

# **From Public Sentiment to Party Scrutiny of EU: The Macro-Politics of Transposition of EU Directives**

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## *Abstract:*

Much scholarly attention has focused on the role of interest group conflict, partisan conflict, or administrative quirks in regards to creating delays for specific directives - usually in the form of case studies. A similarly weighty, and explicitly comparative literature, has sought to examine the manner in which different administrative procedures in different national contexts 'fit' the needs of transposition. Little attention has been given to the role that the public's perceptions of the EU has on political elites with regard to their decision to intervene in the administrative and legislative process, and the slowing effect that such intervention will invariably have on the speed of transposition. This paper, through the use of an innovative comparative measure of the public's perceptions of the EU attempts to provide a theory about this macro-political context that explains changes to the speed of transposition at different times.

The European Union is increasingly present in domestic policy-making. This is most concretely visible in the consistently growing volume of EU legislation adopted by the national parliaments. The Treaty of Maastricht defined detailed steps towards a monetary union and further development of the common market. This development has paved the way for ever broader opportunities for EU institutions to fill the policy agendas of member-state governments. The Treaty of Maastricht has also made the smooth transposition of EU policy fundamental for the persistent integration of member states and the agility of EU governance. In this article, we address the question of how the salience of the EU and the public's mood about EU issues affects the priority of EU on the agendas of governing political parties and how this allocation of policy attention amounts to scrutiny, which affects the level of compliance with EU directives.

Hitherto examinations of compliance in the EU have, until very recently, mostly focused on the efficiency of the rules and institutions devised to incorporate EU law into national legal systems. The idea of “misfit” (Knill and Lenschow, 2000; Boerzel, 2000) is articulated with a view that successful transposition ultimately depends on how well the existing national bureaucratic traditions and administrative routines fit the demands of the transposition process of EU law. Since the original article, the ‘misfit’ hypothesis has been extended to other areas as well – such as domestic policy instruments and substantive policy divergence, or utilizing the notion of veto players (Boerzel, 2000, 2002; Falkner, 2000; Duina 1997, Duina and Blithe, 1999; Knill and Lenschow 2000). Simply put, the arguments suggest that transposition will be difficult if the existing domestic political, legal, and bureaucratic structures are at odds with the EU demands as expressed in the specific EU law. More recently, however, the argument has been losing its theoretical appeal, as it provided only limited traction with respect to the understanding of the theoretical mechanism of what is it that precisely causes the ‘(mis)fit’.

In this sense, the 'misfit' hypothesis primarily considers static institutions and structures of domestic political systems rather than the dynamics of political actors as the primary components of successful transposition process. Thus, the logical implication of this view is that “the interests of domestic actors are largely determined by the pre-existing national structures” (Treib, 2003: 3) and are thus rather constant and deliberately sticky. It is possibly for this reason that studies of compliance in the EU for the major part do not tackle the interaction between institutional traditions, policy demands from the EU with the domestic political actors shifting preferences and priorities.

In this paper we aim to build a larger macro-level model of EU directive transposition that incorporates the effect of the ebb and flow of the public's mood towards and salience of EU policy on partisan elites' decisions to allocate political resources to scrutinize these directives (Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson, 1995, 2002). We pair this macro polity approach with the arguments raised by public policy scholars that suggests that policy-making is, at its core, a two track phenomenon. One track is a bureaucratic or routine track which takes place largely off the active political agenda that is exposed to public pressures and political posturing, and the much more volatile one where substantial changes to the standard operation procedures might occur (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). Thus, while accepting the notion that bureaucratic forms that differ across nature may effect cross-national levels of compliance, we assert that there is a dynamic that occurs across time that leads parties to be more or less willing to place a directive on the policy agenda or thwart the bureaucracies' use of standard procedure.

National political elites must prioritize specific policy areas over which they are going to dedicate their own resources, and which they will leave to the 'standard operating procedures' of bureaucratic or administrative routines. While undoubtedly issue-level factors may be in play,

we argue that democratic pressures combined will directly influence the probability that any individual directive will be scrutinized, and - given that the directives faced by members states are identical - the overall tendency which political elites will dedicate space for EU directives on their agenda.

We more fully elaborate upon these claims as follows: First, develop our argument and discuss the theoretical usefulness of a macro-political model presented in this paper. We discuss the mechanism through which public sentiments influence party response and the speed with which EU Directives are transposed. Second, we present an empirical model, discuss the hypotheses regarding the role of changes in the salience of the EU in public and the resultant attention by political parties to the EU issue on transposition delay, provide in-depth discussion of the measurement of our variables and the data. Lastly, we discuss the findings concluding the more scrutiny EU receives from the main governing parties, the higher the propensity of EU Directives to be adopted after designated deadline.

