regions in the EU now offers interesting novelties is that questions first raised in the 1990s have now been formulated in a way more akin to an empirical test. Surveys have been conducted (Tatham, 2014), new data collected (Tatham, 2013; Tatham and Thau, 2014) and officials interviewed in such numbers that large-N studies suitable for statistical analysis are now available (Tatham and Bauer, 2014a, b), as well as comparative research that includes up to five member states (Högenauer, 2014a, b). Among the issues at stake now are the reasons why regions advance their interests through extra-state channels or favor cooperative intrastate strategies, which require more domestic coordination (Bursens and Deforche, 2008; Tatham, 2012b; Högenauer, 2014a, pp. 455, 470). Another question that deserves attention is the origin of a regional preference for further integration as opposed to increased protection of regions’ competences. For instance, from a large number of interviews and a non-representative survey, Tatham and Bauer (2014a, b) found that for constituent units from federal member states, the EU represents something different depending on their levels of shared rule versus self-rule. The implication of their finding is that regions now welcome further integration only if they benefit from shared rule and therefore from the possibility of shaping the policy-making process. This article zooms in on the *domestic* operation of shared rule and discusses the resulting insights in relation to the influence of peripheral parties (I have analyzed extra-state channels elsewhere; Morcillo Laiz, 2009, pp. 93–112, 139–157).

Its final aim is to better understand regions' ability to cooperate among themselves, and with the center, to shape EU decisions.

To be more precise, in this article I argue that whether regions may counter the transfer of powers to the EU and shape the decisions taken in Brussels depends on the decision-making rule applied within coordination mechanisms, and on the conflicts among statewide and peripheral parties. The bodies in which domestic negotiations on EU agendas take place, which I call 'coordination mechanisms', are termed *Ressortkonferenzen* in Germany and *Conferenza Stato-Regioni* in Italy. In Spain, the *conferencias sectoriales* are the 'center of gravity' of policy coordination (Contreras and Kölling, 2013, p. 256); the three bodies are empirical instances of what Scharpf, (1997, pp. 37–43) calls 'institutional setting' and Radaelli (2003, p. 36) labels 'domestic structures'. The decision-making rule applied in the coordination mechanisms is established by a statute that also indicates when a common regional position binds the center.

According to my argument, when agreements among regions are struck by consensus rather than unanimously, constituent units may advance their agendas in the Council and shape EU decisions. As defined by actor-centered institutionalism, consensus is a decision-making rule characterized both by a widespread *informal* preference for unanimous decisions and by *formal* rules that permit a majority to make decisions should unanimity turn out to be unattainable. The threat of majoritarian decision making moves actors to make concessions, expanding the win-set to possibilities unattainable under the unanimity rule (Scharpf, 1997, p. 144). In other words, 'the barriers to reaching a collective position are low in that majority voting *can* be used' (Högenauer, 2014b, p. 335, my emphasis). In contrast, under the more stringent rule of unanimity, *all* actors must agree. If constituent units do not unanimously define a regional common interest, then the central government retains the ability to freely set the stance of the member state in the Council, avoiding the 'join-decision trap' (Scharpf, 2006). *De facto*, defining a unanimous common regional position is so difficult that constituent units do not even attempt to do so unless there is a real chance of binding the center. The importance of unanimity as the decision-making rule for intergovernmental relations has also been recognized in Spain (Aja, 2003; Beltrán García, 2012a, p. 429; Contreras and Kölling, 2013, p. 267). The emphasis on whether the decision-making rule is consensus or unanimity allows me to 'classify co-ordination ... mechanisms' and to advance 'clearly defined and operationalized concept[s]' (Jensen *et al*, 2014, p. 1238). Put differently, this article is an attempt to closely examine Jeffery's (2007a) second regional strategy, which consists of codetermining the member states' positions in EU matters (p. 2).

These arguments rely on an approach originally devised to explain how 'purposive actors' operate when they are negotiating within institutional settings (Scharpf, 1992; Scharpf, 1994, 1997, p. 36; Mayntz and Scharpf, 1995). While actor-centered institutionalism relies on a wealth of empirical research on policy coordination in Germany, it has only recently been applied to EU policy coordination in



Germany (Jensen, 2014) and in the EU generally (Falkner, 2011); it has only rarely been applied in comparative attempts to explain the outcomes of coordination mechanisms. Admittedly, approaches that target intergovernmental bodies in which ‘the regions and the state’ agree on ‘what their [European] interest is’ are not fully unknown to EU scholarship (Keating and Hooghe, 2006, p. 274). However, my hypothesis is more parsimonious than Högenauer’s (2014b), which is equally based on coordination mechanisms (p. 322); it also differs from broader characterizations of multilevel systems as dual versus competitive (Swenden and Bolleyer, 2014b, p. 397) because it delves into the disparate consequences of the decision-making rules and into the different effects of shared rule versus self-rule on regional responses to the EU, as suggested by recent scholarship (Tatham and Bauer, 2014a, p. 1371, 2014b, p. 256).

