

**Negotiating the European Constitution:  
Government Preferences for Council Decision  
Rules**

**Madeleine O. Hosli**

Department of Political Science

Leiden University

The Netherlands

hosli@fsw.leidenuniv.nl

### **Abstract**

This paper explores what preferences governments held in the negotiation process on the European Constitution regarding European Union (EU) institutional provisions and decision rules. Applying logistic regression and ordered probit techniques to the data collection 'Domestic Structures and European Integration' (DOSEI), and complemented by graphical and descriptive explorations, the paper reveals cleavages between governments' positions that can be discerned in the negotiation process on the European Constitution. Regarding decision rules to be used in the Council, member state preferences clearly differ according to the length of EU states' membership, with older members, in general, favoring a low decision threshold for the Council. Similarly, older EU states were stronger supporters of the application of qualified majority voting (QMV) than were newer EU member states. In addition to this, our analysis reveals that smaller EU states and those facing Euroskeptic domestic publics were more supportive of a low decision threshold in the Council of the EU.

### **Acknowledgments**

Special thanks for helpful comments and feedback on earlier versions of this paper go to Christine Arnold, Bryan O'Donovan, Han Dorussen, Daniel Finke, Simon Hix, Simon Hug, Thomas König, Hartmut Lenz, Frank Schimmelfennig and Tobias Schulz.

## 1. Introduction

Negotiations on the European Constitution constituted a relatively complex process. The Convention on the Future of Europe, conducted between 28 February 2002 and 10 July 2003, aimed to involve a wide range of societal actors in the drafting of Europe's new constitution. In referenda on the new constitution at the end of May 2005 in France and in early June in the Netherlands, however, adoption of the European constitution was defeated by margins of 54.7 against 45.3 percent, and 61.6 percent against 38.4 percent, respectively. This brought on a break and 'period of reflection' regarding the process of ratification. Analyzing this process, it is interesting to explore which positions national and partisan actors advocated in the negotiation process and to see whether specific cleavages can be found regarding different substantive aspects incorporated into the constitution.

This paper is particularly interested in institutional provisions as contained in the EU constitution and respective preference divergence between actors with different party affiliations, governments of larger as compared to smaller EU states, richer as compared to less affluent ones, those supported by a more rather than less Euroskeptical public, and preference divergence between governments of the EU's older as compared to the newer member states. More specifically, the paper explores whether, and what kind of, actor cleavages can be discerned regarding decision rules for the Council of the EU, as discussed during the negotiation process on the European Constitution. It presents some theoretical insights into possible actor cleavages in European integration and explores them empirically. The data source it relies on to test the theoretical claims is the DOSEI data collection, from which the official government positions are extracted.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The DOSEI data collection also contains information on preferences of other domestic actors, such as the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the national parliament and for selected EU states large interest organizations. All DOSEI data have been collected on the basis of expert interviews. In order to allow for enhanced reliability of information, in all cases more than one expert was interviewed in order to obtain relevant preference data for a specific actor.

Methodologically, the paper applies graphical illustrations of the location of member state preferences, supplemented by regression techniques accounting for the potential influence of a range of explanatory variables on actors' preferences for EU decision-making rules. For survey items with dichotomous answer categories -- usually 'yes' and 'no' -- it applies binary logistic regression. For ordered actor responses, ordered probit is used.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The next section presents some theoretical insights regarding expected divergences in actor preferences on different aspects of European integration. Section three of the paper describes the data used for the empirical analysis: information on actor preferences as contained in the DOSEI data set. In addition, this section describes the models employed in order to conduct the statistical analyses and describes the way the independent variables are measured. Section four presents, and evaluates, the results of the empirical analysis. Finally, section five provides a summary and brief discussion of the paper's main findings.

## **2. Actor Cleavages and Negotiations on the European Constitution**

Utilizing different methodological techniques, recent work on European integration aims to assess the dimensionality of the “European political space”. A prominent investigation into the nature and dimensionality of this space is research based on party manifestos. For example, Simon Hix (1999), based on an analysis of preference alignments in the European Parliament (EP), finds the prevalence of two major dimensions in EU politics: an integration-independence and a left-right dimension. His work is based on techniques used by the Party Manifestos Group Project and analyzes positions of the Socialist, Christian Democrat, and Liberal party leaders in the EP between 1976 and 1994. This finding reinforces claims made by Hix (1998) that the EU may be analyzed successfully on the basis of tools used in comparative politics, rendering both the left-right and the integration-independence dimensions salient to the study of EU politics. By comparison, a recent in-depth study of voting within the EP by Simon Hix, Abdul Noury and Gérard Roland (2006), finds that in essence, within the EP, only the left-right policy dimension matters.

According to Arend Lijphart (1999), the left-right policy scale is a cleavage existing on the domestic level in a wide range of advanced industrialized countries. Based on expert interviews regarding positions of domestic political parties, Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (2001) identify a left-right dimension in EU politics ranging from social democracy to market liberalism and, in addition to this, a European integration dimension spanning the range from nationalism to supranationalism. Liesbet Hooghe, Gary Marks and Carole Wilson (2002) find that both a left-right and a libertarian-authoritarian dimension can be discerned in positions of national political parties regarding the EU, but that the latter is more prevalent. According to their analysis, in addition to the left-right dimension, a “New Politics” dimension structures EU politics, ranging from Green, Alternative and Libertarian (GAL) to Traditional, Authoritarian and Nationalist (TAN).