### ***The Macro-Politics of the Transposition of EU Directives***

The argument proposed in this paper places domestic governing parties at the center of the story and thus, our approach complements recent research on the role of political parties in EU transposition process (most notably Falkner et al. 2004, 2005). However, we argue that political parties are integral players in the EU transposition process because they set priorities with respect to government agenda and the degree of attention that an issue receives in the legislative and executive arena. We emphasize that the delay in transposition of EU directives is crucially driven by the amount of scrutiny that EU issues receive from domestic political parties.

Political parties structure the choices and issues over which voters can choose at election times. Thus, parties in government can be responsive to voters either by offering choices to voters that allow them to change the way the government is dealing with an issue - by choosing those parties that match their priorities or by inspiring political parties to shift their priorities and preferences to be in line with those of the public (Budge, McDonald, and Pennings, 2004). The outcome, it is hoped, is that party priorities and preferences largely respond to changes in the public. However, what is more important is that these political actors actually devote attention to the issues they claim to prioritize in a manner consistent with the preferences expressed during elections.

In most issues of public policy this means that real substantive changes in the direction of policies should occur when parties in government prioritize those issues, and their preferences differ substantively with the status quo policy. However, in the case of EU transposition, the room for manoeuvre on substance is limited and not of primary importance from the perspective of EU governance. What is of concern is the speed and efficiency with which legislation is transposed. What happens when elites prioritize a particular policy area with regards to the speed with which it is dealt with?

Interest groups of various types - agricultural interests, labor unions, or other affected interests - all attempt to force elites to provide exactly that kind of attention when they agitate for EU issues to be disposed of one way or another. Ultimately, however, it is political elites organized into political parties that ultimately decide to move any particular policy making process out of the bureaucracy or where standard operating procedures are chosen, or to dedicate political resources to 'double checking', 'investigating', otherwise monitoring the bureaucracy, or perhaps moving the issue to a full parliamentary and public discussion.

The public policy process often creates difficult situations for policy-makers to navigate in pursuit of their goals. As Schattschneider warned, devoting public attention to an issue publicly expands the scope of conflict in a manner that may or may not result in the intended outcome (Schattschneider 1960, 1983). Thus, bringing an issue to the top of the agenda and disposing of it publicly often will create undo scrutiny from a variety of political forces from different sides of an issue. That is, a particular policy-making action will almost always be quicker when it is left in the administrative sphere.

This two-track pattern of policy making has been extensively researched by public policy scholars employing the punctuated equilibrium approach (Baumgartner and Jones 2003). These scholars find that most of policy-making - out of simple necessity imposed by agenda constraints - requires policy-maker to delegate authority to policy-making regimes that operate largely outside of public debate. In the case of EU policy-making, including the adoption of Directives, the excessive reliance on administrative routines rather than more conflictual political routes of parliamentary legislating seem to conform to this view as well. For example, some have argued and shown that parliamentary involvement increases the delay in EU Directives transposition as parliamentary procedures open up a venue where various interest can contest these policies (Mastebroek 2003, Giuliani 2003, Koenig and Luetgert, 2009). Furthermore, with the increased demands from the EU, policy makers are reliant on administrative procedures to dispose of EU legislation. Indeed, it is precisely these procedures that draw the scholarly attention of advocates of the 'misfit' hypothesis. If properly implemented, these administrative procedures are broadly efficient, and seen as evidence of support and broad 'permissive consensus' in the pattern of transposition of EU legislation. When examining administrative politics a view of permissive

consensus is inevitable, as policy will be made in this manner precisely when there is tacit support for transposition.

However, what happens when policy-makers are prone to dedicate attention to explicitly and publicly monitoring EU policy issues? Whether they are doing so to claim credit for their support of Europe, to emphasize their distaste invariably, or so would suggest Schattsneider and the punctuated equilibrium scholars, that such expansion of the policy process may create *the potential* for substantial changes in the course of the policy. However, what is also likely to happen is the disruption of administrative procedures and political wrangling over an issue that would have been disposed of largely technocratically under standard administrative procedures. As such, one expects that when political attention is likely to be dedicated to EU policies - either positive or negative - the administrative process will be slowed, as will the resulting transposition.

At issue then is whether or not prioritization of issues of EU integration by national political parties in EU member state governments will increase or decrease the speed of EU transposition - controlling for the pro-or-anti disposition of that government? The further question is whether or not this tendency is sensitive to the salience of the issue of EU integration to the macro-polity? Together, positive answers to these questions support the idea advanced here that the macro-politics of EU transposition is characterized by government responsiveness to voter priorities with the possible perverse implication that even enthusiasm for the project on the part of voters that incentivizes governments to 'meddle' and 'take credit' to the detriment of smooth EU governance. These macro-political realities in most respects compliment the majority of work done in transposition studies by asking under what general conditions are political elites more or less likely to respond to a directive that is particularly troubling to a vocal interest group,

or at what times administrative procedures and their fit or misfit are less important in explaining cross-national differences in transposition speed in any given year.