The article also attempts to go beyond existing scholarship by examining not only the norms that regulate coordination mechanisms but also the actors that are subject to those norms. This is why an answer to the question of which regions coordinate their EU agendas must pay attention to political parties, in particular peripheral ones. According to the literature on regions, peripheral parties and minority nationalism enhance the clout of constituent units because homogeneous regional elites resist the concentration of power at the EU level (Marks *et al*, 1996, pp. 44–45; Keating, 1997, 1998a; Jeffery, 2000, pp. 11, 17). Marks and his coauthors argued, for instance, that a differentiated identity or durable discrepancies in party color among central and peripheral governments explain domestic disparities in regional mobilization in the European arena. Following Keating (1997, 1998a), Jeffery (2000) similarly claimed that ethnic solidarity or fragmented party systems may give regions ‘a role alongside central state institutions as authoritative interlocutors between the Member State and “Europe”’ (p. 11; see also p. 17).

In contrast, I contend here that peripheral parties render regional influence on EU decisions less likely. When parties are accountable to regional *and* statewide constituencies – divided government – they experience enormous difficulties in reaching agreements (Scharpf, 1997, pp. 162–163, 191–193). Since peripheral parties pay attention exclusively to the constituency to which they present candidates – or to particular subpopulations, such as a linguistic minority – a wedge emerges between them and statewide parties that seek votes and offices across *all* of a country’s constituencies, a dilemma for statewide parties called the ‘double-agent position’ (Ştefuriuc, 2009, p. 112). According to the characteristic of their constituencies, peripheral parties define their own identity, in terms of both the specific *goals* they seek and the normatively acceptable *conditions* considered desirable for achieving those goals (Scharpf, 1997, pp. 64–66). As a consequence, peripheral parties’ normative orientations are compatible with carrying out center-periphery conflicts to extremes inconceivable among statewide parties. While this terminology has been borrowed from Scharpf, my second explanatory variable, just like the first one, presents parallelisms to concept used by other authors within

European studies. The most relevant ones are Radaelli's (2003) 'shared beliefs and norms' (p. 30) and Börzel's (1999) 'understandings about appropriate behavior' (p. 579). To sum up, the differences that *must* exist between statewide and peripheral parties hint that the unanimity rule may have disruptive consequences for decision making.

## Audiovisual Policy: Common Concerns, But No Unanimity

EU regulations of television broadcasting impinge on regions' media powers. In the case of Germany, the *Länder* hold all public television channels and *exclusive* jurisdiction to enact radio, television and cinema legislation (Jeffery, 1997, p. 73; Kleinsteuber and Thomaß, 1999; Erk, 2003). Similarly, Spain's regions own TV channels, although they *share* the power to legislate on audiovisual matters with the central government (López *et al*, 1999; Montero and Brokelmann, 1999). To counteract a potential centralization of these powers, the *Länder* define common regional positions that bind the center's standpoint in the Council, whereas in Spain regions may advise the center on their own media-related concerns. This section analyzes why in the late 1990s, the *Länder* agenda shaped the EU audiovisual policy far more than the agendas of Spanish regions did.

EU media policy decisions in the late 1990s were preceded by intensive discussions among the Commission, the European Parliament and the member states (Drijber, 1999; König, 2002; Harcourt, 2005). Some of the crucial issues at stake were quotas, restrictions on advertising, broadcasting of major sports events and subsidies to public channels, including regional ones, as listed in Table 1. Quotas established by the Television Without Frontiers Directive (Article 4) compelled broadcasters to buy European audiovisual works. Unlike the voluntary quotas established in 1989, the EU Commission's 1995 draft directive mandated compulsory quotas, stricter enforcement

**Table 1:** Audiovisual policy, agendas and output

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Germany</i>			<i>Spain</i>			<i>EU</i>		
	<i>RLP</i>	<i>FC</i>	<i>FG</i>	<i>BC</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>SP</i>	<i>DGC</i>	<i>EP</i>	<i>Output</i>
Compulsory quotas	—	—	√	O	O	—	√	—	—
Advertisement restrictions	—	—	—	√	O	O	—	√	—
Major sporting events	—	—	√	O	√	—	√	√	√
PBS	√	√	√	√	√	√	—	√	√

RLP: Rhineland-Palatinate; FC: Federal chamber (Bundesrat); FG: German federal government; BC: Basque Country; V: Valencia; SP: Spanish center (Spain); DGC: DG Competition; EP: European Parliament; (—) Opposition; (√) support; (O) no definite position.