By comparison, analyzing a large-scale data collection on actor preferences in European decision-making between 1999 and 2002, Robert Thomson, Jovanka Boerefijn, and Frans Stokman (2004) find that the European political space is multi-dimensional – no clear cleavage lines can be discerned in EU decision-making, except for a moderate North-South division. This claim is reiterated by Thomson and Stokman (2006) in their contribution to the book *The European Union Decides*. Analyzing the same data set, the authors claim that if any structure exists in governments’ positions regarding various issues of European integration, it is quite weak. Hence, if a specific division line exists in EU policy-making, it mostly appears to be a “North-South” cleavage. Similarly, in research focusing on decision-making in the Council of the EU, Elgstrøm, Bjurulf, Johansson and Sannerstedt (2001) find little evidence of cleavages or coalition-formation in processes of EU decision-making, apart from a North-South division. Based on an analysis of other data and using different methodological approaches, this finding is confirmed by the analysis of Zimmer, Schneider, and Dobbins (2005). Finally, in an empirical analysis of citizen support for European integration between 1973 and 2004, Eichenberg and Dalton (2007) find considerable cross-national convergence among member states, but show that in addition to evaluation of absolute economic performance, the politics of support for European integration are increasingly characterized by distributive concerns.

In an extensive study on the use of referenda in the process of European integration, Hug (2002: 85) finds that EU states that joined in the latest round of enlargement -- at the time being those that entered in 1995 -- and members of the first round of enlargement (i.e. members as of 1973) may be among those least supportive of EU integration. Similarly, Eichenberg and Dalton (1993), in a quantitative study of factors influencing citizen support for European integration, find division lines between older and newer member states: according to the authors, the United Kingdom, Denmark and Ireland -- 'insular' in their approach towards Europe and therefore latecomers to the Community -- were substantially below the average European level of support for integration. In contrast, states such as the Netherlands, Italy and France -- founding members of the European Community -- had comparatively high levels of citizen support for European integration.

Relative preference homogeneity among EU member states of the same entry groups (i.e. those that joined in the same year) could be explained, for example, by a gradual process of socialization of these states into patterns of EU policy-making, "learning" the culture of negotiation within the EU, and the gradual development of similar expectations regarding EU integration. In a sense, this logic would follow elements of the constructivist research agenda (e.g. see Checkel and Moravcsik 2001), and accordingly, a group of newer EU states could be expected to advocate similar interests in negotiations about future provisions for the EU.

Finally, it is possible that in the bargaining process on the European Constitution, interests of larger member states may have partially contradicted those of smaller ones. Such cleavages have been visible, for example, in negotiations regarding the total number of Commissioners for the EU, where several smaller states appear to have advocated maintenance of their national Commissioner seat. A similar division materialized in discussions on voting weights to be used in the Council of the EU.

Hence, could there be differences in preferences as regards EU institutional provisions in a comparison between older and newer EU states? Were left-wing governments advocating different priorities from those located more to the right on the left-right policy scale? Can systematic differences be discerned between larger and

smaller EU member states? During the bargaining process on the Constitution, were such differences mirrored in the priorities of these states' delegates?

### 3. Models, Methodology and Data

The dependent variables in this study are government preferences regarding EU institutional provisions, notably Council decision rules (as derived from the DOSEI data collection). Table 1 provides an overview of core questions regarding Council decision-making rules in the DOSEI data set.

[Table 1 about here]

In order to explore divergences between actors regarding their preferences for Council decision rules, on the basis of the left-right location of actors; their 'Galtan' positions; the length of their EU membership; their relative wealth; and their population size, and using a control variable reflecting domestic support for European integration, the analysis will study bivariate associations, and in addition to this, test the following basic model:

$$p(C) = \frac{e^{\beta_0 + \beta_1 * \text{Government Left-Right} + \beta_2 * \text{Galtan} + \beta_3 * \text{Length Membership} + \beta_4 * \text{PopSize} + \beta_5 * \text{BudgetStatus} + \beta_6 * \text{Support Integration}}}{1 + e^{\beta_0 + \beta_1 * \text{Government Left-Right} + \beta_2 * \text{Galtan} + \beta_3 * \text{Length Membership} + \beta_4 * \text{PopSize} + \beta_5 * \text{Budget Status} + \beta_6 * \text{Support Integration}}}$$

Regarding operationalization of the independent variables in this study, the subsequent analysis proceeds as follows. Data for the independent variables are chosen as close to the timing of the DOSEI interviews as possible. Left-right locations of governments are assessed by accounting for government composition in the year the DOSEI interviews were held and simultaneously, the respective location of the domestic political parties represented in government on this scale.<sup>2</sup> Information regarding the left-right position of political parties is derived from two sources: data by Benoit and Laver (2006) and by the Chapel Hill Party Data Set (e.g. see Marks and Steenbergen 2004).

---

<sup>2</sup> This procedure is also used to assess government Galtan positions.

Locations of domestic political parties on the Benoit-Laver scale range from 1 to 20 and those on the Chapel Hill scale from 1 to 10.<sup>3</sup> Left-right (or Galtan) position of respective domestic parties are multiplied by the share of cabinet positions held within a government in order to derive a total score for each (coalition) government on the left-right policy scale.<sup>4</sup> Positions on the Galtan scale are also taken from the Chapel Hill 2002 Party Data Set.