The argument in this paper suggests that increased public attention to EU affairs and awareness of the consequences associated with EU policies bears direct influence on how much scrutiny EU legislation receives from the main parties in government. As the stakes increase with heightened public interest on the impact of EU policies, the incentives of governing parties to pay close attention to the potential electoral consequences that the adoption of EU law produces also increases. Thus democratic pressures generated by heightened public interest push domestic political elites towards more substantial position-taking and public evaluation when it comes to EU demands and EU issues gain a more prominent place on the government's agenda. Our argument is set in contrast to skeptics that argue that public does not have much influence on the transposition of Directives, which are technical and far from immediate interest of the general population. On the contrary, we argue that technical nature of Directives does not make them immune from public influence. While the public is unlikely to always pay attention to each specific Directive adopted for domestic transposition, voters are, however, variably sensitive to implications of EU policies at different times and countries. Thus, we propose a specific mechanism that links heightened public interest in EU to incentives of party elites to scrutinize EU legislation more fully.

The preliminary macro-level picture of the relationship between party scrutiny of the EU and the public attention to EU issues is illustrated in Figure 1. Public salience of EU and party attention to EU track each other around main milestones in EU integration history. Increased public attention to EU is associated with jumps in party attention towards the EU during the same time period. The correspondence between party attention and public attention is

remarkable. While the simple plot does not establish a significant relationship, it does lend preliminary support for logic of the theoretical argument proposed in this paper.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

The next section describes our novel approach to measuring salience of EU in public used in this graph. We define salience of EU in public as public's perception of the importance of and attention to EU institutions, policies and the EU as whole. It is the combination of importance and attention that, in our view, captures more fully the extent to which citizens will be likely to and willing to react to EU policies and thus provide sufficiently strong incentives for parties to prioritize EU on their agendas.

In the next section, we provide a fully specified macro-political model that traces the effect of varying degrees of public's view of the salience of EU on party scrutiny while controlling for some of the alternative explanations of transposition of EU Directives. We first specify the hypothesized relationship distinguishing between the exogenous and endogenous variables in a two stage model. Further, we describe the measurement of our variables of interest and the data.

### ***Hypotheses, Measurement, and Data***

Our goal is to compare the effect of the EU's salience in the public opinion may play on the behavior of governing political parties in creating incentives for them to interfere in the transposition process and cause delay. To do so, we use two stage least squares (TSLS) to account for the endogenous effect of the parties' attention to the EU integration issues.

The use of simultaneous equations in this model provides a unique opportunity to directly test the indirect effect of public and other competing comparative macro-level explanations of

transposition in the EU in one model. Unlike in the case of OLS, TSLS assumes that the errors from the individual equations are not independent. Therefore, estimating this model using OLS would produce biased and inconsistent results (Hanushek, 1977; Bollen, 1998).

Our main claim is that as the salience of EU increases in the public, the degree to which political parties will scrutinize EU legislation will increase and indirectly reduce the speed with which political actors involved in transposition of EU Directives adopt these laws into national legal framework. Thus, parties will increase their general predisposition to scrutinize EU issues as the electoral stakes go up when voters are watching more closely. Our measure of salience of EU in public, in our view, uniquely addresses the degree to which EU policy-making is on the minds of the voters. The more voters pay attention to and consider EU institutions and policies important, parties will exercise heightened caution when approaching EU policies and demands of transposition and are more likely to open EU issues to a political contest. Thus we formulate the following hypothesis:

*H1: As salience of the EU in the public increases, parties on average increase the scrutiny of EU legislation and decrease the speed of the transposition of EU Directives.*

In our analysis, we utilize two endogenous variables. The ultimate dependent variable of interest is the *percent of total EU directives transposed after deadline*. We measure the transposition delay using data collected by Koenig and Luetgert (2009) spanning from 1986-2002. Based on Koenig and Luetgert's initial categorization we divide the timeliness of the transposition of EU Directives into two main categories: 1) late or incorrect transposition – directive was not fully transposed in the deadline officially provided by the Commission; 2) timely transposition – the directive was transposed before the deadline provided by the

Commission. As none of the main explanatory independent variables are available at a directive level, the final dependent variable is aggregated into the percent of delayed transpositions per each EU member state and year. This aggregation is appropriate given that our primary interest is the macro-political dynamics of elites' willingness to scrutinize and delay EU directive implementation.