*Source:* Compiled by author.

and fines for broadcasters and placed restrictions on advertising, limiting broadcasters' ability to attract advertising revenue and thereby favoring public channels. Pay-per-view broadcasts of major sporting events, such as the World Cup, had been common since the early 1990s. To counteract that trend, the draft directive granted public channel and other free television channels the right of first refusal for major sporting events before pay TVs could buy broadcasting rights. The aim of this was to attract viewers to public television, which faced increasingly stiff competition from pay TVs (Krebber, 2002, pp. 141–146). Finally, the Amsterdam Treaty's Broadcasting Protocol signed in 1997 explicitly exempted public broadcasters from the state-aid prohibition in TEC Article 87.1 (currently TFEU Article 107.1; Zeller, 1999, p. 237). Similar issues were perceived as controversial in Germany and Spain, but the agendas differed, as did their impact on EU decisions.

The *Länder* advanced a common regional position with a measure of success. Since the 1980s, German regions had rejected any European regulation of broadcasting content as interfering with their media-policy powers, of which they are particularly (Jeffery, 1997, pp. 58, 73, 2007b, p. 25; Erk, 2003). This common regional position was formalized in the *Bundesrat*, where decisions are most often consensual, even if a reinforced majority suffices (Scharpf, 1988, p. 267). The *Länder* responded to the draft directive by rejecting programming quotas, advertisement restrictions and the regulation of sports broadcasting. Of these three main issues, two were eventually settled in ways amenable to it (see Table 1), just like other audiovisual policy decisions, including the MEDIA to support the production and distribution of European films (Morcillo Laiz, 2009, pp. 84–92, 102–103, 110–111). The most important decision among those made in the late 1990s was the inclusion in the Amsterdam Treaty's Public Broadcasting Protocol of a safeguard for the right of central and regional governments to subsidize their public channels (Jeffery, 1997, pp. 65–66; Schmuck, 1997, p. 230).

The *Länder's* ability to define a common regional position was not the automatic consequence of convergent interests. Not only did regions governed by the Christian democrats (CDU) hold more liberal agendas than those governed by the social democrats (SPD), but the concerns of public and private channels also had to be reconciled. For example, while the Rhineland-Palatinate, chair of the *Rundfunkkommission* and seat of a private TV, championed the opposition of these channels to advertising limits, the other *Länder* were unconcerned because regional broadcasters benefited from compulsory fees. Nonetheless, they adopted Rhineland-Palatinate's position (Knothe and Bashayan, 1997; Schmuck, 1997). A further controversial topic was the clause reserving major sporting events for free TV. Even though this provision favored regional broadcasters, the *Länder* rejected it because of pressure by Bavaria. The regional capital, Munich, was the headquarters of Kirch Media, which had bought the rights to air the 1998 and 2002 World Cups on pay-per-view channels (Krebber, 2002, pp. 41, 144). In short, despite differing agendas on the directive, the *Länder* stated a common regional position by consensus, not by a reinforced

majority. Regarding the Public Broadcasting Protocol, the *Länder* collaborated with an informal group, Friends of the Protocol, which included the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). In fact, according to one of the heads of European affairs in Rhineland-Palatinate, the EBU redacted the tenor of the protocol and the regional PM, which represented the German regions during the Intergovernmental Conference and managed to put the proposal on its agenda.

The long-established German routine of collaboration clearly contrasts with the history of indifference combined with occasional conflicts that elsewhere pervade the debates on television broadcasting. In Spain, unanimous agreements on audiovisual media policy must be forged in the *Conferencia Sectorial de Cultura*, a body that had met only three times in the 2 years before the 1995 directive. In one of those meetings, the directive was discussed, but no negotiations took place, and no regional demands were formulated. Instead, the center merely briefed regions on the directive Ministerio de Cultura (1995). Interestingly, the Basque and Catalan regional representatives were absent from this important meeting. Years later, a Basque official admitted that at the time they were unable to understand the implications of the directive, in particular of the quotas. In any case, the Spanish co-rapporteur of the directive, Gerardo Galeote (EPP), claimed that he had perceived no interest from the regions, and only a limited concern from the association of regional public TVs, the FORTA. As for the autonomous communities, the head of the Basque department for European affairs noted that at the time contacts to Galeote were scarce and focused on ETA terrorism. Of course, no unanimous agreement on the directive was struck by the Spanish center and its regions.