Length of EU membership will be measured in years.<sup>5</sup> However, this study also measures the variable ‘length of EU membership’ in an alternative way in order to facilitate estimates for groups of EU member states. The quantitative analysis will treat this alternative assessment as categorical, on the basis of the following coding: founding members (code 5); members since 1973 (code 4); members since 1981/1986<sup>6</sup> (code 3); members since 1995 (code 2); members since 2004 (code 1). The size of EU member states is measured in terms of population in 2003 (in millions). Figures on net budget status (as a percentage of Gross National Income, GNI), are taken from the European Commission’s publication on EU expenditure allocation (2004). Domestic support for European integration is measured on the basis of Eurobarometer public opinion data for 2003.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Estimates for the Chapel Hill data set are transformed in this analysis to scores ranging between 0 and 1.

<sup>4</sup> Since there are no left-right scores available for relevant French and Italian parties in 2003 in the Benoit-Laver data set, the subsequent empirical analysis uses replaced values for this year on the basis of data from the Chapel Hill data set. For example, the assessments by Ray, Marks and Steenbergen for French governmental parties in 2003 leads to a (transformed) score for France of 13,68.

<sup>5</sup> For the members as of 2004, the score in 2003 is negative (-1).

<sup>6</sup> Due to the small number of cases, the 1981 (Greece) and 1986 (Portugal and Spain) entrants are clustered into one group.

<sup>7</sup> The subsequent analysis takes the percentage of EU citizens that state they consider the EU to be a “good thing” minus the percentage stating it was a “bad thing”. Average responses are given on the basis of two surveys conducted in the year 2003: Eurobarometer 59 and 60.



#### 4. Analysis and Evaluation

The subsequent analysis will provide descriptive and qualitative insights into government preferences for Council decision rules, and in addition to this, apply the model as described above to actual data on government priorities as derived from the DOSEI data set. First, a correlation matrix (see appendix) shows that the different measurements of the left-right policy scale, including Galton, correlate quite strongly with each other. However, whereas the variable ‘length of EU membership’, as measured in years, is correlated moderately to both ‘population size’ ( $r = 0.53$ ) and ‘net budget status’ ( $r = -0.45$ ), none of these remaining connections is strong enough to cause serious problems of collinearity in the main model. Hence, the subsequent analysis will use explorations based on different variants of the ‘left-right’ measurement, but retain the other independent variables of the main model in the empirical analysis. Similarly, the bivariate analysis will include each of these alternative left-right specifications.

DOSEI Question 8 asked experts about the preferred rule regarding the QMV threshold in the Council (see table 1). It gave respondents five choices, ranging from the option that decisions be taken by a simple majority of member states and of their population (option 5) up to the triple majority clause as encompassed in the Treaty of Nice (option 1). In practice, however, only answer categories 1, 3, 4, and 5 were chosen by experts,<sup>8</sup> with option 4 denoting the possibility of a simple majority of member states and three-fifths of the population being required for decisions in the Council to pass – a proposal made by the Convention on the Future of Europe.

Table 2 shows the official government positions as regards Council decision rules. Clearly, a majority of member states (nine) preferred option four, whereas the number of member states favoring the options reflected by categories one and five was equal (seven each). Only two states preferred option three.

[Table 2 about here]

---

<sup>8</sup> Answer category 3, suggesting a 60 percent of member states and 60 percent of population threshold, was added to the DOSEI questionnaire later, on the basis of proposals made during the intergovernmental negotiations.

Visual inspection of the relation between these variables generates some additional interesting insights, as figure 1 demonstrates: as the simple graphical exploration shows, in general terms, EU members as of 2004 preferred a more inclusive decision threshold for Council decision-making, whereas the lowest levels regarding a decision quota were advocated by the EU's oldest member states. The founding members are followed closely by the states that joined in 1973.<sup>9</sup> Equal preference scores apply for states that joined in the 1981/1986 and 1995 enlargements. Comparing mean scores of the group of original member states (group 1) with those that joined in the 2004 enlargement (group 5), assuming non-equal variances, indeed yields a significant test score ( $t = 2,936$ ,  $p = 0.014$ , two-tailed).

[Figure 1 about here]

Figure 1 and the accompanying t-test provide some empirical evidence that the newest EU states in particular favored protection of their own sovereignty in Council decision-making, by an application of comparatively inclusive decision thresholds for QMV.

How did independent variables influence this pattern? Table 3 gives an overview of bivariate regressions of the dependent variable (preferred Council decision rule) on the various independent variables as presented above.<sup>10</sup>

[Table 3 about here]

As table 3 shows, in the bivariate assessments, only length of EU membership generates a significant regression coefficient ( $t = 2.281$ ,  $p > |t| = 0.032$ ). For all other

---

<sup>9</sup> Members as of 1973 have defended maintenance of the unanimity rule for several policy areas, but for the domains in which QMV would apply, they in fact favored a lower decision threshold.

<sup>10</sup> For simplicity, the bivariate assessments treat the dependent variable as being on the interval scale. The subsequent multivariate explorations, however, will take into account the fact that the dependent variable consists of (ordered) categories.

independent variables, no significant statistical relations with the dependent variable can be discerned.