The second endogenous variable is the scrutiny of EU issue by governing parties. As there is no direct cross-country measure available that would capture the extent to which parties scrutinize EU issue when in government, we rely on the amount of attention that political parties' pay to the EU in their election manifestos. We use the mean party manifesto scores of the parties in government to calculate the parties' salience scores on EU as collected by the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP). The importance or salience of the party's EU position incorporates the number of positive and negative statements in parties' manifestos towards the EU. This sum is then divided by the total number of statements about all issues made in the manifesto. Thus for each party in government we derive the following score:

$$Party\ j's\ position_{EU} = \frac{(abs108_j) + (abs110_j)}{total}$$

where  $abs108_j$  = absolute number of pro- EU statements in party j's manifesto  
 $abs110_j$  = absolute number of anti- EU statements in party j's manifesto  
and  $total$  = the total number of statements in the manifesto

Unlike much of the existing research where expert scores of party positions represent the norm, we consider the CMP data crucial and the only currently available measure that validly captures of the dynamic of parties' *priorities* (rather than positions) at election time and thus it is uniquely appropriate for estimating the strength of the electoral influences between voters and important parliamentary parties' priorities. The key challenge with expert scores is that even when they do take account of issue importance they tend to under-reflect cross-time changes in

EU-positions among parties. That is, expert scores tend to be overly stable vis-à-vis public opinion, and bias the results against finding evidence for an electoral connection (McDonald and Mendes 2001; McDonald, Mendes, and Kim 2006). CMP party scores tend to vary more over time than expert scores and therefore, provide, the opportunity to explore dynamic effects. Furthermore, the only available expert scores available on this issue are *retrospective* in nature, rather than representative of the position of parties as perceived at the time of the election. Experts were asked to give their opinions on where parties' positions were during a given year, or were asked in infrequent waves (Ray 1999).

### *Measurement of Salience of EU in Public*

One of the major challenges in examining the effect of public attention to EU is creating a reliable longitudinal measure of the phenomenon of salience of EU in public. Typically, the convention is to utilize large national surveys, such as the NES in the US, and selecting “the most important problem” (MIP) question over time (McCombs and Shaw 1971; MacKuen and Coombs 1981; Soroka 2002, Binzer Hobolt and Klemmensen 2005). Current theoretical accounts of issue salience in the mass public incorporate a multitude of sub-concepts that may or may not be positively correlated with one another. In effect, the notion of salience of an issue in the public attempts to capture at least two concepts: the importance of an issue and the attention to an issue.

The salience of EU issue in the public in this paper is conceptualized in terms of an underlying latent variable that can be extracted from a number of similarly focused survey questions over time. To construct the salience measure we use the Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File data. We have selected questions that directly concerned the respondents' perceptions

of the importance and attention towards the EU. The selection of questions addressed generally, the EU as a whole and the role it is perceived to play, as well as more detailed questions about the importance and attention of the individual EU institutions. Three types of general categories of questions were included: 1) perception of media attention towards EU institutions or the EU as a whole, 2) respondents' interest in the EU institutions or the EU as a whole, 3) the perceptions of importance of the EU institutions or the EU as a whole. The aggregating procedure involved calculating the percentages of respondents that answered these questions positively in each of the EB surveys in each country and year the EB survey(s) were taken.

To calculate the series we used the latest version of Wcalc employing Stimson's Public Opinion Dimensional Extraction Algorithm (Stimson et al. 1995) that calculates the way survey marginals (such as percentage of respondents answering positively) for each survey question change over time. Following the calculation of these relative changes over time for each question, the algorithm then extracts the underlying latent variable of the shared variance across time (see Baumgartner and Jones 2008 for a similar application in the US). Thus the resulting scores reflect how similarly the individual survey questions move over time. Each question included in the calculations appeared in the survey series at minimum two but most frequently more than two years and the questions were sufficiently overlapping one another as is required for the software's extraction of the underlying latent variable.

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

When plotting the resulting salience of the EU in public scores over time, three notable patterns are immediately obvious. First, illustrated by Figure 2, the average salience of the EU issue among the public is characterized by gradual increases around important periods of European integration as should be expected – in the first wave, first elections to the European

parliament in 1979 and controversial EU enlargement with Greece in 1981, followed by accession of Spain and Portugal in 1986.

In the second wave, salience of the EU issue in the mass public increases as the time approaches Maastricht Treaty negotiations, and then lastly goes up in the late 90s and early 2000s following the debates and eventual introduction of Euro to 12 of the EU member states. When individual countries are plotted separately (Figure 3) the pattern of upward trend persists (with the exception of Spain and Portugal where salience remains steady or decreasing) and thus, for the most part supports the intuition that salience of the EU in the public has been, on average, increasing over time.

[FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

### *Control Variables*

We also include a host control variables that allows us to examine our argument in light of other competing claims in the literature. First, we consider the impact of the EU benefits on the extent of scrutiny of EU issues and ultimately transposition delay (see Perkins and Neumayer, 2007). Indirectly, we posit that governing elites that rely substantially on EU benefits are primarily concerned about keeping future access to those benefits without major complications. It is plausible that high dependence on EU funds increases the proportion of EU supporters among different voter coalitions who are more likely to voice their disapproval come next election time. Simply put, if large segments of the population or specific well-organized voter coalitions consider EU's transfers of funds vital to their every day lives, they are likely to care more if a country developed a reputation of notorious laggards in compliance with EU demands. Furthermore, EU benefits can offset some of the political costs that elites might have

to bear by implementing unpopular EU policies and provide an additional incentive to strategically confine adoption of EU directives outside of the main political conflict (Perkins and Neumayer, 2007: 184). Thus as the aim of political parties is to demonstrate trouble-free transposition record, we expect that the scrutiny of governing parties with respect to the EU legislation may be diminished as parties try to strategically avoid contesting the EU and ensure smooth politically uncontested translation of EU directives into the national legal framework.

*H2a: Governments that rely more on EU's transfers are less likely to scrutinize EU legislation and more likely to speed up transposition of EU Directives.*

*H2b: Government's that rely more on agricultural subsidies are less likely to scrutinize EU legislation and more likely to speed up transposition of EU Directives.*

*H2c: Government's that rely more on structural funds are less likely to scrutinize EU legislation and more likely to speed up the transposition of EU Directives.*

To examine the effects of the benefits of redistribution from the EU on the behavior of governing parties and transposition of EU Directives, we used a *net fiscal transfers per capita* measure from Perkins and Neumayer (2007) spanning from 1972-2007 and collected from EU's annual financial reports to measure the extent to which domestic governing parties are considered the "winners" or "losers" of EU's redistributive policies. The net benefits are often discussed in the media and several countries, such as Ireland, Greece, or Italy are prominently featured as ones that benefit from EU's subsidies more than others thus often invoking gratitude and positive disposition towards the EU and thus more likely to comply. In order to capture the effects of special interests on the distribution of resources, we also collected two more nuanced variables that trace the *percentage of the total revenue devoted to two main policy sectors* –

agriculture and structural funds to provide alternative and less crude measure of re-distributional consequences of EU benefits on the speed of transposition.

Further, we include a measure of public support for the EU as one of the main predictors both of party attention to EU issues and transposition of EU directives. The most typical argument emphasizes the crucial role that general public predisposition towards the EU has on the extent to which political elites consider transposition of EU directives electorally sensible behavior. However, as we pointed out in our previous discussion, public preferences do not capture the intensity with which voters are watching and which we consider the key incentive for political parties to react to public inputs. Thus we formulate the following hypothesis:

*H3: As public support for the EU increases, parties will increase their scrutiny of the EU legislation and, at the same time, slow down the transposition process.*

In order to obtain a measure of the shifts in public opinion in each country each year we used data obtained from Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File from 1976-2002 to measure the percent of EU supporters of the EU in 15 Western European states. As the goal was to assess general support for the EU rather than specific policy issues under EU's discretion and as we sought to create comprehensive longitudinal sample, we chose a question that asked respondents whether they thought that their country's membership in the European Community was good or bad. This question regularly reappears in the Eurobarometer series since its inception and thus can be easily compared across time and has been used in a number of prior studies (Franklin and Wlezien 1997; Steenbergen and Scott 2004).

As discussed in the previous section, many have argued and demonstrated that much of the transposition delay remains a factor of administrative and bureaucratic idiosyncrasies that are not systematically driven by political will. The main crux of institutional explanations of

compliance centers on administrative inefficiencies at the EU and national level that prevent smooth transposition of EU Directives into national law. These explanations focus on the capacity rather than the willingness of the member states' to comply with the demands of the EU. Any factor that adds complexity, reduces transparency, and adds obstacles will exaggerate the ability of the national political systems to process the inputs from the EU in a timely and correct manner. To control for the effects of institutional and administrative capacity, we derive an additional hypothesis:

*H4: The higher the overall quality of bureaucratic apparatus in EU member state, the less delay in EU Directives' transposition we observe.*

To measure the general bureaucratic/administrative capacity, we use a bureaucratic capacity score constructed by International Country Risk Guide (2008), where countries with the weakest bureaucratic structures receive a score of (1) and countries with the most stable and efficient bureaucracies are assigned. Country experts base these scores on a qualitative assessment of the countries' bureaucracies.

Finally we also include a year count to control for some of the main aspects of the time dependence that we observe in the data and expect an positively increasing trend as EU integration proceeds along.