Not a radical opposition of interests but preexisting audiovisual policy conflicts explain why regions such as the Basque Country were absent from the coordination mechanisms. In the early 1990s, PSOE, a statewide social democratic party, formed the Spanish government, and its public broadcaster, Radio Televisión Española (RTVE), went to great lengths to keep the Basque and Catalan public channels out of the EBU, which administered broadcasting rights for major sporting events (Zeller, 1999, pp. 205–206, 210). The former director of the *Ràdio Televisió Valenciana* (RTVV) mentioned to this author the diverse – failed – attempts of the regional TVs to become part of EBU. That episode set hurdles to later collaboration on audiovisual policy between the center and the regions because the regional channels were excluded from the EBU. This organization orchestrated the strategy to include the protocol, about which Spanish regions simply ‘were not informed’ (*no estaban al tanto*), as laconically admitted by the Spanish civil servant in charge. According to him, the coordination problems were simply a consequence of the absence of the regional TVs ‘from the organizational chart’ of the Spanish Ministry for Industry Trade and Tourism. When DG Competition tried to repeal the protocol through a subsequent interpretive decision, the center made an effort to attract regional support for a common Spanish position on it, but it was too late. Despite appeals from the center ‘to fight for the languages’, as that civil servant put it, most regions opted for

lobbying through the FORTA, rather than collaborating with the center and its broadcaster. According to the director of RTVV, regional broadcasters tried to collaborate with the center, but its strategy was focused exclusively on protecting RTVE, rather than the regional broadcasters.

No doubt, pointing to divergent, objective policy interests could challenge my argument. A conceivable line of reasoning would be to argue that the center and the regions were unable to identify shared goals because of the disparate linguistic and audiovisual policies of the Spanish center, where a 'supercentral language' (Swaan, 2001) is spoken, and those of regions where Basque, Catalan and Galician are also used. The different interests would explain why these regions had to push for a position different from that of the center, and from the Spanish-speaking *comunidades autónomas*. However, it is possible to weaken this objection by zooming in on the Valencian audiovisual agenda because, in fact, only some of the regions where a vernacular is spoken are interested in minority languages. In the Basque Country, the PNV has historically backed a linguistic and media policy aimed at revitalizing *Euzkera*, the regional language (Corcuera Atienza, 2001, p. 433). Conversely, the local dialect of Catalan is considered a liability, and a reminder of Valencia's historical links with Catalonia, by the statewide conservative *Partido Popular* (PP), which was at the helm there between 1995 and 2015. Therefore, the PP promotes a Spanish-language-oriented media policy to halt what it sees as a pan-Catalonian threat (Viadel, 2010); that this perception was relevant was confirmed in an interview of a former director of the Catalan broadcaster, Corporació Catalana de Ràdio i Televisió. Since the mid-1990s, the government of Valencia has disregarded the possibilities for linguistic policy that media policy offered and tried to privatize content production for its public channel (García Parreño, 2000; Sindicatura de Cuentas, 2005). In the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis, a highly indebted RTVV was closed, moving commentators to regret a decision harmful to the local vernacular (Puig, 2014).

Thus, it makes sense that the Valencian executive was uninterested in protecting linguistic minorities through the 1997 directive and unaware of the negotiation of the protocol, as revealed by the then-director of RTVV. Still, Valencia defended the regional broadcaster from the threats of DG Competition but eschewed an agreement with the central government on this matter and cooperated instead on the regional FORTA effort. The Valencian conservative executive flouted both the Basque PNV concern with minority languages, despite its own vernacular, and the center's audiovisual agenda, notwithstanding a convergent interest in protecting public channels.

The preceding analysis of audiovisual policy negotiations reveals very little of the alleged decrease of conflict between the center and the regions that had allegedly occurred in Spain by the late 1990s. No joint agendas were defined by the center and the regions within the frame of cooperative federalism. Consequently, it seems doubtful that a Europeanization of coordination mechanisms would have taken place. In reality, the Spanish regions were unable to advance a joint, unanimously defined agenda, although they did share some goals with the center, such as the defense of

public channels. By contrast, the *Länder* reached consensual agreements despite divergent interests. In any case, the EU decisions – against compulsory quotas and further advertising restrictions, but in favor of subsidies to public broadcasters – resulted from the German common position rather than from the interventionist preference of the Basque government. The next section analyzes nonbinding common regional positions on a distributive policy issue.

## Cohesion Policy: Divergent Interests and Territorial Cleavages

Allocations from the EU's Structural Funds are assigned to specific geographic areas – about €258 billion between 2000 and 2006 (Allen, 2010, p. 237). As a result of its regionalized character (Bache, 2008, pp. 44–45), cohesion policy is particularly relevant for the study of peripheral political parties whose voters are by definition locally concentrated. From this article's perspective, another relevant trait of cohesion policy is that common regional positions on this subject, unlike those on audiovisual policy, are not binding on central governments. Nonetheless, they must at least give consideration to regional preferences. So this policy case study affords a basis for exploring an alternative hypothesis to mine, which is that the *Länder* define common regional positions *only if* they are binding for the government, as Högenauer (2014b, p. 330) claims happens in Austria. By contrast, my argument is that consensual decision making is what makes an agreement likely, not its binding character. The unanimity rule made it exceedingly difficult to define common regional positions in Italy and Spain during the 1999 reform.