The total number of cases to be used in this analysis, with  $n = 25$ , is small. However, bearing in mind the limited information this analysis can generate in statistical terms, ordered probit regression of these preferences on a range of independent variables provides similar insights into this issue, as table 4 illustrates. Clearly, ‘older’ EU member states were more in favor of less inclusive decision rules in the Council (i.e. in favor of rules allowing for quicker patterns of decision-making). Holding the effect of all other variables, including length of EU membership constant, however, also indicates a significant effect of ‘population size’ and ‘support for European integration in domestic politics’ on preferences for Council decision rules (all models), with smaller EU states and those facing more Euroskeptic domestic publics being more supportive of a low decision quota in the Council.<sup>11</sup> In addition to this, in models 1 and 4, the variable ‘net budget status’ also shows a significant effect on preferences for Council decision rules, with ‘net receivers’ supporting a lower decision threshold.<sup>12</sup> However, these findings have to be treated with caution, due to the small overall number of cases included in the analysis (as data points in terms of official government positions were only available for 25 EU member states).

[Table 4 about here]

Graphical explorations of the relation between the various independent and the dependent variable (preferred Council decision rule) allow for further visual explorations of this topic and show that with the exception of length of EU membership, no linear

---

<sup>11</sup> However, only models 1 and 4 reach a fairly adequate level of statistical significance (with  $\text{Prob} > \chi^2$  being  $< 0.05$  in each case). In addition to this, they provide higher aggregate explanatory power than models 2 and 3.

<sup>12</sup> The total number of observations is twenty-one in models 1 and 4 and twenty-five in models 2 and 3: the Galtan variable has four missing entries (Cyprus, Estonia, Luxembourg and Malta) that cannot be filled in with information from alternative data sources, reducing the total number of cases to twenty-one.

relations between the independent and the dependent variable can be discerned. However, the relationship between government left-right location and the preferred decision rule may follow a non-linear pattern: figure 2 shows a scatter plot of government left-right locations (based on the Benoit-Laver dataset) and preferences for the Council decision rule. It seems that EU member states with governments located at the extremes of the left-right policy scale are somewhat more in favor of a stringent Council decision rule. By comparison, governments located in the center on this scale – with the notable exception of Malta – tend to prefer a less inclusive Council decision quota.<sup>13</sup>

[Figure 2 about here]

A possible further way to explore this potential link between government left-right locations and preferences for the Council decision rule is a bivariate linear regression of the preference for the decision quota on the (absolute) distance from the mean government left-right position of all EU member states. Indeed, this statistical analysis demonstrates that a moderately significant linear relationship exists between these variables ( $b = -0.468$ ,  $p = 0.061$ ), providing some empirical support for the assumption that governments fairly distant from the mean EU government location, during the time the DOSEI interviews were held, were more inclined to favor a higher Council decision threshold.

DOSEI questions 18.a1 through 18.a12 examine the issue of whether an actor prefers QMV to unanimity as a decision rule to be applied in given areas of EU policy-making. Member state positions on these issues are likely to depend primarily on a) the decision rule currently applicable in these areas and b) their specific location in terms of preferences on specific substantive areas. For example, it is likely that EU member states with relatively extreme preferences in a given policy domain will tend to prefer unanimity as a decision rule if their interests could be undermined by a majority of EU member states under the QMV rule. The following areas (listed in table 1) were, during

---

<sup>13</sup> This pattern, however, can only be found for government left-right locations based on the Benoit-Laver data collection; it is not supported by data based on the Chapel Hill data set.

the time of the DOSEI interviews, dealt with by unanimity in the Council:<sup>14</sup> freedom, security and justice; tax harmonization; monetary policy (for the Euro states); economic policy; social security rights; common foreign policy; and finally, defence policy. Clearly, in several of these areas, the UK, for example, is likely to have relatively extreme preferences as compared to the EU majority, notably in areas such as freedom, security and justice, and a potential EU collective defense policy (partially due to the UK's particularly strong partnership with the U.S. in this area). This pattern is somewhat less applicable to the domain of tax harmonization (DOSEI question 18a5), however, as according to the DOSEI data collection, a total of 15 EU states favored maintenance of the unanimity clause for this policy area. Government preferences for these various substantive areas will now be explored in more detail, partially resorting to additional DOSEI-information on the position of sub-national actors on these issues.

A descriptive exploration of the DOSEI data on question 18 indicates that no actor for which preferences were assessed – whether a government delegation, foreign minister's office, or leading domestic political actor – preferred application of the unanimity rule for agricultural policy. Hence, regarding decision rules to be incorporated into the new European Constitution, QMV was endorsed unanimously for decisions concerning agriculture. Regarding Structural and Cohesion policies, however, the picture is somewhat more mixed: The governments of the Netherlands and the UK, as well as some important domestic actors within these states – e.g. the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Her Majesty's Treasury, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Dutch Parliament – advocated application of the unanimity rule.<sup>15</sup>

On the matter of the decision rule for issues concerning the EU's internal market, with just a few exceptions (the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Estonian Ministry of Finance) all actors for which data were available favored the QMV rule. Similarly, concerning monetary policy for the Euro states (question 18a.6) and economic policy (question 18a.7), most actors preferred application of the QMV rule. In Cyprus,

---

<sup>14</sup> See respective information in the DOSEI data collection on the location of the status quo.

<sup>15</sup> By comparison, Downing Street preferred QMV regarding Structural and Cohesion policy.