### ***Findings and Discussion***

This paper proposes a mechanism through which the macro-polity influences EU related policy-making by its government. The impact of the public in the specific case of transposition of EU directives is understudied as the predominant focus in current scholarly debates is to emphasize the lack of opportunity and willingness of the public to interfere with such a

routinized and politically uncontested process. We suggest a macro-political logic that emphasizes the underlying varying sensitivity of voters to EU and subsequently its impact on political elites' willingness to prioritize the EU in their agendas. In our argument, the prioritization of the EU in parties' agendas is inextricably linked to political scrutiny and an increased likelihood of a political conflict with respect to EU legislation. When EU legislation is politically contested, however, the speed of the transposition of EU Directives will decrease as political parties engage in a public debate.

Our findings (Table 1) provide remarkably robust support for the core argument advanced in this project. In the first stage of the estimation we are interested in parsing out the direct effect of the salience of the EU in the public has on the average attention of the governing parties towards the EU issues. The results reveal that salience exerts a positive effect on the amount of scrutiny the EU ultimately receives from the governing parties. On average, for each 10 percent increase in the salience of EU in the public, governing parties devote, on average, 1.1% more attention to EU in their manifestoes. Interestingly, the inclusion of salience of EU in public renders public support for the EU statistically insignificant. In this sense, the effect of public support for the EU seems to have no effect on the level of party scrutiny of the EU. This finding makes intuitive sense as parties are more likely to react to public's heightened interest in the EU rather than to simple shifts in preferences of the public while unwilling to pay closer attention to the EU.

A positive and strong effect is also associated with the receipt of EU benefits. Net fiscal transfers and agricultural subsidies have a substantively positive effect on the level of attention to the EU among political parties. With 10% increase in the agricultural subsidies distributed to a particular member state, the extent of political parties' mentions of EU in their manifestos goes

up by .2%. In the case of fiscal transfers, the results show that for each 1000 EUR increase of per capita transfers, governing parties devote, on average, 2% more mentions of EU in their manifestos. Subsidies obtained from structural funds, however, have no effect at all on any of the endogenous variables in the model. This absence of an effect of structural subsidies is rather puzzling in that structural funds have been gaining on importance and currently comprise about 35% of the Community budget. In part, the problem can be found in the way such measurement confounds a number of important aspects of regional development, such as fisheries, or social and employment policies.

The individual effects of each of these categories potentially cancel each other out and thus rendering the aggregate effect insignificant. Therefore, future studies should attempt to parse out the individual sub-categories and disaggregate their separate impact on transposition delay with the help of more nuanced theoretical stories.

[INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The effect of EU benefits, however, is interesting as it runs against our a priori expectations. Ultimately, the results seem to indicate that the various types of EU benefits increase the attention from the governing parties. Thus, in contrast to our expectations, parties are more likely to emphasize rather than de-emphasize the various positive aspects of EU membership. However, as we demonstrate below, this effect cancels out in the second stage of model where benefits undoubtedly decrease transposition delay. To some degree this result can be also explained our measurement of salience utilized here which does not differentiate between negative and positive statements. Thus, it is plausible that governing coalitions composed of parties with as many negative as positive statements will choose to scrutinize the problem more

than in the case of predominantly positive sentiments. If parties' voter coalitions are split over the benefits received from the EU, then scrutiny of the EU issue is more likely.

However, the most important portion of the analysis arguably concerns the extent to which our endogenized indicator of party attention to EU legislation affects ultimate speed with which EU directives are transposed. We hypothesized that the more there exists an incentive for political parties to examine EU directives and scrutinize their adoption during the transposition process through domestic political exchange, the more likely that the transposition will be ultimately delayed. The findings indicate that this is undoubtedly the case and support our claim that as party attention to EU increases, the more delay in transposition we observe. Indeed, for each additional 1% of manifestos devoted to EU issues among the governing parties, we see around 5% increase in the directives transposed after the deadline. The effect of the endogenous variable is robust to various specifications performed by the authors. Interestingly, the effect of parties' attention to the EU on transposition delay disappears when standard OLS estimation is used. The statistically significant results of the Hausman test confirm that TSLS is a more efficient estimation technique than OLS and generally provides consistent result. Thus, our initial assumption to model the endogenous effect of parties' attention to EU directly is correct<sup>1</sup>.

In line with our hypotheses and controlling for the endogeneity of party scrutiny of EU issues, the findings reveal that EU benefits in the form of net fiscal transfers and agricultural subsidies have a positive effect on transposition speed. The more benefits a country receives, the less likely it is to cause a delay in transposition of EU directives. The effect is rather substantial in the case of the overall net fiscal transfers and statistically significant at the .05 level. Thus, the

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<sup>1</sup> The p-value of  $0.0034 < 0.05$  so we can reject  $H_0$  that OLS estimator is more efficient with 95% confidence. The use of TSLS is preferred as OLS is not consistent estimator.

effect of EU benefits is interesting in that it has a positive indirect effect of transposition delay by influencing party scrutiny and negative direct effect on the level of transposition delay.