This section compares the preferences for the so-called Agenda 2000 in the Rhineland-Palatinate, Tuscany and the Basque Country. All of these regions were similar in terms of populations, per capita GDP and eligibility for cohesion policy funds under Objective 2 for areas in industrial decline (Sutcliffe, 2000; Bachtler and Méndez, 2007, p. 542); their agendas are easy to spot in Table 2. Note that here

**Table 2:** Cohesion policy, agendas, and output

<i>Agenda Item</i>	<i>Germany</i>			<i>Spain</i>		<i>Italy</i>		<i>EU output</i>
	<i>RLP</i>	<i>FC</i>	<i>FG</i>	<i>BC</i>	<i>SP</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>I</i>	
Decouple Objective 2 from 87.3.c	✓	✓	✓	—	—	✓	✓	✓
CI Conver	✓	✓	—	—	—	—	—	○
Softer eligibility criteria	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓	○
Left Margin	—	—	—	✓	—	—	—	—

T: Tuscany; I: Italian central government. For other abbreviations see Table 1.

*Source:* Compiled by author.

Tuscany appears in place of Valencia because the logic of cohesion policy required selecting an Objective 2 region governed by a statewide party.

The German regions defined a common regional position on the 1999 cohesion policy reform, even though it was not binding for the central government. Striking an agreement was not an easy task because the *Länder's* interests diverged as a consequence of abysmal economic disparities that existed among them. Significant differences occurred even among the rich West German regions in the south of the country and the rest, which moved a regional official from Rhineland-Palatinate to note that the common regional position was 'full of contradictions'. For instance, his and other less well-off regions reluctantly supported affluent regions in demanding an extension of the 87.3.c TEC derogations. Such a demand was actually detrimental to poorer regions, which, unlike Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, were unable to grant subsidies even if an exemption of the prohibition to do so were granted. In exchange for supporting wealthy regions, the *Bundesrat* – over the objections of wealthier regions – backed Conver, a community initiative (CI) sponsored by Rhineland-Palatinate. Its aim was to turn closed-down military bases, which had caused sudden job losses, into civil infrastructure. This polemic reveals the opposing points of view of the *Länder* but remained without practical consequences because the then-Chancellor Helmut Kohl's federal government ultimately rejected Conver, and some other regional demands. In addition, the center did take up two issues introduced in the common regional position by the affluent Christian democratic *Länder* (see Table 2). Regarding softer eligibility criteria, the federal government had to make concessions to the Commissions and other member states, but the final regulation was considered a success for Germany, and not only by my interviewees (Hüttmann Große and Knodt, 2000, p. 38).

While Germany's *Länder* were able to define a common regional position, the rule of unanimity prevented Italian regions from reaching a timely agreement. Simultaneously, it permitted peripheral parties from Northern Italy to veto all alternatives and impose a bargain on all parts, including the center. The developments in Italy that led to an open conflict between the center and the Objective 2 regions are intricate. Since detailed analyses are available elsewhere (Ciaffi, 2001; Gualini, 2003), my own account focuses on the specific episode that is most relevant for my argument.

After collaboration at the administrative level among the regions ceased in February 1999, negotiations were assumed by the regional PMs (Ministero del Tesoro, del Bilancio e della Programmazione Economica, 1999). From then until early 2000, it looked as if Italy would be unable to begin structural planning in January 2000, as originally intended (Dipartimento per le politiche di sviluppo e di coesione, 1998). In fact, in February and March 2000, the center and the regions were still bargaining. Even more important, they were in the middle of a regional electoral campaign that brought landslide victories for *Lega Nord*, a peripheral party, and the center-right coalition *Casa delle Libertà* (Chiaramonte and Virgilio, 2000, p. 533; Fargion *et al*, 2006, p. 773). In the following months, the winners remade the

cohesion and competition policy maps unilaterally and tried to impose these on the remaining Objective 2 regions. More precisely, this 'political provocation' (Gualini, 2003, p. 628) consisted in Lombardy and Piedmont being allowed to readjust their Objective 2 areas to compensate for yielding 87.3.a TEC areas to Liguria and Friuli-Venezia-Giulia (Ciaffi, 2001, pp. 467, 470). Nonetheless, this last region and Val d'Aosta rejected the maps and preemptively blocked an agreement, as they alleged potential great losses in terms of both Objective 2 and of 87.3.c TEC derogations (Ministero del Tesoro, del Bilancio e della Programmazione Economica, 2001).