Hungary, Ireland, Poland and Portugal, all relevant actors, including the government, preferred non-application of the QMV rule (i.e. maintenance of unanimity) for both areas. In Hungary, all domestic actors that the DOSEI data set provides information on preferred QMV for monetary policy, but unanimity to be applied in the domain of economic policy-making.<sup>16</sup>

As regards the areas of employment policy and social policy (questions 18a.8 and 18a.9, respectively), opposition to the application of the QMV rule, across the range of domestic actors, materialized in Denmark and Estonia. With respect to social policy exclusively, all domestic actors in Cyprus, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia were opposed to the application of QMV. Actors in other EU states opposing QMV in the domain of social policy include the Finnish Parliament, the German *Bundesländer*, Slovenia's Chamber of Commerce and the Confederation of British Industrialists.

A statistical exploration of this topic, using each government's preference for a given decision rule in a specific policy area as the unit of analysis, provides further insights into this issue. For this analysis, aggregate values of questions 18a.1 through 18a.12 are taken. As the original answer categories are dichotomous ('yes' or 'no') and the responses of each actor for the several sub-categories of question 18a (see table 1) are summed up, the aggregate answer codes cannot be estimated using an interval scale. Instead, the statistical analysis applies ordered probit regression to estimate the effect of independent variables on government responses to question 18a (DOSEI). This analysis reveals that regarding aggregate preferences for the QMV rule instead of unanimity, no systematic divisions can be discerned between governments along left-right policy lines (neither those based on the Benoit-Laver data nor those using one of our two options from the Chapel Hill data set). Neither can a cleavage along North-South lines, indicated by net budget positions, or between larger and smaller EU states be found on this issue. Similarly, results of this analysis show that priorities on this issue do not really differ according to whether member state governments face a Euroskeptic public or a domestic audience that is more

---

<sup>16</sup> In the case of Hungary, data were collected for the Hungarian government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Minister for EU Coordination, Ministry of Justice, and Parliament's 'EU Big Committee'.

supportive of European integration. However, clearly, length of membership matters:<sup>17</sup> The longer a country's EU membership, the more a government favors application of QMV instead of unanimity as the voting rule in the Council, aggregated over the several substantive policy areas incorporated in the DOSEI data collection. Newer EU states appear to be most concerned about the loss of domestic sovereignty and tend to favor unanimous decision-making for several policy areas.

## 5. Conclusions

The European Constitution encompassed a wide range of issues regarding the substance of EU policy-making and EU institutional and legislative provisions. The DOSEI data set has aimed to measure preferences of a wide range of actors regarding the desired shape of the new Constitution.

This paper is interested in government preferences regarding EU institutional provisions, notably the preferred QMV threshold to be used in the Council of the EU and the choice between unanimity and QMV decision-making for various policy areas. Building on recent insights into EU policy-making processes and the dimensionality of the EU political space, the paper aims to explore whether specific cleavage lines were discernible in the intergovernmental negotiation procedures, notably between older and newer states, governments located on the left as compared to the right on the left-right policy scale, between the EU's 'North' and 'South' and between smaller and larger EU members. A statistical exploration of these issues, on the basis of ordered probit analysis, complemented by graphical and descriptive explorations, reveals that the cleavage between the EU's older and newer states may largely explain preferences for Council decision rules, but other cleavages are also relevant.

Regarding the choice between either unanimity or QMV being applied for a range of issue areas incorporated in the EU constitution, the analysis demonstrates that member states' preferences vary on this issue according to the location of their preference compared to the mean EU position, as well as the position of the status quo (current

---

<sup>17</sup> This finding is supported by models 1, 2 and 3 (the variable 'length of membership' is, according to usual standards, only close to being significant in model 4).

Council decision rule). But, in addition to this, the year in which they entered the EU matters, with older EU states being clearly more in favor of the application of QMV than the EU's newer states. By comparison, in the different analyses conducted here, government left-right positions, net budget positions, member state size and domestic support for European integration did not matter.

Regarding the question of the preferred decision rule to be applied in the Council of the EU, our statistical analysis reveals that holding the effect of all other independent variables constant, smaller EU states tended to prefer a lower decision threshold in the Council. Similarly, member states facing more Euroskeptic publics preferred easier forms of EU decision making (i.e. a lower decision quota in the Council). Moreover, as our analysis shows, net contributors to the EU budget tended to support a high decision threshold in the Council. However, these findings have to be treated with caution, as the total number of cases in the statistical analysis (25 EU states involved in these negotiations) is rather limited.

Finally, as discerned on the basis of graphical and bivariate associations, government left-right policy positions mattered as regards the preferred Council decision threshold: in general terms, governments fairly remote from the mean EU government left-right position preferred more stringent rules for Council decision-making. Finally, as confirmed by both qualitative and quantitative explorations, the most recently-joined EU members favored the most stringent decision rules for the Council. By contrast, the founding members tend to prefer swifter decision-making procedures. This result may be interpreted on the basis of the reasoning that 'older' EU states have been faced with a gradual loss of domestic sovereignty over time, while the new EU states, to a large extent, have only regained their sovereignty with the end of the Cold War, and so tend to be more concerned with the application of majority decisions in the Council based on a lower QMV threshold. Alternatively, it is conceivable that processes of 'learning' and adaptation to the EU negotiation style have led governments – notably of the EU founding states – to develop similar priorities regarding modes of policy-making and a shared belief that EU decision quotas have to be lowered in order to allow for swifter patterns of EU decision-making.