We also consider the weak performance of our bureaucratic quality measure to be a surprise. We have no doubt that bureaucratic efficiency is an important predictor of transposition delay. In part, the results are weakened by our country fixed effects that, as our bureaucracy variable, tap into systematic differences in country intercepts. Equally plausibly, however, our indicator of bureaucratic efficiency lacks the necessary nuance to capture the manner in which bureaucratic drift and idiosyncrasies influence the transposition process at the macro level. Thus, a more nuanced operationalization of this important control variable is necessary for future version of this paper.

In sum, our macro-political model provides a couple of interesting insights into the general understanding of transposition efforts of EU governments. In line with recent research on transposition of EU Directives that centers around political actors (Falkner et al., 2005), our model shows the transposition process has undoubtedly a strong political component, whereby parties strategically choose to navigate their transposition efforts based on their political preferences and in response to domestic democratic pressures. Public salience of the EU was shown to have positive and robust impact on how much parties prioritize the EU in their manifestos and how likely that these issues gain more prominent position on their policy agendas. More importantly, parties' propensity to scrutinize EU issues has a negative and significant impact on the extent of successful and timely transposition of EU Directives. Further, the results also point out that parties care substantially about the re-distributional benefits that EU provides, but contrary to our expectations, they are likely to devote more attention to EU matters where the gains from membership in the EU are higher. In addition, confirming the

conclusions in the literature, however, these benefits notably decrease their willingness to lay down obstacles to smooth transposition process as they seek to use these gains to offset some of the political costs and placate their domestic coalitions.

The evidence in this paper, in part, runs counter the arguments of prior scholarship that suggested that political parties purposefully mute the attention towards the EU to single-handedly navigate the integration process without the disturbance of democratic and accountability pressures. However, these claims come with a caveat in that the findings also show that parties do not seem to respond to changes in public support for the EU, rather that the attention of the public towards the EU matters more for the extent to which European publics will indirectly influence the transposition process.

The analyses presented here represent a first look at the importance of party attention towards studying transposition in the EU. In that, the conclusions drawn here are limited. Primarily, more nuanced measurement of legislative and executive scrutiny of EU using parliamentary questions or government speeches will provide a more precise insight into the level of attention beyond the scope of party manifestos. However, by focusing on governing parties, salience of EU in party manifestos represents a reasonable approximation of the expected importance assigned to EU issues in government agendas and thus provides a first-cut analysis of the possible effects on transposition in the EU.

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*Tables*

**Table 1: Two Stage Least Squares: Party Attention to EU Issue and Transposition Delay**

	<b>Transposition Delay (% Directives)</b>	<b>Mean Party Attention to EU</b>
	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Coefficients</i>
	<i>(s.e.)</i>	<i>(s.e.)</i>
Mean Party Attention to EU	5.033** (-2.29)	--
Salience of EU in Public	--	.106*** (.040)
Support for EU in Public	--	.020 (.023)
CAP Subsidies	-0.215* (-0.113)	.028** (.012)
SF Subsidies	0.063 (-0.135)	-.006 (.018)
Net EU Transfers (per capita)	-24.512** (-12.277)	3.531* (1.437)
Bureaucratic Quality	-4.643 (-7.181)	--
Year	-1.315** (-0.537)	.169*** (.051)
<i>Country Effects:</i>		
Belgium	-7.172 (-7.613)	.746 (1.111)
Denmark	-10.89 (-8.086)	-2.281** (1.116)
Finland	-13.114 (-9.205)	-2.034* (1.176)
France	-6.783 (-7.321)	-.022 (1.078)
Germany	-18.584** (-8.799)	1.338 (1.036)
Greece	9.555 (6.788)	2.567 (1.976)
Ireland	8.885 (-10.681)	-2.608 (1.733)
Italy	1.782 (-9.402)	-1.802 (1.593)
Luxembourg	-10.879 (-10.008)	.308 (1.414)

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Netherlands	-7.178 (-7.582)	-2.480* (1.321)
Portugal	-0.704 (-16.119)	-.608 (2.390)
Spain	-29.678** (-13.125)	1.823 (1.734)
Sweden	-37.055*** (-9.002)	1.682 (1.154)
UK	-10.138 (-8.134)	.465 (1.046)
Constant	10.785*** (-2.869)	-8.106* (4.778)
R-squared	.168	0.318
N	166	166