For my argument, the crucial fact is that such a strategy – to agree to the maps only after additional eligible areas had been transferred to them – was feasible only for actors, such as peripheral parties, with basic interests and normative orientations toward *a part* of the country. In contrast, Tuscany and other center-left Objective 2 regions in Central Italy had to yield in the face of the demands the northern regions placed on them. A Tuscan regional official pointed out that his PM, Claudio Martini, 'accepted a sub-optimal solution' because the commitment to policy coordination compelled the center-left government in Rome to accept any outcome short of total failure, a decision in line with the engagement of the Tuscan leadership in European affairs (Fargion *et al*, 2006, pp. 766, 781). The central government eventually incorporated the modifications into its proposal, although it was critical of *how* the agreement had been defined, and sent it to Brussels in late June 2000.

Hitherto, the best scholarship on European policy coordination has explained the outcome of the negotiations by emphasizing the conflict between the leftist central government and northern regions governed by center-right *Casa delle Libertà* (Gualini, 2003, pp. 628–629). However, the regions that imposed the agreement on protected areas in central Italian regions were also under the sway of *Lega Nord*, a peripheral party, whose rise explains the electoral success of the center right (Chiaromonte and Virgilio, 2000, p. 533). The *Lega* also enhanced its clout within the coalition based on the increase in voters' support it had obtained. Consequently, a northern axis emerged, composed of the *Lega Nord* and its Lombardy allies within *Forza Italia* (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005). Indeed, the *Lega Nord* showed both considerable 'formation' and 'coalition weight' (Wilson, 2009, pp. 68–71; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2010, p. 1323). Subsequently, regional interests became more relevant in the parties' agendas (Graziano, 2003, pp. 329–330). In conclusion, while there are broad hints at the importance of parties for the 1999 cohesion policy reform (Fargion *et al*, 2006, pp. 773, 780), this makes apparent that the center-periphery cleavage augmented the difficulty of defining common regional positions under the unanimity rule.

The explanatory import of the unanimity rule and of peripheral parties receives confirmation from the Spanish strategy for the reform. The coordination mechanisms on the policy of cohesion are similar to Italy's: decisions are unanimous and not binding on the center. In the case of cohesion policy, the discussion takes place in the *Foro de Economía Regional*, which is not a ministerial meeting, but a second-level



sector conference in which regional officials express their preferences during informal sessions – no minutes are taken (Fernández Miranda, 1999, 2000; Bourne, 2003, pp. 612–615). The center officials I interviewed did not mention the Foro as a body in which the cohesion policy reform was discussed, while a Basque civil servant considered it a useful body, but one in which merely ‘information would be exchanged; it was before Internet existed’. In any case, the *Foro* has never produced a single unanimous common regional decision that might have influenced the center’s stance in the Council of Ministers.

Notwithstanding the center’s grip on cohesion policy, the Basque government defined an extremely ambitious agenda for its large Objective 2 areas (Gobierno Vasco, 1998) The PNV-led executive went as far as to include the declaration of Bilbao’s Left Margin as a small Objective 1 area and also aspired to the admissibility of overlapping of Objective 2 and 87.3.c areas (see Table 2). Such a maximalist approach necessarily had to encroach on the concerns of other Spanish regions, and of the Madrid executive. The high-ranking officials from the central government I interviewed found ‘no reason whatsoever’ to try to declare the Left Margin an Objective 1 area. Not surprisingly, the center’s refusal to take up the Basque agenda moved the PNV to mount a media campaign for its preferences, both at home and in Brussels, and brought the region into open conflict with both its domestic and European counterparts (Bourne, 2003, p. 614). This campaign, with its emphasis on denigrating the central Spanish government, confirms the PNV’s identity as the advocate of a specifically Basque constituency, and as an actor with a normative role orientation that pushes federal loyalty aside. As the PNV campaign developed, the PP successfully managed to expel the PNV from the EPP, as a response to the Lizarra Pact for the independence of the Basque Country, which the PNV signed with Herri Batasuna, a political party allied to ETA, the separatist, terrorist group. Both PNV and PP interviewees, including Miguel Arias-Cañete (EPP), admitted that the Lizarra Pact and the ETA killings of local PP and PSOE politicians made collaboration in Brussels exceedingly difficult. Predictably, none of the Basque demands were implemented as part of the 1999 cohesion policy reform.

The preceding comparison among regional strategies has shown that consensual decision making on cohesion policy is indeed possible, even when regional agendas differ widely, as was the case between West and East German *Länder*. Coordination thus seems to depend less on an absolute identity of interests – or on whether common regional positions bind the center, as Högenauer contends (2014b, p. 330) – than on the decision-making rule. Once an agenda has been defined, it is possible for the center, the *Länder* and the MEPs to consensually advance their goals. Conversely, the lack of a shared set of objectives further reduced the ability of the Spanish and Italians to achieve comparable inroads in the EU debates and decisions. In the case of Spain, the EP rapporteur of one of the Structural Funds regulations best summarized the one-sidedness of the center’s agenda. According to this interviewee, Arias-Cañete, who was at the time chair of the Committee on Regional Policy, ‘was

concerned with fisheries and agricultural issues, not at all with Objective 2 regions'. Such a clear-cut agenda, and Arias's focus on Objective 1, is hard to reconcile with the idea of cooperative federalism.