## References

- Benoit, Ken and Michael Laver (2006): *Party Policy in Modern Democracies*. London: Routledge.
- Checkel, Jeffrey and Andrew Moravcsik (2001): "A Constructivist Research Program in EU Studies?" *European Union Politics*, 2, 2, 219-249.
- Eichenberg, Richard C. and Russell J. Dalton (1993): "Europeans and the European Community: The Dynamics of Public Support for European Integration", *International Organization*, 47, 4, 507-534.
- Eichenberg, Richard C. and Russell J. Dalton (2007): "Post-Maastricht Blues: The Transformation of Citizen Support for European Integration, 1973–2004", *Acta Politica*, 42, 128–152.
- European Commission (2005): Allocation of 2004 EU Expenditure by Member States. September. Available at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/agenda2000/reports\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/agenda2000/reports_en.htm)
- European Central Bank (2004): *Statistics Pocked Book* (January). Frankfurt am Main, Germany: European Central Bank.
- Elgström, Ole, Bo Bjurulf, Jonas Johansson and Anders Sannerstedt (2001): 'Coalitions in European Union Negotiations', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 24, 2, 111-128.
- Gabel, Matthew and Simon Hix (2002): "Defining the EU Political Space", *Comparative Political Studies*, 35, 8, 934-964.
- Hix, Simon (1998): "The Study of the European Union II: The 'New Governance' Agenda and Its Rival", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 5, 1, 38-65.

- Hix, Simon (1999): "Dimensions and Alignments in European Union Politics: Cognitive Constraints and Partisan Responses", *European Journal of Political Research*, 35, 69-106.
- Hix, Simon and Christopher Lord (1997): *Political Parties in the European Union*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Hix, Simon, Abdul Noury and Gérard Roland (2006): *Democratic Politics in the European Parliament*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hooghe, Lisbet and Gary Marks (2001): *Multi-Level Governance and European Integration*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Hooghe, Lisbet, Gary Marks and Carole J. Wilson (2002): "Does Left-Right Structure Party Positions on European Integration?" *Comparative Political Studies*, 35, 8, 965-989.
- Hug, Simon (2002): *Voices of Europe: Citizens, Referendums, and European Integration*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Lijphart, Arend (1999): *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. Yale: Yale University Press.
- Marks, Gary and Carole J. Wilson (2000): "The Past in the Present: A Cleavage Theory of Party Response to European Integration", *British Journal of Political Science*, 30, 433-459.
- Marks, Gary, Carole Wilson and Leonard Ray (2002): "National Political Parties and European Integration", *American Journal of Political Science*, 46, 585-594.

Marks, Gary and Marco Steenbergen (2004): Marks/Steenbergen Party Dataset, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, available at <http://www.unc.edu/~gwmarks/data.htm>.

Mattila, Mikko (2004): 'Contested Decisions: Empirical Analysis of Voting in the European Union Council of Ministers', *European Journal of Political Research*, 43, 1, 29-50.

Thomson, Robert, Jovanka Boerefijn and Frans N. Stokman (2004): 'Actor Alignments in European Union Decision-making', *European Journal of Political Research*, 43, 2, 237-261.

Thomson, Robert and Frans Stokman (2006): "Research Design: Measuring Actors' Positions, Salience and Capabilities", in Christopher H. Achen, Robert Thomson, Frans N. Stokman and Thomas König, eds., *The European Union Decides*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zimmer, Christina, Gerald Schneider and Michael Dobbins (2005): 'The Contested Council: The Conflict Dimensions of an Intergovernmental Institution', *Political Studies*, 20, 403-422.

*Figure 1: Means Plot 'Length of EU Membership' and Preferred Decision Threshold for the Council of the EU*

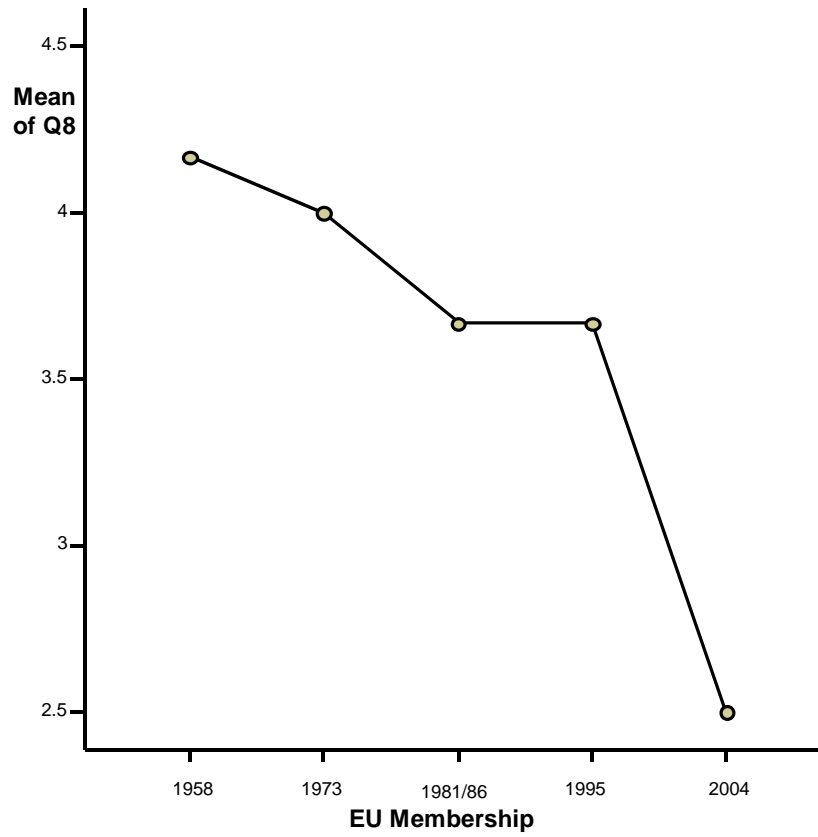


Figure 2: Government Left-Right Positions and Preferred Decision Threshold for the Council of the European Union