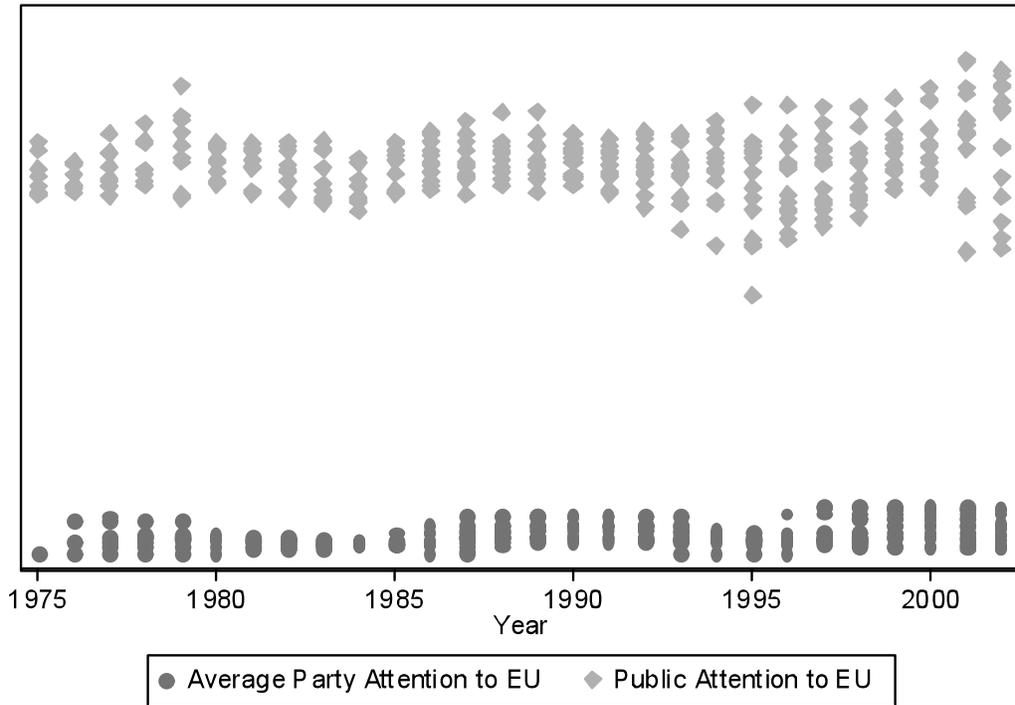
\*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

*All analyses were run with Austria as omitted category.*

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*Figures*

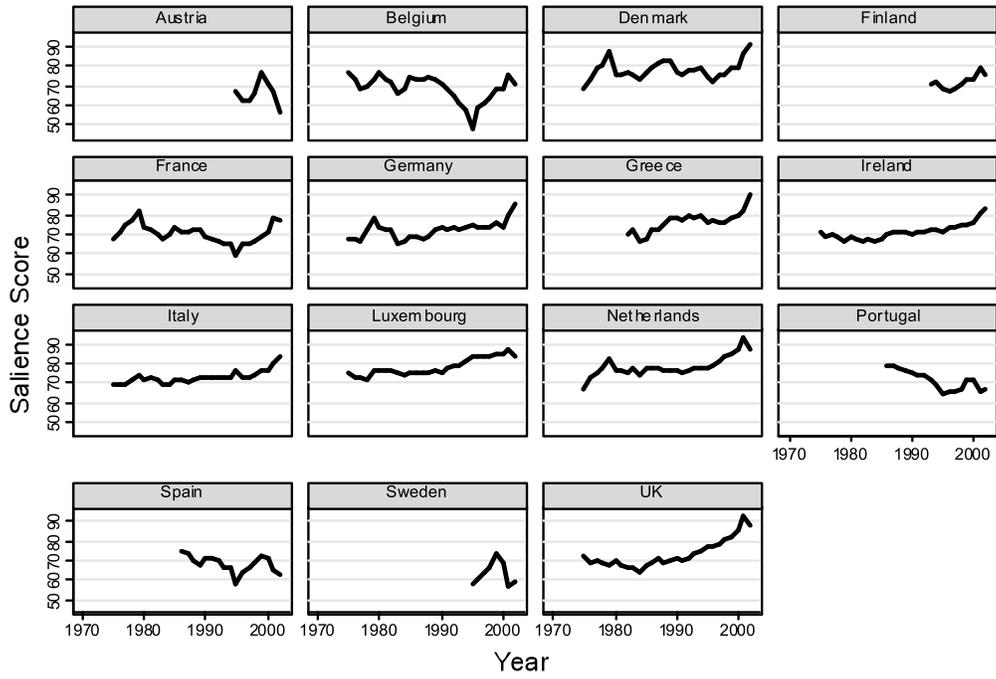
**Figure 1: Trends in Party and Public Attention to EU**



**Figure 2: Average Salience of EU Among Public**



**Figure 3: Salience of EU Among Public By Country**



Graphs by country