As a matter of fact, no traces of Börzel's *explanandum* could be identified here: rather than new, cooperative, consensual policy styles and EU-like 'understandings of what constitutes appropriate behavior' (Börzel, 2002, p. 8; see also pp. 6, 214), the case studies brought to light negotiations in which regions oscillated between 'apathy' (Contreras and Kölling, 2013, p. 262) and highly conflictive decisions – 'veritable power struggles' (Baudner and Bull, 2013, p. 203) – taken by Spanish and Italian peripheral parties.

## Conclusions

On the basis of regional case studies from three EU member states, and from audiovisual and cohesion policy decisions, this article explains why regions in certain member states are better able than others to coordinate their EU agendas, a finding that introduces a useful hedge into the centralization thesis (Moravcsik, 1993; Bomberg and Peterson, 1998; Bache, 1999). In medium-sized member states such as Italy and Spain, the unanimity rule, which grants every constituent unit a veto power, leads to a lack of agreement among regions and, in turn, prevents them from having their preferences included in the bargaining positions of the member state in the Council (Morcillo Laiz, 2009, pp. 178–179). Consequently, regions in Spain and Italy have fewer chances of shaping European policy. By contrast, common regional positions make it possible for the regions to jointly resort to extra-state channels of interest representation (such as the collaboration with MEPs employed by the *Länder* during the cohesion policy reform; Morcillo Laiz, 2009, pp. 150–156). Similar levels of self-rule notwithstanding (Hooghe *et al*, 2008, pp. 262–266), the German *Länder* wielded more influence on EU decisions – on six out of the eight topics analyzed here – than Italian *regioni* and Spanish autonomous communities. Certainly, for member states such as Germany and Belgium, due consideration should be given to *territorial* interests, even from a liberal intergovernmentalist perspective (Bursens and Geeraerts, 2006, pp. 170, 173; Tatham, 2011).

Despite being some of the most federalized EU member states, Germany and Italy and Spain offered significantly different opportunities for their regions to participate in the integration process. Even if the belief in an apparent convergence was widespread (Börzel, 1999), the disparities in EU policy coordination among *federal* states identified here confirm the importance of distinguishing self-rule versus shared rule, also called coordination mechanisms, as two aspects of regional authority with different consequences (Tatham and Bauer, 2014b, p. 244; earlier, Tatham raised claims that went in the opposite direction, see Tatham, 2011, pp. 76–77). To discriminate among federalisms according to the decision-making

rule seems more fruitful than to classify them as dual versus cooperative (Swenden and Bolleyer, 2014b, p. 397), at least when the issue at stake is the domestic coordination of EU policy.

Disparities in EU policy coordination are a consequence of the unanimity rule, and of the interplay among parties with different constituencies, including peripheral ones with a 'narrow focus on distinctive regional interests' (Jeffery, 2007a, pp. 2, 8). Peripheral parties, as representatives of distinct constituencies, embrace normative orientations compatible with advancing maximalist interests that harm citizens within the same member state, as the PNV and some northern Italian regions did. Peripheral parties may even blackmail other actors because of their indifference to interests outside their own local clienteles. At the same time, readiness to provoke conflicts – or lack of federal loyalty – was also recognizable in the center's opportunism on audiovisual policy coordination; this could be seen as an instance of what Verge (2013) has called an 'adversarial centralist strategy' (p. 333).

These results go against widely accepted claims raised by scholars interested in Europeanization and in regions, but they receive at least partial confirmation from other authors. Bourne (2008) scrutinized the tensions between the Basque and the Spanish governments in the 1990s (pp. 138–139); my characterization of peripheral parties' strategies is widely supported by the literature on multilevel electoral competition (Hopkin, 2009; Ștefuriuc, 2009; Swenden and Maddens, 2009).

The consequence of combining the unanimity rule with peripheral parties is the absence of common regional positions. Therefore, this causal link should be reckoned with when it comes to establishing the sway of regional interests in the EU, *together with* the constitutional range of powers (Bomberg and Peterson, 1998, p. 231; Bache and Jones, 2000, p. 18), intergovernmental relations (Jeffery, 2000, p. 17) and differentiated identities (Bomberg and Peterson, 1998, pp. 222, 234; Bache and Jones, 2000, p. 18; Jeffery, 2000, p. 14). Cohesive regional elites are an important independent variable, but they operate in the opposite causal direction to the one hypothesized by other authors (Marks *et al*, 1996, 2002; Keating, 1997, 1998a). A caveat is appropriate here, though. Radical and separationist parties as in the Basque Country and Northern Italy are an exception in the EU (Masseti and Schakel, 2013a, p. 5).