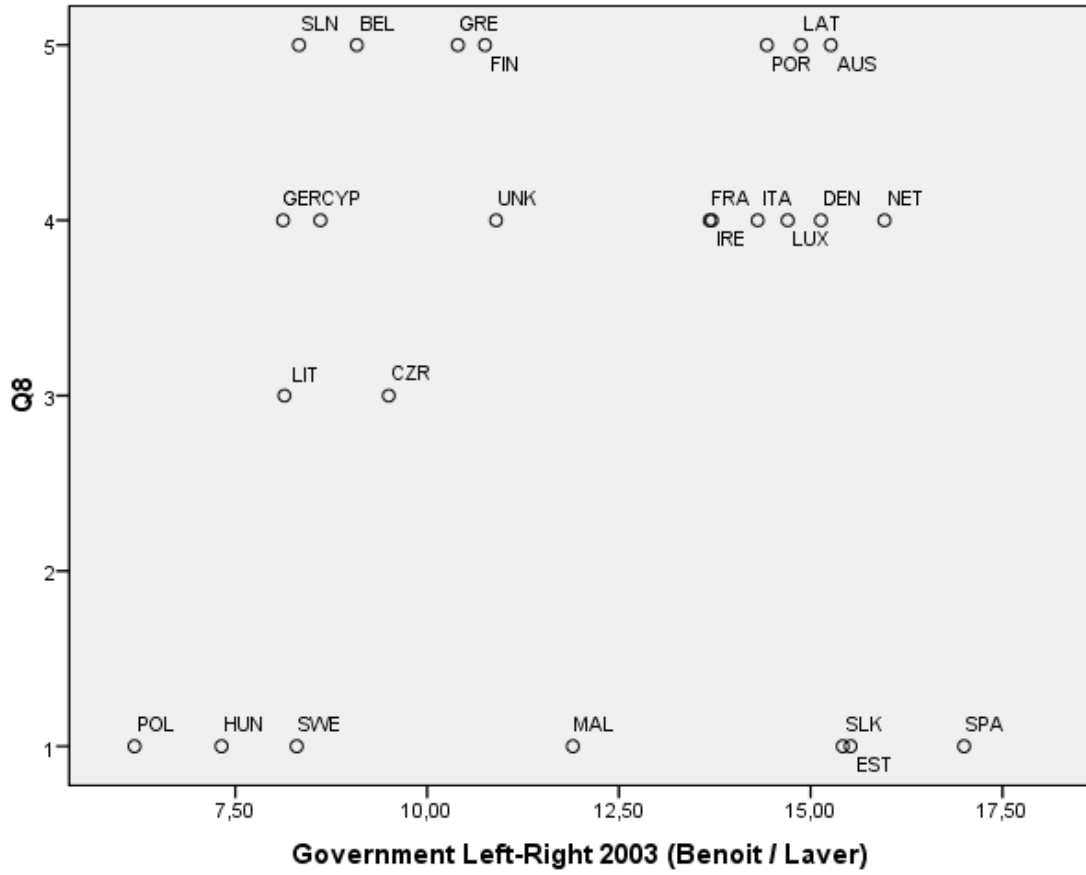


Table 1: Questions Concerning Council Decision Rules

Item DOSEI Questionnaire	Wording of DOSEI Question	Answer Categories	
		Category	Corresponding Answer
Voting threshold for qualified majority voting (Question 8)	Which voting threshold does the [government / EP / Commission] prefer for qualified majority voting in the Council?	5	A simple majority of member states and a simple majority of the population
		4	A simple majority of member states and three-fifth of the population
		3	A 60/60 threshold <sup>1)</sup>
		2	75% or more of member states and a specific majority of the population
		1	The Nice Treaty model: 1) 72% of the qualified-majority votes; 2) a majority of member states; 3) 62% of the population.
Council Decision rule (Question 18a)	What is the [government's / EP's / Commission's] position on [...] the voting rule in the Council in the following policy areas?	2 1	Yes No (=unanimity)
Question 18a.1	Agriculture	2 SQ 1	Yes No
Question 18a.2	Structural and cohesion policies	2 SQ 1	Yes No
Question 18a.3	Area of freedom, security and justice	2 1 UN	Yes No
Question 18a.4	Internal market	2 SQ 1	Yes No
Question 18a.5	Tax harmonization	2 1 UN	Yes No
Question 18a.6	Monetary policy (for the Euro states)	2 1 UN	Yes No
Question 18a.7	Economic policy	2 1 UN	Yes No

Question 18a.8	Employment policy	2 SQ 1	Yes No
Question 18a.9	Social policy	2 SQ 1	Yes No
Question 18a.10	Social security rights	2 1 UN	Yes No
Question 18a.11	Common foreign policy	2 1 UN	Yes No
Question 18a.12	Defence policy	2 1 UN	Yes No

*Table 2: Official Government Positions of European Union Member States as Regards the Preferred Decision Threshold for the Council*