By exploring the combined effect of two explanatory variables, this article sheds light on the claim that Europeanization moves federalism toward a goodness of fit (Börzel, 2002, pp. 6, 23, 25). The differences between unanimous versus consensual decision making, as well as the clout of peripheral parties, make apparent the enormous distance between Spain's federalism and Börzel's 'German model' (2002, p. 212). As for Italy, a recent study on the implementation of cohesion policy concludes with the idea that 'the resulting change ... can hardly be described in terms of adaptation to European policies' (Baudner and Bull, 2013, p. 217). In addition, it is actually the case that German coordination mechanisms and the Italian and Spanish ones differ on numerous respects, apart from the 'formal arrangements'

(Bursens *et al*, 2014, pp. 378–379), even if I have emphasized here the decision-making rule. As a consequence, practices such as issue linkages, side payments and cross-sectorial deals, which would be conducive to joint agendas, are banned, setting additional hurdles to the definition of agreements, as suggested by sound theoretical and empirical arguments (Scharpf, 1992, p. 16; Morcillo Laiz, 2009, pp. 168–169; León and Ferrín Pereira, 2011, pp. 519, 522). As a Spanish scholar candidly put it, the rules on coordination are ‘hard to fulfil ... because there is no an appropriate system ... to define agreements’ (Beltrañ Garcíá , 2012b, p. 145). While they could not be explored here, these arguments point at the benefit of explicitly framing EU research within a broader theory of organizations such as actor-centered institutionalism. All empirically relevant regularities or ‘arrangements’, both formal and informal, should be included in our analyses as well.

For the preceding reasons, I remain sceptical about claims of an enhanced role of the regions in the Spanish EU policy. Admittedly, when the social democratic leader José Rodríguez Zapatero was appointed PM in 2004, some progress was made in terms of regional participation in the Council (Colino *et al*, 2014, pp. 286–287). However, some sector conferences have been turned into battlegrounds as a consequence of the 2008 economic crisis (Aja and Colino, 2014, p. 462). But, the decisive variables – the rule of unanimity, tensions between center and peripheral parties – have remained unchanged. This is why the prevailing views on the developments after 2004 are unduly optimistic, as the Aron Report revealed for the Scottish case (McEwen *et al*, 2012, p. 335). This purported stability, which results from the inaccuracies in the customary descriptions of EU policy coordination, may explain the contradiction the experts on EU regions incur when trying to give a comparative account of the current situation in Spain (Colino *et al*, 2014; Swenden and Bolleyer, 2014a, p. 254; Swenden and Bolleyer, 2014b, p. 394). In fact, nobody has hitherto produced evidence of the Spanish central government altering its stance on an EU policy as a consequence of a common regional position unanimously defined by the autonomous communities. Irrespective of the reasons the Basque and Catalan governments call separatist referenda, this seems hardly compatible with a ‘cooperative strategy’ (Börzel, 2002, p. 219) (see *Financial Times*, 2004, 2014).

Compared with large-N studies, policy case studies such as those offered here give solid and detailed evidence on actual, specific and crucial negotiations. While this strategy requires that results are carefully evaluated before making inferences on other cases, enough arguments and evidence demonstrate that in any attempt to explain the workings of EU policy coordination in federal member states, it is necessary to take into account both the decision-making rule and peripheral parties. With regard to Belgium, the claims raised here make apparent that the number of actors is important, as is letting the center bear at least part of the costs of a lack of agreement. As a consequence, the absence of agreement between the constituent units and the center has only occasionally led to a Belgian abstention in the Council

(Morcillo Laiz, 2009, p. 177). In Austria, the unanimity rule has not prevented the definition of common regional positions in the coordination mechanism, the *Integrationskonferenz der Länder*; however, their impact on the Austrian EU policy seems negligible (Bußjäger and Djanani, 2009, pp. 59–63), which makes the experience of this member state akin to that of Spain. Most probably, the statewide, but extremely regionalized, Austrian parties feed the regional interests into the center's EU policy. The weakness of the federal chamber (Karlhofer and Pallaver, 2013, pp. 44, 49), explains why Austria, just like Spain and Italy, actually differs from Germany. Finally, these findings may illuminate the long-foretold difficulties for the British unanimity-based coordination mechanisms (Bulmer *et al*, 2002; Swenden, 2009), particularly during the cohabitation of the Scottish National Party and the conservatives in London after 2010 (McEwen *et al*, 2012).

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