Preferred Decision Threshold (Answer Categories)	The Nice Treaty model: 1) 72% of the qualified-majority votes; 2) a majority of member states; 3) 62% of the population. (Category 1)	75% or more of member states and a specific majority of the population (Category 2)	A 60/60 threshold (Category 3)	A simple majority of member states and three-fifth of the population (Category 4)	A simple majority of member states and a simple majority of the population (Category 5)
Member State	Estonia Hungary Malta Poland Slovakia Spain Sweden		Czech Republic Lithuania	Cyprus Denmark France Germany Ireland Italy Luxembourg Netherlands United Kingdom	Austria Belgium Finland Greece Latvia Portugal Slovenia



*Table 3: Bivariate Regression Coefficients Preferred Decision Threshold for the Council of the European Union on Independent Variables (Main Model)*

Independent Variables	Preferred Decision Rule in the Council (Choice 1: most inclusive; choice 5: least inclusive; see table 1)	
	Coefficient (Std. Err.)	t-value (p >  t )
Government Left-Right Position (Based on Data Laver, Hunt, Benoit)	0.042 (0.101)	0.416 (0.681)
Government Economic Left-Right Position (Based on Chapel Hill Data Set)	0.707 (2.108)	0.335 (0.740)
Government Galtan Position (Based on Chapel Hill Data Set)	2.912 (2.163)	1.346 (0.194)
Length of EU Membership (in Years)	0.036 (0.016)	2.281 (0.032)
Support for European Integration in Domestic Politics	0.005 (0.018)	0.293 (0.772)
Net Budget Status	- 0.081 (0.356)	-0.227 0.823
Population Size (in Millions, 2003)	0.001 (0.014)	0.046 (0.964)

*Table 4: Explaining Preferences for the Decision Threshold in the Council (Question 8 DOSEI, Ordered Probit Regression)*

Explanatory variables	Preferred Decision Rule in the Council (Choice 1: most inclusive; choice 5: least inclusive; see table 1)							
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Coefficient (Std. Err.)	Probability P> z	Coefficient (Std. Err.)	Probability P> z	Coefficient (Std. Err.)	Probability P> z	Coefficient (Std. Err.)	Probability P> z
Government Left-Right Position (Based on Data Laver, Hunt, Benoit)	-0.364 (0.235)	0.121	-0.104 (0.090)	0.248	--	--	--	--
General Government Ideological Left-Right Position (Based on Chapel Hill Data Set)	6.419 (4.358)	0.141	--	--	-1.542 (1.664)	0.354	--	--
Government Galtan Position (Based on Chapel Hill Data Set)	1.398 (3.004)	0.642	--	--	--	--	0.063 (1.956)	0.974
Length of EU Membership (in Years)	0.077 (0.026)	0.004	0.066 (0.024)	0.006	0.061 (0.022)	0.006	0.069 (0.025)	0.005
Support for European Integration in Domestic Politics	-0.047 (0.020)	0.022	-0.028 (0.016)	0.079	-0.026 (0.016)	0.094	-0.045 (0.020)	0.021
Net Budget Status	0.906 (0.429)	0.035	0.496 (0.320)	0.122	0.433 (0.310)	0.162	0.771 (0.401)	0.055
Population Size (in Millions, 2003)	-0.041 (0.016)	0.011	-0.031 (0.015)	0.035	-0.028 (0.014)	0.042	-0.033 (0.015)	0.023
Cut-off score 1	-2.116 (1.415)		-2.247 (1.290)		-1.844 (1.145)		-1.830 (1.352)	
Cut-off score 2	-1.624 (1.414)		-1.944 (1.285)		-1.544 (1.139)		-1.377 (1.349)	
Cut-off score 3	-0.250 (1.384)		-0.787 (1.273)		-0.403 (1.138)		-0.167 (1.315)	
Log likelihood	-19.970		-27.458		-27.726		-21.270	
LR chi2	14.58		9.22		8.68		11.98	
Prob > chi2	0.041		0.101		0.122		0.035	
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.267		0.144		0.135		0.220	
n	21		25		25		21	

*Appendix: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix*

**Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
GovLR (B-L)	25	11.90183	3.303824	6.184615	17
GovLR (ChH)	25	.5499985	.1582885	.2647059	.7760119
Gov Galtan	21	.5426971	.1589847	.2726154	.8454545
Length Mship	25	17.2	19.05912	-1	45
Size (Pop 2003)	25	18.18209	23.42726	.3973	82.5367
Budget Status	25	0.5672	.9384851	-.44	2.52
Support Integr	25	41.66	18.12901	2	76
Aggregate Value Q18.a	25	20.36	2.547548	16	24

### Correlation Matrix

---

Explanatory Variables	Gov LR (B-L)	Gov LR (ChH)	Gov Galtan	Length Mship	Size (Pop 2003)	Budget Status	Support Integr
Gov LR (B-L)	1.0000						
Gov LR (ChH)	0.9082	1.0000					
Gov Galtan	0.7830	0.6892	1.0000				
Length Mship	0.2780	0.3091	0.1457	1.0000			
Size (Pop 2003)	-0.0730	-0.0098	-0.0354	0.5285	1.0000		
Budget Status	0.0654	-0.0649	0.1570	-0.4510	-0.3372	1.0000	
Support Integr	0.0664	0.0474	-0.0741	0.2944	-0.1233	0.1206	1.0000

---